**Article #1 - Symbology of Sheep & Goats**

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Excerpt from: *Watchman, Watchman What of the Night?* by Joy Parrott (Chapter 11: Sheep, Goats, and Wolves pp.88-98)

**Sheep**

Sheep are commonly used throughout the Bible to symbolically refer to God’s people. We see this in Psalm 95:7

Psalm 95:7  
For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

In light of that scripture, let us keep in mind the spiritual application from the scriptures that will be used in this chapter. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells a parable using sheep and the goats.

Matthew 25:31-34  
When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Matthew 25:41  
Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Although there are similarities between a sheep and a goat, there are differences so great that Jesus said the goats would not inherit the kingdom of God. While the sheep are considered God’s children, the goats are not. Though, sheep and goats can remain in the same fold, when Jesus returns in all His glory, He will separate the sheep from the goats.

Sheep are gentle, quiet, innocent animals. They do not give their shepherds a lot of problems. If you are having problems with your “sheep” you may find out that you are really looking at a “goat.”

2 Samuel 12:3  
But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

Although this scripture is a parable that Nathan spoke to David when confronting him about his sin with Bathsheba, it reveals that sheep can be affectionate, gentle animals. Not only are the affectionate and gentle, but they can also be considered non-aggressive as seen in the following scriptures:

Isaiah 53:7  
He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Jeremiah 11:19  
But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.

These scriptures show that the lamb or sheep is not aggressive. They are very docile animals. The word “docile” as described in the Webster’s dictionary is, “easily managed or handled, readily trained or taught.” Even though sheep are easily managed, this does not eliminate the need of care and supervision provided by the shepherd, as noted from the following scriptures:

Numbers 27:17  
Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:5And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

Matthew 9:36  
But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

If sheep are not cared for properly, they will become food for all the beasts of the field. After all, sheep are defenseless animals.

Matthew 10:16  
Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Sheep are not only defenseless, but this scripture would also indicate that sheep are vulnerable to danger, reaffirming their need to be shepherded. Sheep love to follow the shepherd. They feel comfort with the presence of a shepherd. Unfortunately, though, sheep will follow the shepherds even if they are irresponsible as outlined in Ezekiel 34. This is because sheep are very trusting animals and are easily led. However, when sheep are not shepherded properly, they become vulnerable to attack. The attack can come from either outside the fold or from within the flock, since sheep and goats can be found in the same fold.

Sheep are grazers, unlike the goat, which instead likes to browse. The sheep enjoy eating in lush green pastures.

Ezekiel 34:14  
I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

When the sheep are fed properly, in lush green pastures, they will also find rest there. They will lie down in those good fields. Lying down is a sign of passivity and submission. When one animal obeys another, this is called submission. You can find two types of submission. One is active and the other is passive. Active submission is when a dominant animal forces another animal to obey it. Passive submission is when a subordinate animal lowers itself to the ground without being forced by the dominant animal. By acting submissive in a fight situation, an animal can avoid serious injury. The fact that sheep lie down on their own would indicate that they are operating in passive submission. Sheep would rather submit than fight. Being herbivores, sheep do not prey on other animals. They are content in a safe environment and are harmless and unobtrusive. Their demands are simple; they rarely make a noise except to let you know they are hungry or fear danger. Unfortunately sheep do not always get to eat in lush green pastures.

Ezekiel 34:19  
And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.

In some situations, where the pastures have not been lush and green or where the shepherds have been irresponsible, God will scatter His sheep. He will bring them out of the fold and lead them into the fold of His choice where they will be able to eat and lie down in green pastures.

Ezekiel 34:13-15  
And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

God desires for all of His sheep to feed in good pastures with caring shepherds. In Psalm 23:1-2, David relates himself as a sheep to his shepherd.

Psalm 23:1,2  
The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

David is describing his relationship with the Great Shepherd. David himself was a shepherd so he knew very well the behavior of sheep. In this verse, David shares another characteristic about these animals; sheep love still waters. They love peaceful, quiet conditions and to drink from still waters. They are not comfortable with agitated waters. When the waters become agitated, the sheep become skittish.

Now that we have looked at some of the natural tendencies of sheep, let’s see how we might apply those natural tendencies to the spiritual application of sheep to the shepherd. We have learned that scripture often refers to sheep as being the children of God and shepherds as pastors or leaders. Flocks or folds represent our congregations. Remember that both sheep and goats can be found in the same flock. Jesus says in Matthew 25 that He will come in all His glory and separate the sheep from the goats suggesting that they had been in the same fold. We find a similar parable or analogy in Matthew 13 where Jesus talks about the wheat and tares growing up together.

Matthew 13:24-30  
Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

The wheat and the tares are allowed to grow together in the same field until the time of the harvest. At that time, the wheat will be gathered into the barn (kingdom of God) and the tares will be bound in bundles to be burned. Although sheep and goats can dwell together in the same fold, it is important for leaders to recognize the differences so that the sheep are not mistaken for goats.

To review, true sheep (God’s children) are affectionate and non-aggressive. They are easy to manage because they are submissive in nature. They rarely give the shepherd (their leader) problems. If they should give the shepherd a problem it is generally because the presence of a wolf or the butting of a goat has agitated them. Also sheep enjoy still waters, not liking to drink from agitated waters. This means that they are not quick to be where strife, arguing, dissension, or turmoil is present. Such problems make the sheep skittish and they are quick to scurry away from such discord.

Truly, sheep love to graze, meaning they love to eat the Word of God. They love to be in the presence of God. They rarely will miss a feeding or shall we say a meeting. They are hungry and love to graze in the green pastures. They are not in a hurry to move on and will stay as long as the shepherd allows.

Although sheep are easily managed, they also are defenseless and vulnerable to danger. As leaders, it is important to provide the sheep with a comfortable, safe environment. We can do that as leaders if we recognize the danger of allowing wolves into the folds. This will come with the watchman and leader working together. The watchman will sense the danger of a wolf long before it is able to attack the sheep. Before we see how much danger a wolf can present though, let’s take a look at the characteristics of a goat.

**Goats**

The scripture does not give a lot of indication to the natural tendencies of a goat. What we can find from the scriptures concerning the goats is that they were a useful animal. Just like the sheep, goats were allowed to be used as a sacrifice before God as long as they were without spot or blemish. Goats were also considered to be a clean food and could be eaten. Their skin was used to make clothing and the milk was used for food. These would all seem like very good things. However, we do read that the goats will be separated from the sheep when Jesus comes in all His glory. This would indicate that goats are different from sheep. Since the Bible is not clear on some of the characteristics of a goat, I will have to relate information that I found as a consensus amongst those that have raised or tended goats.

Overall, a goat’s reputation is less than positive. Even goat metaphors are negative. For instance, “Look at the old goat” refers to an old fool or dirty old man. “You get my goat!” applies to a person who irritates another. The poem, “Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow; and everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go” gives such a positive look at the little lamb, but when the gypsy girl Esmeralda in The Hunchback of Notre Dame has a pet goat that performs tricks, the people want to hang the girl because they presume she’s using witchcraft. Anyway you look at it; goats tend to be seen in a negative way. Perhaps it is because of the natural tendencies that a goat displays.

Whereas sheep are gentle, quiet and easily led, goats are pushy, self-sufficient, and headstrong. Most goats are naturally horned, but many sheep breeds are polled or naturally hornless. Those goat horns can be used to bring harm to another. Alas, goats are naturally quarrelsome and have short tempers. They rear and butt in order to establish dominance. Rather than being a passive animal like the sheep, they have more aggressive tendencies.

Goats do not require as much supervision or care as sheep. Perhaps this is because they are a more independent animal. Unlike sheep, goats will easily revert back to their wild conditions if given the chance. Goats do not graze like sheep do, but instead browse. They nibble here and there, sampling a variety of bushes and leaves. Because they are browsers and do not graze, they tend to wander when they eat.

Goats also like the high places, often heading upward. They are not herded as well as sheep because they would rather lead than follow. Two striking differences between sheep and goats are that goats have an excessively bad odor and their tails are short and held high.

How do these goat characteristics relate spiritually to the shepherd or leader? If a “goat” is part of a fold, you may see some of these characteristics displayed. Goats are often pushy and can cause undercurrents and dissension. Turmoil and agitation are part of their nature. I believe this is because the goat has a dominating and controlling temperament, rather than a passive and submissive one.

Goats tend to be more self-sufficient than sheep, choosing to browse rather than graze in the pasture. They don’t enjoy the green pastures in the same way as the sheep. They are not always satisfied with what the shepherd (leader) gives them. They will nibble on the Word of God, a little here and a little there, yet they love to be seen in the high places. The goats walk with their tails held high, spiritually indicating pride, and they emit an offensive odor. There is something distinguishing about the goat, and that is the odor, or “air” about them.

All this said, it is important to note that goats are not wolves. They will not eat the sheep because they are not the meat eaters that the wolves are. They may be agitators and cause some turmoil for the shepherd, but they are not seriously harmful to the sheep. Perhaps that is why Jesus waits until His return to separate the sheep from the goats. The real danger and threat to our flocks and herds is the wolf.

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**Article #2 - Difference Between Sheep and Goat**

**Sheep vs Goat**

The first difference that can be thought of pertains to how the two animals look. A goat is more slender of the two, while a sheep is tubbier. That apart a sheep gives us wool while a goat does not. In the west sheep meat is eaten whereas in the Middle East and the Indian sub continent a goat is eaten.

Sheep belong to the Ovas Aries species and have 54 chromosomes while goats belong to Capra Hircus species and have 60 chromosomes. A goat’s tail is for most part stands up while a sheep’s hangs down. Their eating habits are distinct. A goat is a typical browser, feeding on leaves, shrubs, twigs and vines. A sheep on the other hand loves to graze on grass and clover.

Goats are curious by nature and are quite independent. A sheep on the other hand prefers to stay put in its flock. Another major difference is that sheep have an upper lip divided by a distinct philtrum. This is something that a goat does not have. Another difference is in the horns. Goat horns are narrower, more upright and less craved than sheep horns.

A ram could dominate a buck, but as adults there is a roles reversal with the goat easily dominating the sheep. The sheep happen to be much more prolific in breeding though. A comic anatomical difference that one could point out pertains to the fact that a goat has a beard while a sheep has a mane! Yet another piece of trivia is that while a goat has hair a sheep has fleece.

Another telling difference perhaps reflective of the differing nature of the two species is that fact that while wild goats are found in abundance sheep are entirely domesticated, suggesting that they have a greater symbiotic relationship with mankind. Thus we see that though goats and sheep look quite similar and bleat the same way there are some pretty stark differences between the two species that have distinct and separate traits that set them clearly apart. The debate about their differences though is largely academic as both the animals are among the most beneficial to mankind.

Summary:  
1.A goat is more slender of the two, while a sheep is tubbier.  
2.Sheep belong to the Ovas Aries species and have 54 chromosomes while goats belong to Capra Hircus species and have 6o chromosomes.  
3.A goat’s tail is for most part stands up while a sheep’s hangs down.  
4.A goat is a typical browser, feeding on leaves, shrubs, twigs and vines. A sheep on the other hand loves to graze on grass and clover.  
5.Goats are curious by nature and are quite independent. A sheep on the other hand prefers to stay put in its flock.  
6.While a goat has hair a sheep has fleece.  
7.A goat has a beard while a sheep has a mane.  
8.Wild goats are found in abundance and by all accounts sheep are entirely domesticated.

Sep 13, 2013

**Article #3 - Goats are from Mars, Sheep are from Venus**

petMD Logo

by Dr. Anna O'Brien

I love small ruminants.  These little guys (and sometimes not so little when a large Suffolk ram can push more than 200 pounds) are just the coolest patients.  But did you know that not all small ruminants are created equal? There are some pretty big differences between sheep and goats.

Although anatomically very similar, sheep and goats do not even share the same genus. Taxonomically speaking, sheep are *Ovis aries* (the adjective “ovine” is used to describe something dealing with sheep, such as the respiratory disease ovine progressive pneumonia, or OPP), and goats are *Capra hircus* (again, the adjective “caprine” means goat, as in the goat disease caprine arthritis and encephalitis, or CAE). Sheep have 54 chromosomes and goats have 60, a fun fact I challenge you to include in your dinner conversation.

Called small ruminants because they share similar digestive systems as cattle (four stomachs that utilize bacteria to ferment cellulose for energy), sheep and goats are much smaller in stature, but they still have differences between their natural eating behaviors. Sheep are technically grazers, meaning they prefer munching grass low to the ground. Goats, on the other hand, are known as browsers, meaning they often choose to select leaves, shrubs, vines, and weeds, often found at the tops of plants, higher off the ground.

This natural difference between these two animals is key when it comes to pasture management. Sheep have an overall better resistance to pasture parasites because they have evolved eating close to the ground, putting them in close contact with roundworms, tapeworms, and the like. Goats, in contrast, developed eating off the ground. With less contact with parasites in manure on the ground, goats have a less developed natural ability to resist parasitic infections. Goats overall are more susceptible to devastating parasitic infections than sheep if forced to graze directly off the ground.

Another difference between goats and sheep is their flock behavior. Goats tend to be much more independent and curious than sheep, who adhere tightly to flock mentality and can appear aloof to humans. This difference often makes people assume sheep are less intelligent than goats and, I won’t lie, I’ve fallen to using this label as well. However, I’ve known a few cases where a sheep is raised on its own in a more “pet” setting and I’ve noticed those individuals are much more inquisitive and interactive than their flock-bound brethren.

Phenotypically, there are some breeds of sheep and goats that look very similar. One give-away to tell the difference is the tail position: A goat’s tail is frequently held up vertically while a sheep tail hangs down. In general, a sheep grows wool while a goat grows hair, but there are breeds of sheep called “hair sheep” that developed in the Caribbean with coats that are more hair-like and actually shed seasonally, negating the need for shearing.

If you ever get into the position where you’ve made a goat or sheep angry, here’s one last difference that might be useful to know. Rams (male sheep), when aggressive, will butt head-on while bucks (male goats) will rear up and come down with their heads. Believe me, you do not want to be on the receiving end of either one of those heads!

To wrap up this topic, let’s discuss briefly small ruminant diseases. Sheep and goats share many common bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Indeed, respiratory disease, bacterial foot disease, and diarrheal diseases are common between the two genera. But there are some diseases specific to each animal, such as OPP for sheep and CAE for goats, which I mentioned earlier. Other management problems like urinary stones are similar between the two animals as well.

So there you have it: the down low on the coolest little rumination machines on the farm.

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Dr. Anna O’Brien

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**Article #4 - What Is the Difference Between Sheep and Goats?**

**God apparently has very different opinions of two groups of people He calls "sheep" and "goats." But what is it about sheep and goats that makes such a big difference? And how can we know which we are?**

Peppe Ragusa/Unsplash

The central difference between sheep and goats—is really simple. It's an idea that we can come back to when we need to stay on track: A sheep is led by its shepherd. A goatherd is led by his goat.

I am not, nor have I ever been, a shepherd. My familiarity with sheep and goats ends after cartoon characters and mattress commercials. So many times, I feel like scriptures involving the concept of God’s Church being a flock, or of us being His sheep, or even of Jesus being a lamb go right over my head. For instance, in Matthew 25, this analogy, which is obviously included to help me understand something more, just left me more confused:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’ … Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’ … ‘And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life’ (Matthew 25:31-34, English Standard Version).

So for us to be God’s sheep, we must depend on Him to defend us. If we push, take, destroy and bully, we are goats.

Why are the sheep and goats separated? Why are sheep better than goats? Why does one earn reward and the other earn punishment? How do I make sure I am not a goat? What if I already am a goat, and I don’t know it? The analogy continues to describe the works of the sheep versus those of the goats, but why? What inward difference produces such different outcomes?

I did a little research. Here is what I learned.

Fun facts: In North America, sheep and goats are easily distinguishable, due to specialization through breeding. Sheep are fluffy and wooly; goats are not. However, throughout history, and still today in parts of Asia and Africa, sheep and goats are almost identical, and no one but a shepherd can easily tell the difference. So the application here for the parable would be that outward conformity (being part of the herd) isn’t all that’s required of us. There is something that only our Shepherd can see in us, and that unseen thing tells God whether we are sheep or goats. It determines whether God sorts us to the left or to the right.

But what is it? I needed more research.

I learned that sheep have a reputation for being stupid and just sort of worthless (bummer!) However, again, the sheep of today are much different than sheep as they were created. Again, they have been bred in such a way as to produce fluffier, dumber sheep. But they are, and have always been, dependent on their shepherd and defenseless. Goats, on the other hand, have a reputation for being independent, opinionated and curious at best—or vulgar, dangerous and destructive at worst.

Here are some fun quotes about goats from a livestock forum: “If you leave goats in with your horse, they may chew off his tail.” “My dad has described goats as ‘Jack Russells with hooves.’” “If your fence won’t hold water, it won’t hold a goat.” And about 50 testimonies of goats climbing and butting cars.

So I would boil all that down this way: Shepherds protect sheep from their environment, whereas goatherds protect the environment from their goats. So for us to be God’s sheep, we must depend on Him to defend us. If we push, take, destroy and bully, we are goats.

The main thing though—the central difference between sheep and goats—is really simple. It’s an idea that we can come back to when we need to stay on track:  *A sheep is led by its shepherd. A goatherd is led by his goat.*

Literally! Sheep follow the voice of their shepherd and trust him to lead them to food, water and safety. If they wander, which some do, the shepherd will go out and rescue them and bring them back to the safety of the flock. Sheep separated from their shepherd and flock are nervous and vulnerable because they have no defensive or offensive survival abilities.

A goat, however, doesn’t follow anyone. A herd of goats goes where it wants, and the goatherd follows behind. Instead of grazing, goats “browse”—foraging for whatever strikes their fancy. So that tells us that if we are allowing ourselves to be led, being sensitive to the pull of God’s Spirit, and following the path of our Shepherd, we are sheep. If we are headstrong, going our own way, and pulling back against God’s Spirit, we are goats.

So the thing that God sees in His sheep is a gentle and yielded spirit. They trust their Shepherd. They follow His voice. On the other hand (pun intended), the goats have a spirit of defiance, self-will, or independence from God’s involvement in their lives.

So now that you know these things, how are you feeling? Are you more of a sheep or more of a goat?

If you are like me, some days you feel a little more goatish than others. So is that it? Are we doomed?

What I see from all of these concepts, and what I think the analogy is meant to convey (when you know at least something about sheep!) is that it’s something we can change right now! I can choose—and you can choose—to be led. We can learn to recognize our Shepherd’s voice and to trust it.

Here are three things you can do to help.

**1. Get in God’s Word *every day.***

Whether it’s a reading plan, a verse-of-the-day app, or listening to gospel music in the car or while you run, make God’s Word a part of your routine. Even if you just flip open your Bible before bed and read for five minutes, do *something,*  and do it every day. Start small and then let it grow! The more familiar you make yourself with the voice of your Shepherd, the more easily you can recognize it.

**2. Take time to pray.**

Pray about little things, big things, silly things. Prayers don’t have to be long or formal. When you see something beautiful, say, “Thank you, God!” When you are moved to tears or giggles, just tell Him about it. When you don’t understand something, just let Him know. Develop trust in your Shepherd by sharing your fears, your hopes and your needs with Him.

**3. Take time for quiet.**

Take time to listen. When life gets chaotic and confusing, and you don’t know which path to take, pause and listen. What scriptures come to mind? Has God helped you with something similar in the past? Ask God to inspire you with His Holy Spirit. In my experience, if you ask, He always will! The more you pray and saturate your mind with God’s words, the more you will be able to recognize His voice above the voice of the crowd.

Make the choice. Take the steps to be a sheep and not a goat.

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**Article # 5 - Separating the sheep from the goats**

**Taxonomy**  
While sheep and goats have many similarities, their taxonomy (scientific clasification) eventually diverges. Each is a distinct species and genus. Sheep (*Ovis aries*) have 54 chromosomes, while goats (*Capra aegagrus hircus*) have 60. While sheep and goats will occasionally mate, fertile sheep-goat hybrids are rare. Hybrids made in the laboratory are called chimeras.  
  
  
**Look at their tails**The easist way to tell the difference between a sheep and goat is to look at their tails. A goat's tail goes up (unless it is sick, frightened, or in distress). Sheep tails hang down and are often docked (shortened) for health and sanitary reasons.  
  
  
**Foraging behavior**A big difference between sheep and goats is their foraging behavior and diet selection. Goats are natural browsers, preferring to eat leaves, twigs, vines, and shrubs. They are very agile and will stand on their hind legs to reach vegetation. Goats like to eat the tops of plants. Sheep are grazers, preferring to eat short, tender grasses and clover. Their dietary preference is forbs (broadleaf weeds) and they like to graze close to the soil surface. Goats require and select a more nutritious diet.  
  
  
**Behavior**Sheep and goats usually exhibit different behavior. Goats are naturally curious and independent, while sheep tend to be more distant and aloof. Sheep have a stronger flocking instinct and become very agitated if they are separated from the rest of the flock. It is easier to keep sheep inside a fence than goats.  
  
Goats will seek shelter more readily than sheep. Neither species likes to get its feet wet and both prefer upland grazing to lowland. In a fight, a ram will back up and charge to butt heads. A goat will rear up on his hind legs and come down forceably to butt heads. During controntation, such fighting behavior favors the ram.  
  
  
**Physical differences**  
Sheep and goats have numerous physical differences. Most goats have hair coats that do not require shearing or combing. Most sheep grow woolly coats that need to be sheared at least annually. Lamb tails are usually docked (shortened) whereas goat tails are not.  
  
Sheep have an upper lip that is divided by a distinct philtrum (groove). The goat does not.  
Male goats have glands beneath their tail. Sheep have face or tear glands beneath their eyes and foot or scent glands between the toes. Male goats develop a distinct odor as they grow in sexual maturity. The odor is very strong during the rut (mating season). Sexually mature rams have much less of an odor, if they have an odor at all.  
  
  
**Horns**Most goats are naturally horned. Some goats have beards. Many breeds of sheep are naturally hornless (polled). Some sheep have manes. Goat horns are more narrow, upright, and less curved than sheep horns. Sheep tend to curl their horns in loops on the sides of their heads.

**Sheep and goat production**

**Reproduction**  
There are a few differences in the reproductive systems of sheep and goats. The estrus (heat ) cycle of the ewe averages 17 days while the doe's estrus cycle averages 21 days. Goats are much easier to artificially inseminate (AI) than sheep. There are several reasons why.

Ewes have a more complicated cervix which makes passage of an insemination rod very difficult. Frozen semen is usually delivered laparoscopically into the uterine horns. Sheep show few visible signs of estrus as compared to goats. A teaser ram is required to detect estrus or timed inseminations are done after hormonal manipulation.  
  
Though it varies by breed, goats tend to be less seasonal and more prolific than sheep. Male goats have an offensive odor during the mating season; rams do not. The mating rituals of the two species vary, with goats being more "bizarre" in their behavior.  
  
  
**Nutrition**  
Sheep and goats have similar nutrient requirements, though goats have higher maintenance requirements because they are not able to digest the cellulose of plant cell walls as well as sheep. Lambs tend to grow much faster than kids, no matter what the diet is. Sheep convert feed more efficiently. Grain-feeding is less likely to be profitable in goat (meat) production.  
  
With the exception of a few breeds, sheep and goats fatten very differently. Goats deposit fat around their internal organs before depositing external fat over their back, ribs, and loin. Sheep deposit external fat before depositing internal fat. Finn sheep and hair sheep of tropical orgins deposit fat around their organs similarly to goats.  
  
Sheep have a narrow tolerance for excess copper in their diet, though toxic levels depend upon the level of other minerals in their diets. Breeds also vary in their sensitivity to copper toxicity. For this reason, it is generally recommended that sheep not be fed grain and mineral mixes that have been formulated for other livestock (including goats), as these feeds likely have copper added to them.  
  
It can also be risky to graze sheep on pastures that have been fertilized with poultry or hog manure. Caution should be exercised when using any form of copper as a deworming agent. Additional copper should not be added to the diet of sheep unless a deficiency is confirmed by laboratory tests.

Goats require more copper in their diets than sheep and are not as sensitive to copper toxicity. Their maximum level of copper is considered to be similar to cattle. When co-mingled, sheep products should be fed. It may be necessary to give copper supplements to goats that are co-raised with sheep.  
  
  
**Diseases**  
Sheep and goats are generally susceptible to the same diseases, including scrapie, which is transmitted via infected placenta to genetically-susceptible offspring. U.S. law requires both species to carry official USDA identification when entering commerce or moving from the farm of origin.

Sheep and goats are infected by the same internal parasites (worms), though coccidia (*Eimeria* spp.) tend to be host-specific. Both sheep and goats can serve as a abnormal host for meningeal worm, a parasite of white tail deer.

Goats tend to be more susceptible to worms than sheep, due to their origins (in a dry climate) and natural browsing behavior. Goats also metabolize anthelmintics quicker and require higher doses of the drugs. The clostridial vaccines also seem to be less effective in goats than sheep. Tissue reactions (to vaccinations) tend to be more common in goats than sheep. Fewer drugs are FDA-approved for use in goats.  
  
OPP (ovine progressive pneumonia) and CAE (caprine arthritic encephalitis), are similar diseases, caused by a slow virus (like HIV), that affect sheep and goats, respectively. The primary mode of transmission is through the colostrum. Cross infection is possible.  
  
No disease similar to "floppy kid syndrome" has been diagnosed in sheep.  
  
  
**Social dominance**  
Due to their more aggressive behavior, goats will usually dominate sheep, especially if the goats have horns and the sheep are polled (hornless). However, when young bucks and rams are maintained together, rams will dominate because the ram will preemptively strike the buck in the abdomen while the buck is still in the act of rearing up.

**Article #6 - Is This A Goat Or A Sheep? It's Harder Than You Think**

December 21, 20147:03 AM ET

Marc Silver



The photographer thought it was a goat. The photo editor thought it was a goat. Sure looked like a goat to the author of this post. It turns out to be a sheep, in Dakar, Senegal.

Claire Harbage for NPR

**Goats and Soda**

**How Can You Tell If Your Goat Is Happy? Now We Know!**

So perhaps you noticed a post I wrote last weekend about how you know if your goat is happy. Yes, scientists do study that.

The story had a cute picture of a goat at the top, taken by a photographer in Dakar, Senegal. The farmer told the photographer that the animal was his "goatie." And to our untutored eyes, it looked like a goat.

And then NPR's ruminant-wise Africa correspondent, Ofeibea Quist-Arcton, send me an e-mail with the subject: "MARC, THAT'S A PIC OF A SHEEP, NOT A GOAT!"

She wrote a little poetic explanation:

*The ears, the ears!*

*It's all in the ears!*

*Goats have sticky out small ears!*

*These flappers surely belong to a sheep!*

Ofeibea was right. We were wrong. We took down the sheep photo and replaced it with a photo that was definitely, positively, 100 percent a goat.

This humiliating experience made me eager to learn more about sheep and goats, and the differences between them. I turned to Cathy Dwyer, a professor at Scotland's Rural College, who does research on animal behavior and welfare. "I've worked on sheep quite a bit," she says. "Most of the last 20 years."

So clearly we can't pull the wool over Dwyer's eyes.

We started our interview by showing her the photo of the sheep we thought was a goat.

**I feel really stupid. I'm the editor of a blog called "Goats and Soda," and I can't tell a sheep from a goat.**

I can understand the difficulty. It's usually the tail that's the real giveaway. Sheep tails always go down; goat tails go up. But there's only a face to work from in the photo.

**Our ace NPR library did find that there's a sheep raised in Senegal called the Djallonke sheep, and it looks a lot like a goat. When you first saw the photo, would you have thought it was a sheep or a goat?**

I probably would have said a sheep. But I'm struggling to tell you why. It might be something about the ears, even just the location of the ears. They're a little bit lower in a sheep than in a goat. But it is hard to tell.

**That makes me feel a lot better. Some people say goats have more personality than sheep. Is that true? I mean, do sheep really act like, you know, sheep — kind of passive and hanging out with other sheep?**

Goats and sheep occupy slightly different niches. A sheep is predominantly a grazer, and a goat is a browser.

Because they browse, goats spend a lot of time investigating things. They are forever nibbling on and eating things. So they have more exploratory, investigate behavior because of their feeding style. They appear to be more interactive with the environment, and they are very engaging animals. Because of that, I can completely understand why people think they're more intelligent or have more personality than sheep.

When you're a grazing animal, like sheep, you spend a lot of time with your head down eating grass. That's much less interesting to people.

**So are sheep ... boring?**

Some are very fearful and withdrawn. Some are quite bold. Once sheep overcome their fear of you, they can be quite bold and confident animals — even though they appear to be just wooly blobs in the field.

**Are they followers rather than leaders?**

If you're a successful sheep it's because you've been evading predators. The way you do that is sticking together with other sheep. And following a dominant animal is a good way to stay alive.

**I bet a goat could beat up a sheep.**

I only remember one paper about goats and sheep fighting. When a goat wants to fight, it rears up on its hind legs. But the sheep butted the goat in the stomach. The sheep won.

**Which animal is easier to raise in the developing world?**

Actually I would say sheep. I think they're more robust than goats, so they survive better under the same conditions. Goats are particularly susceptible to cold weather. And goats are a little more susceptible to bacterial infections and viral diseases.

**What about in hot climates? Who has the edge?**

Both sheep and goats do pretty good when it's hot and dry. Goats do better than sheep when it's hot and humid. Then it's more difficult for sheep to dissipate heat by panting and [standing in the] shade because of their fleeces.

**Any other issues in the sheep versus goat debate? I guess sheep do offer a little more bang for the buck: milk, meat and wool.**

In Mongolia, sheep are used for portage as well. People dig out salt; the sheep carry it back.

**Would a goat do that?**

I could imagine the goat would just lie down and refuse to move.