



# How to construct best goat shelter

Several farmers in Uganda have embarked on dairy goat farming. To achieve the best from goats, farmers have been advised to embrace the best practices such as erecting the best shelter and proper fencing, writes **Beatrice Nakibuuka**.

**G**oats whether raised for meat or milk, need basic protection from the elements such as wind, rain and heat.

Provision of a simple shed with low cost housing materials in dry areas may be enough for goats to produce efficiently especially milk. To keep your goats safe, there is need for you to provide them with that perfect shelter.

How elaborate your goat shelter is depends on where you live, how many goats you plan to have in the shelter and how much you can afford.

If you have or plan to rear many goats, you need to make sure you have a large structure or plan to build more shelters over time.

In other words you may need to have a relatively big piece of land because different groups such as bucks, does and kids to be weaned need separate housing areas.

Miriam Ankunda, a vet assistant at Shimmer Africa, warns that if they are all kept together, they may be fighting for resources such as food which will cause non uniformity in their growth as some may be weak and not get enough feeds.

You need to have a store place where you keep the goats' feeds and care tools.

A suitable goat shelter should be well-lit with natural lighting and have adequate ventilation, but it needs to be free from breezes, particularly at ground level.

Some of the things to consider when deciding to build a goat shelter

**800,000**

**THE COST OF A GOAT HOUSE INCLUDING MATERIAL, TWO TO THREE DAYS OF LABOUR AND TRANSPORTATION**

include:

### Flooring

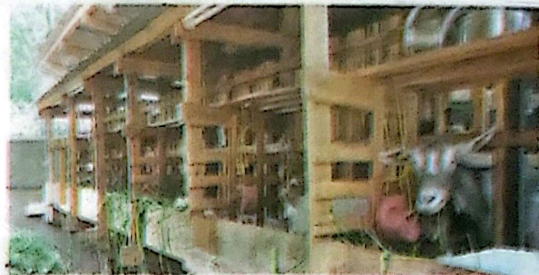
Gravel floors are the best option for goats although some people prefer wood. The dirt in the gravel absorbs urine and when the gravel is covered with straw, it helps keep the goats warm.

Sheds with mud floor may be suitable except in places where high rainfall is observed such as central and western Uganda.

Ankunda says, "Farmers should therefore avoid concrete flooring because it is cold and hard on the goats' bodies even though it is easier to clean. Farmers should also remember to keep the floor of the shelter dry always because dampness can be a breeding place for various diseases among your goats."

The shelter should be constructed in an elevated area or slightly slanting to prevent water and urine stagnation.

This also helps with drainage in your shed which should be good, to counteract any buildup of smells and urine.



Kithinji Musyoka tends to goats in a raised shelter. PHOTOS BY EDGAR BATTE

"The kids may be left with their mother for the first three days but afterwards isolated into a special cage where they are bound to receive special attention. The same place should have bedding for the kids," Zziwa says.

Also, regardless of the breed, you need an area for doing routine care, such as hoof trimming or clipping. If you are keeping dairy goats, you can use the same space for milking.

### DIMENSIONS

Considering the height and width of the shelter, goats need to have about 15 square feet of housing if they also have an outdoor area. Make sure that your building is in an area with good drainage and, if it is open, that it faces away from the prevailing wind.

Zziwa says, "During the building process, it is important to consider how easy it will be to muck out old bedding. Having to bend over or stretch a long way while mucking is uncomfortable and hard on your back. The shelter should therefore be built a little taller than you are for easy mucking."

When creating goat housing consider where you will store feed,

straw or other bedding, and other goat-related equipment.

Zziwa advises that goats should not be tethered while they are in the shelter except if they are outdoors. The roof should be strong enough not to leak when it rains.

### FEEDING & DRINKING PLACE

You need to have space for feeders and drinkers, which will keep things cleaner and prevent wasting of feed. All animals should be able to eat or drink at one time.

Having easy access to water for your goats while they are in the shelter is important. This will prevent you from the hassle of transporting the water to the goat's shelter all the time.

### Bedding

Regardless of type of flooring, you need to use some sort of bedding for warmth and comfort.

If you have to use a concrete floor, make sure to put down three to four inches of saw dust to insulate the goats with enough warmth while they sleep.

Dr Paul Zziwa, a freelance vet, says goats can be deep littered, with the bedding being topped up regularly then being mucked out completely every month. You need about 20 square feet per goat for sleeping space.

### Fencing

Goats are notorious for getting out of enclosures, so you will need some

tight shelter to protect them from bad climate but also a considerably strong fencing for them.

"Fencing is important for the safety and health of your goats. Fencing for goats needs to be secure, not just to keep them in, but to keep predators like dogs out. You will need perimeter fencing around the entire goat area or your property boundary, and then cross fencing within the goat area to keep goats separated from each other," Ankunda says.

### Kidding place

If you plan to breed your own goats, you will need kidding enclosures and the number of cages you will need depends on how many goats are kidding at a time.

### Costs

Of the two common types of goat shelters, experts at Give A Goat Farm advise farmers to invest in a raised goat house as opposed to the pen type.

The farm which was established in 2013 by American Scott Panella helps prospective and active goat farmers by providing housing, fencing, food, medical care, and education.

According to Panella the cost of a simple goat house, including material, two to three days of labour and transportation for all is approximately Shs800,000.

"Great dairy goats tend to produce more milk and live healthier when the proper treatment and management is in place. By building the raised goat house the risk of worms is less and the droppings can be used as fertiliser in gardens. Goat houses consist of one male/buck room and one or two female rooms depending on how many goats have been provided," read in part guidelines authored by Panella.

### Goat perimeter (Fencing)

Panella says one way to keep goats safe is by building a fence. "Fencing has been a successful way for us to keep the goats healthy and happy. We also bring in a mound of stones and bricks for them to climb on as a "play" area which can also help with hoof care. Fencing cost can vary depending on the size of the fence and the area we are separating for the goats, but the average cost including labour is approximately Shs575,000," Panella says.