



On Radar TV show tonight: Male goat-kids victim of growing goat-dairy industry

Due to the increasing popularity of goat-cheese and milk the number of dairy-goats, since 2000, has almost increased fivefold. From 98,000 in 2000 to over 476,000 in 2020. This means there are also more male goat-kids than ever before. Even though the dairy goat industry earns a lot of money, for many years in a row now, they still have not solved the ethical problem of producing unwanted male kids. Unable to produce milk and meat of low economic value, most male-kids are not given adequate care and fall sick, or are sent to slaughter at only 7 days of age. These are the findings of Eyes on Animals, which RADAR, a Dutch TV show, will expose tonight (30.11.2020, at 20:35 / NPO1).

Between 2017 and 2020 Eyes on Animals inspected dozens of goat farms, collecting centers and trailed livestock trucks transporting male-kids to slaughterhouses and spoke to various parties within the goat sector. The findings and recommendations are collected in their new report "Welfare of male goat-kids".

What is the problem?

To produce goat-milk, a dairy goat must give birth. Half of the new-borns is male. Males do not produce milk and few people eat their meat. Fattening them is often not profitable. Some farmers take responsibility for them and fatten them for a few months, but most of them do not. They send their male-kids to slaughter as soon as this is legally allowed (after 7 days of age). This was the fate of 80-90% of the male-kids in 2020 (also partly due to COVID-19 since the export market was also limited). In 2019 about 30-40% were sent straight to slaughter. Some farmers are willing to fatten their male-kids, but do not have the space and are not allowed to build an extra stable.

Long transport journeys

Transport to the slaughterhouse is very detrimental to the welfare of the kids. By the time the livestock truck is full, 6 to 7 hours have gone by because kids are collected at many different farms by the same truck first. All this time they are deprived of milk. Many kids arrive at the slaughterhouse very weak and dehydrated.

No quality of life and mortality rates not registered

Goat kids are separated from their mother immediately after birth and put in a plastic container, often individually. The attention is given to the female-kids who are of higher value as they will be used to later produce milk. Male kids, which have little economic value, get inferior-quality colostrum (first milk a mother produces after giving birth, full of antibodies), get it late or not at all (since they are often slaughtered just 7-10 days after birth). If they die on the farm, they do not have to be transported to the slaughterhouse, which saves money. Exact mortality rates on the farm are unknown. Currently goat kids only have to be registered within a half year after birth. But as of tomorrow, 1 December 2020, goat-kids must be registered within one week after birth. This is a slight improvement to get mortality statistics, nevertheless goat kids that die within that first week (which often happens to those that do not receive colostrum) will still remain unrecorded.

What does Eyes on Animals want?

It is ethically irresponsible to allow a sector, such as goat dairy, to grow as long as there is no ethical solution to the problem of the male goat kids. Goat cheese, milk and yoghurt results in male newborns having little value and given little care. Male goat kids born just to be slaughtered shortly thereafter is not morally acceptable, especially in 2020. Until the sector and authorities have solved this problem, we encourage consumers to stop consuming goat dairy.

The following immediate action is needed:

- **Keep all goat kids at least 3 weeks on the farm**, as already required in the biological sector. This prevents transport at a very young age to slaughterhouses and motivates dairy goat farmers to take better care of their male-kids.
- **Phase out the practice of removing the kids from their mothers directly after birth**, and start keeping them in families, all together.
- **Mandatory registration of kids < 3 days after birth**. This will expose farms with high mortality due to poor colostrum supply more easily.
- **Spread out birthing over the entire year**. If kids are no longer all born in the same season (as is the case now), supply and demand can be better matched and it will lower the burden of caring for many kids all at once.
- **Softer municipal rules for goat dairy farms that wish to build new space to raise their kids for fattening on-site**.

Researcher Madelaine Looije: 'Behind every piece of goat-cheese in the supermarket, there is male goat-kid that had a short and worthless life. Consumers, including vegetarians, should ask themselves if they want to support an industry that earns its money over the backs of innocent male-kids. If you do not want to support this industry, try a plant based alternative or search for farmers that keeps all kids, including the male ones, in the herd with their mothers for several months.'

For journalists

[Report "Welfare male goat-kids"](#) (only available in Dutch)

[Investigative film](#)

Contactgegevens

Do you have questions? Do not hesitate to contact Eyes on Animals.

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