

Feeding Grain to Unruly Goats



I need to remember that not everyone has the same experiences in life. What is second nature to me, now, wasn't always that way. I had to learn different methods of handling our livestock, just like everyone else does. So here's a tip on how to feed grain to your goats and sheep. Not everyone will do it the way I do, but this works for me and it may help

someone who is getting frustrated with the rude behavior seen while feeding grain to unruly goats!

Recently I was chatting back and forth with a fellow goat owner about how out of control feeding time can become. You know, how goats and sheep shove each other around while the grain is being dispensed into the feeder, trough or bowl. Usually, someone is left out with little or no food. Or, the dominant goat will chase the weaker goats away from the fresh hay. It seems that they are being intentionally mean spirited. Some breeds are more aggressive than others about this.

My Pygora goats are a Pygmy/Angora cross and the Pygmy side can come shining through at feeding time. Angoras are usually a bit more of a docile breed. The larger milking goats, like the Nubians and Toggenberg we had rarely showed aggression towards each other.

Sheep can behave like this too. The three lambs we got this past spring are usually happy to share with each other but the

older Ewe, Millie, will chase everyone off the feed. The younger sheep keep moving from bowl to bowl during feeding time.

And that, is my big secret! I have at least as many bowls as animals available during feeding time. More feeding bowls or feeding stations equals less aggression during feeding.

Try adding bowls or areas where you put the feed. Yes, the goats will still chase each other off the feed but the less aggressive will just move to the next bowl, and keep eating.

The number of bowls needed will depend on the personalities of your goats. In one area, we use three bowls for three goats. If they each don't have a bowl they fuss and fight and push me

around too.

In the area that has the six goats that were all born here, I only need three or four bowls. They all grew up together and while there is a boss goat, most don't mind sharing.

And in our last goat pen we have our two studs and an aggressive whether. They only need two bowls, however, as they all seem to eat out of one bowl at a time.

The food aggression issue is very common in goats. We have raised Pygoras and taken in abandoned goats for over 10 years, now. Learning what is normal behavior helps you determine how to work around it to find a solution that will work for you.