

# From Hoof to Horns: A Guide to Everything Goat

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## **Abstract**

This thesis project explored the question: What can be done to ensure that people treat goats properly and provide the best quality care? Drawing on my experience in raising goats, I developed an educational Youtube channel focused on providing the correct care for goats and addressing common issues. This series covers a range of goat-related topics, from common procedures for goat care to education on the various goat breeds.

Given that 2.51 million goats are in the US as of 2026, there is a pressing need to educate new goat owners, many of whom purchase animals without knowledge of proper animal husbandry. Although there are existing resources, my background in science and medicine allows me to bring a unique, research-backed perspective to this project, setting my channel apart from others.

Through this series, I hope to improve the well-being of goats by influencing new owners, youth programs, and farming operations nationwide. When I began raising goats, a resource similar to the one I am creating would have been highly beneficial to me. This project was a way for me to give back to the community by providing valuable support to aspiring livestock owners and reflecting on my own time with goats.

## Opening

“Goats can eat tin cans.” This is a line that has haunted me from before owning and raising goats. With a line like that, one would expect goats to be incredibly hardy. Unfortunately for us owners, we realize that such is not always the case.

Throughout my time with goats, we have experienced a series of challenges every year. People often assume that the transition to having goats is easy. I can tell you from personal experience that it is far from it. The literature surrounding goats is often murky, depending on the sources that are easy to find at a moment’s notice in a time of emergency. My experience has come from my amazing mentors and a large amount of trial and error. I remember how I used to lament about knowing nothing starting out, but it was not from my negligence. It was simply due to a lack of research and a lack of veterinarians experienced in goat care in my area.

It was from these experiences and an abrupt realization of my own early ignorance that I decided to become a source for other people. These people were like me at one point; now it is my turn to bestow this knowledge onto them to the best of my ability. Through my videos in this project, I hope to make a lasting impact on goat owners and their animals. But this begs the question, “Of all the farm animals, why did my family choose goats?”

## **My Story With Goats**

It was in 2020 that my journey with goats took an unexpected start. An accident left my mother with a lifelong limit to the amount of weight she could lift, signaling the beginning of the end of our time owning and showing horses. My horse, Smokie, needed a friend after his pasturemate was rehomed. The answer? He needed a goat. I grumbled and groaned, complaining that I didn't want goats, and tried to insist on getting a pony or a donkey to keep him company. Little did I know, a tiny and adorable baby goat would run through the auction ring on a cold Saturday morning in late January. That tiny goat became our first girl kid, or doeling, Rosie. Less than a half hour later, a Nubian "doe," Sparky, ran through and we got "her" as well. When we stopped at my grandmother's house to show her our auction finds, my mother went into the horse trailer to take a closer look at what we bought. She felt along the stomach of the "doe" and exclaimed "Yep, definitely a doe." Sparky promptly responded by urinating on her hand to prove that he was indeed a wether, or castrated male. As I threw my head back and laughed, I realized that having goats might be more fun than I thought.

Fast forward to March. We saw a Craigslist ad for 3 young Boer/Nubian doelings. By March 13, 2020, we had three more goats on the premises that we named Honey, Poppy, and Daisy. That same day we were told we would have a two-week Spring Break, but little did we know what

was to come. These doelings were adorable and wonderful despite being incredibly skittish. Honey ended up passing from polio not long after getting her, but Daisy and Poppy grew up with Rosie and formed our first group of breeding does.

May 18th, 2020; it was on this gorgeous day that we picked up Peanut, my first Toggenburg doe. The next day, May 19th, we were scheduled to pick up two more wethers from the Toggenburg breeder when things took a sudden turn for the worse. My family went out to feed our goats and my horse (Smokie) the heels of a loaf of bread for a little treat. Smokie had been placed in the 1 acre pasture instead of the larger one to control his weight loss, but the goats were able to crawl through the barbless twisted wire to hang out with him as they pleased. When I walked over to his pasture, I didn't see him. Immediately, I went into panic mode. I began calling for him and praying he was okay. It was then that I noticed a single hoof sticking up above the grass. I choked down a sob as my parents ran over. My poor horse had rolled close to the woven wire fence and got his leg caught. My parents set to work freeing him as I, still sobbing in fear, kept the goats in our roundpen to prevent them from getting in the way. Unsurprisingly, Smokie had torn through his back leg badly. After he was free, we actively tried to stop his bleeding with kitchen towels and a large amount of direct pressure. My grandma's husband, who lives a

quarter mile down the road, was driving by in his Jeep and we waved him down to call my grandma.

Together we contacted local vets to have them come out to our place while I stroked Smokie's forehead to try to keep him calm. This was in the height of COVID and, unfortunately, everywhere was closed. One vet was able to work him in if we brought him from the country all the way to town in our horse trailer. The problem lay in trying to have Smokie keep his footing for a slower-than-normal 30 minute drive over 2-3 sets of railroad tracks with an injured leg. As we began thinking about the logistics of this, we weren't feeling overly optimistic. In a last ditch effort, I begged them to call one more vet. Luckily, this vet was able to come to our property to sedate him and stitch him up. Now with months of stall rest and healing to go, we were thankful that he was at least stable.

The next day we picked up the bottle baby Toggenburg kids, thankful for the baby goats to cheer up the mood. Now we were up to 7 goats to keep Smokie company. About two months later, he was finally able to go out into the pasture for little stints, his posse prancing along around him.

As time passed on, the goats got bigger and stronger, playing on the structures we made for them and hanging out by the roundpen where Smokie was getting his rehabilitation exercise. In the Summer of 2021 he made a full recovery. Somewhat attributed to this recovery was my decision to stay off his back for over a year. Along with showing Smokie in 4-H, I

made the decision to show Daisy and Peanut through my high school's Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter. My brother Zack chose to show Rosie and Poppy as well. Since he was an incoming freshman, he was able to show with me through FFA. In July I got another young Toggenburg kid, Heidi, and showed her alongside my other projects.

At the fair, I showed Daisy in the meat goat division, taking the Grand Champion Meat Goat Showmanship buckle. My Toggenburgs and Smokie also did well, but Daisy made one of my dreams come true. Ever since I was in the 4th grade, I wanted to compete in the Round Robin, or Master Showman, competition. To compete, one must win the showmanship championship of their shown animal within either 4-H or FFA. I never won with my horses, but Daisy was the key to me getting in and competing in the FFA Round Robin, or Master Showmanship. In this competition, the champions of each division of animals at the fair competed against one another to see who was the best showman. I showed sheep, cattle, pigs, dairy goats, and meat goats. I didn't win against my peers, but Daisy made it possible for me to compete and fulfill a lifelong dream.

The next year, another large shift happened. February 23rd, 2022 Daisy had the very first kids ever born on our farm. She had triplets, 2 traditional doelings and 1 gorgeous white male kid, or buckling. Sassy, Georgia, and Bentley grew like weeds along with their 4 siblings. Poppy

and Rosie each had two doelings, the latter's two doelings becoming my grandma's pets to this day. We had decided that my brother, Zack, would show his goats at the fair with their kids, and me with mine. For some reason, the runt of Daisy's triplets, Georgia, stood out to me. She was small, but she was determined and feisty – my Georgia.

Not long after those kids were born, I helped my mentor, Jan, show at the local American Dairy Goat Association (ADGA) show and continued to learn more from her. I went out to her house often, sometimes returning with yet another of her Toggenburgs. But during this time at the show, I took a particular liking to one of her animals, Riverwind Keepsake. I already owned her daughter, Heidi, but she was truly a special and remarkable animal. I think Jan noticed this likening and she surprised me and my family with her as a gift. The gifts kept on giving though, as Keepsake ended up having quadruplets, a rare occurrence for her breed.

That next fair, my last, Keepsake helped me win two belt buckles. We won Grand Champion Showman in the dairy division for FFA as well as Supreme Dairy Doe. She had impressive capacity, helped along by her two doe kids. I did not win the meat showmanship class with Daisy, but that was only because I noticed a speck of dirt on her and decided to show another one of my meat goats instead. That turned out to be an unfortunate mistake, but Daisy and the kids did quite well in their conformation classes.

At this same fair, a normal situation turned into an emergency. I was finishing filling up water buckets for my animals when I heard a blood-curdling scream. A fellow FFA member's show wether got his horns stuck in some paneling after attempting to access hay from a neighboring stall. I immediately and calmly hurried into his stall to comfort the animal. My mom called the superintendents, vets, my dad, and advisors as I stayed with the poor animal. Caspian, the goat, had partially broken his horn off and degloved the tissue when he pulled back. Blood was pouring from his head and I began to delegate to those who came over. From having my mom fetch the cauterizer to a former vet giving him banamine for pain relief to other people giving me paper towels for applying pressure, we were a well-oiled machine. We were able to dislodge him as the vet removed the rest of his horn and cauterized the tissue. He ended up fully recovering and has since gone on to live a wonderful life as a lopsidedly horned goat.

It was at the conclusion of this unorthodox situation that the former vet and other adults approached me. They commended me on my skills and delegation, telling me that many adults wouldn't have been able to do what I had. I hadn't realized that I had gained the knowledge and the skills to help animals until that very moment.

After this fair, I ended my high school goat showing with three belt buckles and countless champion and blue ribbons; more buckles than I

ever won showing horses. Not long after, when I went up to college, Smokie was sold to another family with young kids to continue the life of showing he loved.

That chapter of my life ended, but new ones have since begun as the herd continues to expand. Raising goats has had its share of triumphs and struggles. I have learned so much and met so many amazing people. This thesis only serves as a reflection of all I have learned in order to pass it on to the new generations of goat people. My story with goats is far from complete, but to date I am amazed at how much I've grown. I started this journey not wanting goats, and now I have no idea how I could ever live life without them.

## **Problem Identification**

As mentioned above, my time and experience owning goats was not always full of joy. In fact, random issues popped up much more often than I would care to admit. As much as we thought it was our fault, we soon realized that such is the reality of a goat owner. The common adages involving the hardiness and fortitude of goats were definitely not referring to some we have owned over the years. With that being said, we were incredibly lucky to have found such an amazing and knowledgeable community. From my Toggenburg breeder, to the ADGA members, to fellow Boer breeders, I cannot thank them enough for their guidance. Before meeting these people and after losing Honey, I was able to find solid literature stating what her issues were. There are a lot of “could be’s” found in the literature, but none were truly conclusive. A lot of veterinarians in our rural area were specifically targeted to every species except goats. We would have been truly lost without the network we found ourselves in, which is why this thesis is designed to help people who may be in our similar situation. There are a lot of videos out there, but mine will be rooted in both research and experience, not just focusing on one or the other. This series will help limit this gap in knowledge for the betterment of goats and livestock owners nationwide.

## **Literature Review**

Goat production has become one of the fastest growing livestock sectors in the United States. Historically underrepresented in American agriculture, goats are gaining popularity due to their hardiness, size, temperament, and the increasing demand for goat meat, milk, and fiber products (Gillespie). As of January 1st, 2024, the U.S. goat population was estimated to be at 2.47 million head. Just two years later, the population is estimated to have reached 2.51 million goats, marking a consistent upward trend in population (USDA). Of this population, approximately 1.5 million goats are slaughtered for meat annually. This figure is expected to increase as demand continues to grow, especially in ethnically diverse communities that consume goat as a dietary staple. Supporting this increase in goat population, the number of goat operations surged from 100,910 in 2012 to 136,000 by 2020 (Gillespie; USDA).

Goat breeds in the United States fall into three primary categories: dairy, meat, and fiber. Each breed offers unique traits that are valuable to producers, including productivity in terms of reproduction, feed efficiency, climate adaptability, and physical traits. Maintaining and promoting the diversity of these breeds is vital for genetic conservation and the sustainability of goat production systems long-term (Garcia-Peniche). For example, dairy goats are selected for the milk quantity, composition, and efficiency. The Nigerian Dwarf, a small but sturdy breed, is often favored

for its high butterfat content and docile temperament, making it popular in many dairy operations. The Lamancha goat, a breed developed in Oregon, is known for its small, gopher-like ears and high milk yield that make it suited for commercial dairy production (Whitley).

Fiber producing breeds such as the Angora are raised primarily for their luxurious fleece. These goats are typically white in color, with a thick, downy undercoat that produces mohair. This fiber is valued in the textile industry for its softness and ability to provide insulation to the wearer. The presence of special breeds like these support niche markets within the agricultural economic sector.

In the meat sector, the Boer goat remains the most popular breed in the United States. Known for its rapid growth rate and musculature, the traditional Boer goat is easily recognized by its white body and reddish-brown head. In addition to the quality of the lean red meat produced by these animals, Boers are valued for their calm demeanor and manageability compared to cattle and other large livestock (Whitley; Gillespie). Their reproductive efficiency and compatibility with crossbreeding programs with breeds like the Kiko further increase the desirability of these animals.

Across all breed types, goats are considered to be hardy, versatile animals that adapt well to various climates and production systems (Zobel). With growing populations and an increasing interest in goat production, there is an urgent need to promote good animal husbandry

practices. Animal husbandry is the practice of ethical care and management of animals. This branches into all areas of care, including, but not limited to nutrition, shelter, reproduction, and medical care. When livestock producers implement good animal husbandry practices consistently, animals are healthier, happier, and better producers (4-H). Good husbandry not only benefits the animals but also protects the economic interests of producers by minimizing losses due to disease or poor performance.

This rising importance of proper care and public understanding comes at a time when societal views of livestock production are evolving. In 2022, Oregon introduced Initiative Petition 13 (IP-13), which aimed to redefine animal cruelty laws by removing exemptions for standard agricultural practices, including breeding and slaughter. Although IP-13 failed to collect enough signatures for the 2022 ballot and again for the 2024 ballot under the name IP-3, IP-28 or the PEACE Act (People for the Elimination of Animal Cruelty Exemptions), has the goal of appearing on the 2026 ballot. If successful, this legislation would significantly alter livestock production in Oregon by criminalizing practices like artificial insemination and humane slaughter. Petitioners need to gather 120,000 signatures by the 2026 ballot cut-off date to qualify for state-wide voting. This effort underscores the disconnect between the public and the realities of livestock care, making agricultural education more critical than ever.

Part of this education must address common but under-discussed health challenges in goat herds. Goats are susceptible to a wide range of diseases, many of which can have serious implications on herd health and profitability. Among the most concerning conditions for producers are Caseous Lymphadenitis (CL) and Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis (CAE) (Navarre).

CL is a bacterial infection caused by *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis*, an organism known for thriving in soil for extended periods of time. Infection typically occurs when the bacteria enters the animal through open wounds, ingestion, or inhalation. Affected goats develop abscesses, especially around the mandibular and parotid glands. These abscesses can rupture, releasing pus that spreads the bacteria to other animals. Due to the high recurrence rate and ease of transmission, infected animals are often culled to protect herd health (Navarre).

In contrast, CAE is a chronic viral disease caused by a lentivirus. Transmission occurs primarily through milk, making it especially prevalent among dairy goats. CAE presents with a range of symptoms, but joint swelling (arthritis) and neurological impairment due to encephalitis are the most common. Encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain, leads to weakness or a loss of coordination at an advanced stage of disease. There is no cure for CAE, and like CL, results in the animals testing positive getting culled from the herd to protect the other animals (Navarre). The

long term effects of these diseases highlight the need for consistent testing, biosecurity measures, and culling protocols.

Aside from identifying disease, producers must be able to recognize the signs of a healthy goat. This includes observing animals for proper rumination (chewing cud), healthy hoof condition, bright and alert eyes, pink mucous membranes (observed at the inner eye and the gumline), and low parasite loads. One effective tool for monitoring anemia is the FAMACHA scoring system, which evaluates the color of the inner eyelids to determine worm burden (Thedford). Routine management tasks such as hoof trimming, deworming, and regular health checks are essential for maintaining herd health and productivity.

Effective herd management also involves making informed breeding decisions. Selective breeding enables producers to amplify desirable traits, such as growth rate and litter size. Heritability studies suggest that these traits as well as milk yield and parasite resistance can be passed to offspring, but long-term evaluation is necessary to determine success (Jembere). For example, a doe that regularly gives birth to twins or triplets may seem ideal for herd expansion, but if her milk production is insufficient, the health of the kids and the dam can be compromised. In such cases, producers may opt to bottle-feed one kid or place it with a foster dam to ensure proper nutrition for all offspring. Managing the nutritional demands is extremely important during lactation, as excessive

energy output can impair the dam's ability to recover and delays rebreeding. Although goats are able to produce offspring every six months with a 150 day gestation period, most operations prefer to breed annually to align with market cycles and ensure the welfare of the does (Thedford).

Producers that target the youth market, such as 4-H and FFA programs, time births for late fall to ensure that goats are show-ready by the summer fair season. Dairy operations, in contrast, usually plan for spring kidding to align with forage abundance in the early spring months. These practices reflect the variety of production goals and the need for strategic reproductive management.

With so many elements at play, the need for accessible, accurate education is evident. During the COVID-19 pandemic, access to in-person training and mentorship sharply declined, increasing reliance on digital tools. Video-based learning emerged as a powerful tool to reach diverse audiences during this era of online education. Instructional videos allow for the demonstration of concepts and hands-on skills in a format that can be repeated and shared. Literature shows that educational videos are most effective when they are intentionally designed with specific learning outcomes and cognitive principles in mind (Fyfield; Amos).

One such principle is the Cognitive Load Theory, which divides mental effort into intrinsic, extraneous, and germane load. Of these, germane load is the mental effort devoted to understanding and integrating

new information into existing knowledge. Educators can support learning by minimizing extraneous distractions and focusing the learner's attention such as segmentation (dividing content into small sections), signaling (highlighting key ideas with on-screen cues), and pacing (Brame). These methods reduce cognitive overload and help learners absorb technical material more effectively.

In summary, the continued growth of the U.S. goat sector presents both exciting opportunities and substantial challenges. The increasing goat population, greater breed diversity, and evolving consumer demands necessitate a renewed emphasis on animal welfare, health management, and public education. As legislative efforts like IP-28 gain traction, it becomes even more crucial to bridge the knowledge gap between livestock producers and the public. Through well-designed instructional content grounded in sound educational theory, we can empower new and experienced producers alike to make informed, ethical, and effective decisions in goat production.

## **Review of Project**

My goal with this project was to create 10 captioned videos to post on YouTube. These videos would be public with the intention of reaching as many viewers as possible. The videos would be on a wide range of subjects from how to show goats to more common topics like trimming hooves and giving injections.

Instead of settling on 10 videos, I decided to break larger segments into more manageable, bite-sized chunks that would be more likely to be viewed. I asked peers how long they would be willing to watch videos for and used the answers to develop my content.

These videos eventually became playlists and the channel will continue to evolve as more people ask questions they want to have video answers on. Long-form videos were edited, captioned, and tagged to make them more accessible to a wider audience. Some were scripted, but the formatting shifted as the style of filming changed.

Although I analyzed 10 videos for the written section of my project, many more than that have been filmed. They have not all yet been posted due to time constraints, but will be in the future. In an effort to attract more viewership, I also posted Shorts from videos I filmed in the past (11 in total). These videos were primarily selected with humor in mind, but some highlighted training or breakthroughs with gentling individual animals.

## Results

For the results, I chose to utilize YouTube analytics to analyze viewership over time. Quantitative data was collected from each video and analyzed graphically in Excel. The number of videos analyzed were capped at 10 for both Shorts and long-form videos, with data collection ending May 1st, 2026.

Across the study period, there were 13666 views for the 20 analyzed Shorts and long-form videos. Views ranged from 9 to 3650 views per video. Tables 1 and 2 show the viewer count as well as the date of each video's release.

Long-form videos demonstrated more sustained viewership over time (Figures 1, 3, and 5). Long-form videos received fewer overall views than Shorts, averaging at 33 views, with the highest at 64 and the lowest at 9.

Interestingly, Shorts were viewed almost immediately upon release, with viewership dropping approximately 48 hours after the video became public (Figures 2, 4, and 6). The average viewership for each Short was 1333. The highest number of views was 3650, with the lowest at 12. 48.3% of viewers stayed to watch the entire clip.

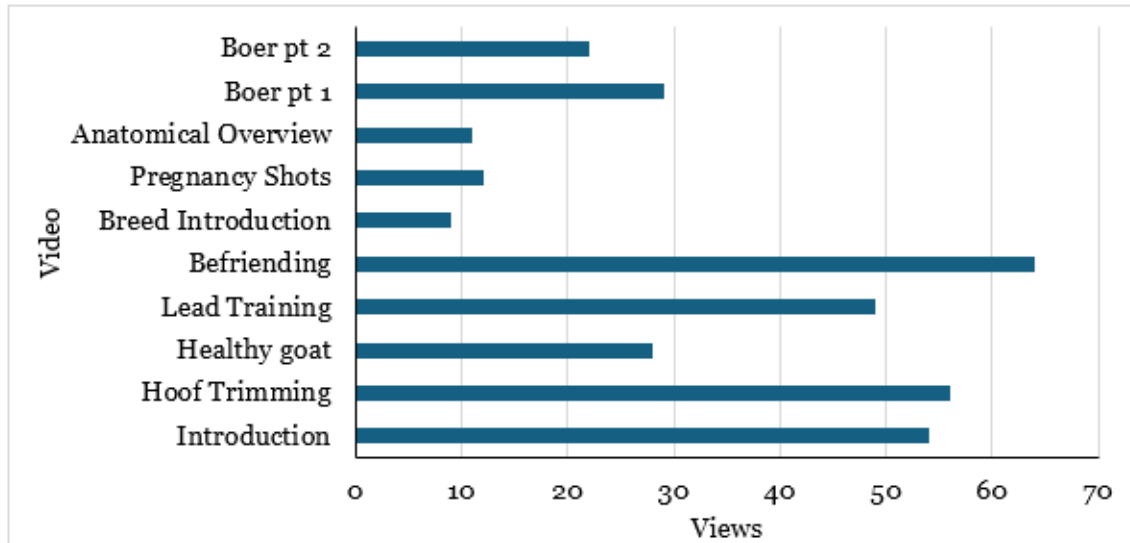
## Figures

| Video | Description                     | Date Posted | Views |
|-------|---------------------------------|-------------|-------|
| 1     | Channel and Thesis Introduction | 9/20/2025   | 54    |
| 2     | Hoof Trimming                   | 11/3/2025   | 56    |
| 3     | Guide to Healthy Goats          | 2/5/2026    | 28    |
| 4     | Lead Training Goats             | 2/16/2026   | 49    |
| 5     | Befriending Goats               | 2/23/2026   | 64    |
| 6     | Beginning Guide to Breeds       | 2/24/2026   | 9     |
| 7     | Pregnancy Injections (pt. 1)    | 3/10/2026   | 12    |
| 8     | Anatomical Overview             | 4/8/2026    | 11    |
| 9     | The Boer Goat Part 1            | 4/13/2026   | 29    |
| 10    | The Boer Goat Part 2            | 4/15/2026   | 22    |

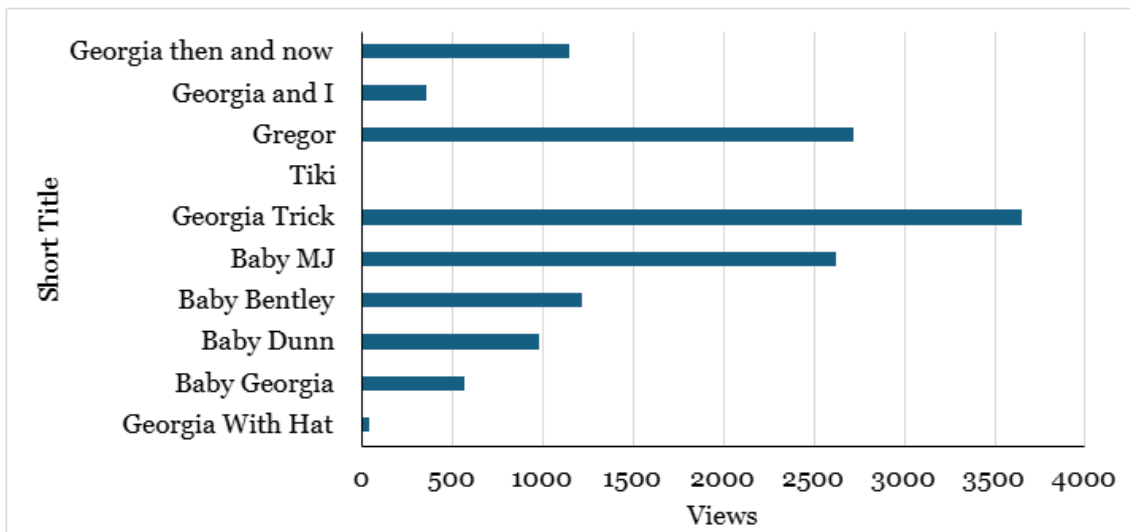
**Table 1.** Long-form videos analyzed in this project and their viewership by date posted

| Short | Description                         | Date Posted | Views |
|-------|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------|
| 1     | Georgia wearing a hat               | 10/4/2025   | 44    |
| 2     | Baby Georgia                        | 10/14/2025  | 566   |
| 3     | Dunn playing on Rosie               | 10/15/2025  | 983   |
| 4     | Bentley giving foot                 | 10/18/2025  | 1220  |
| 5     | MJ in the barn                      | 10/20/2025  | 2628  |
| 6     | Georgia foot trick                  | 10/23/2025  | 3650  |
| 7     | Tiki getting pet for the first time | 10/29/2025  | 12    |
| 8     | Gregor running                      | 11/3/2025   | 2722  |
| 9     | Georgia and I bonding               | 11/7/2025   | 357   |
| 10    | Georgia Then and Now                | 2/25/2026   | 1150  |

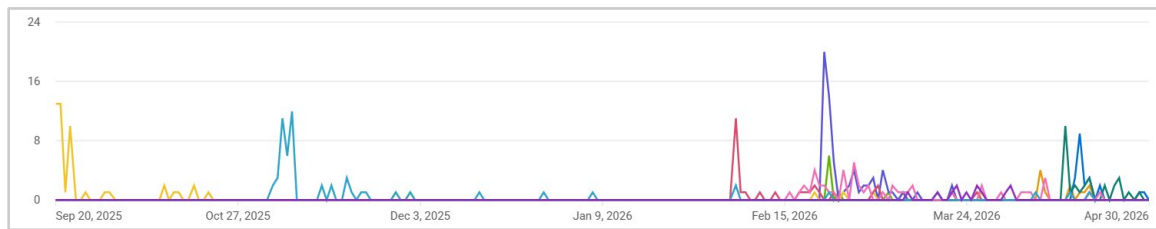
**Table 2.** Shorts analyzed in this project and their viewership by date posted



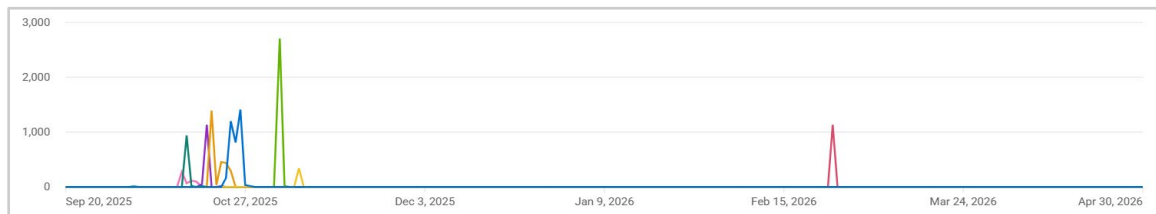
**Figure 1.** Long-form video viewership for each individual video analyzed. Bars represent views for each video.



**Figure 2.** Video viewership for each individual Short analyzed. Bars represent views for each Short.



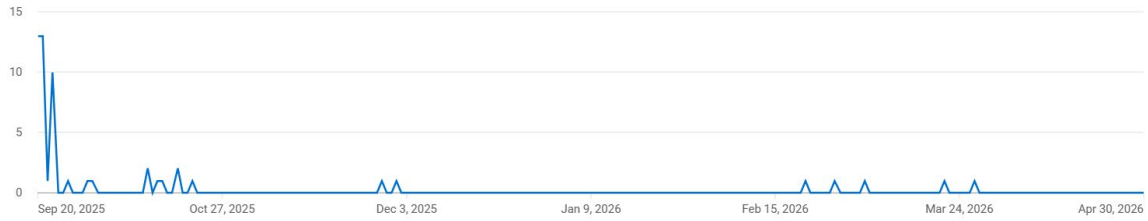
**Figure 3.** Viewership across time for all long-form videos over the lifespan of the channel.



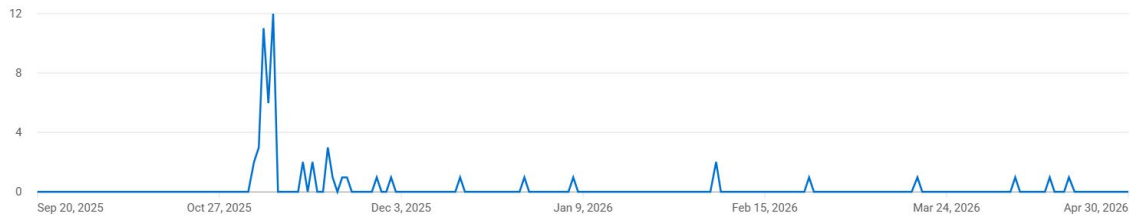
**Figure 4.** Viewership across time for all Shorts over the lifespan of the channel.

## Long-Form Videos

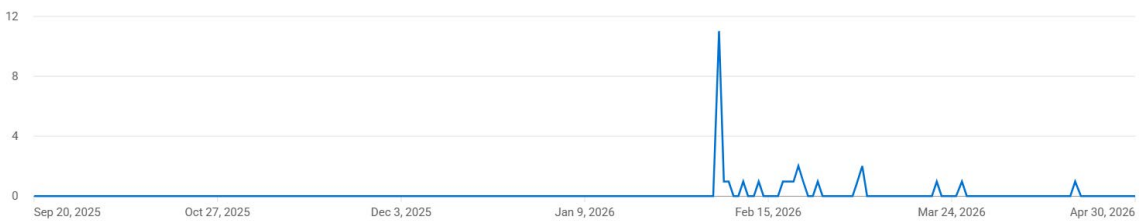
### An Intro to the Series and Meeting the Star



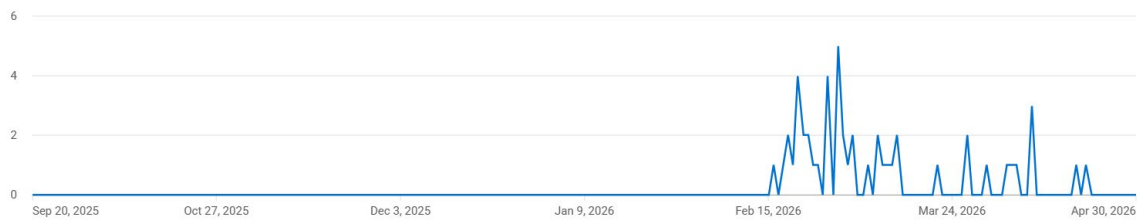
### A Guide to Hoof Trimming



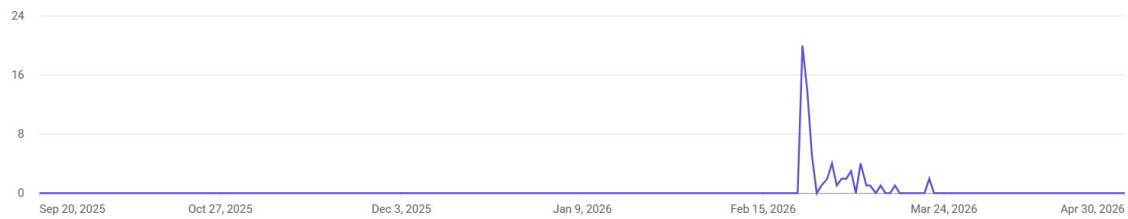
### A Guide to a Healthy Goat



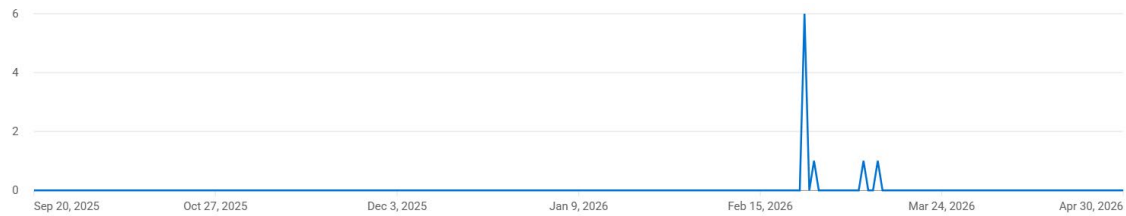
### A Guide to Walking Your Goat on a Lead



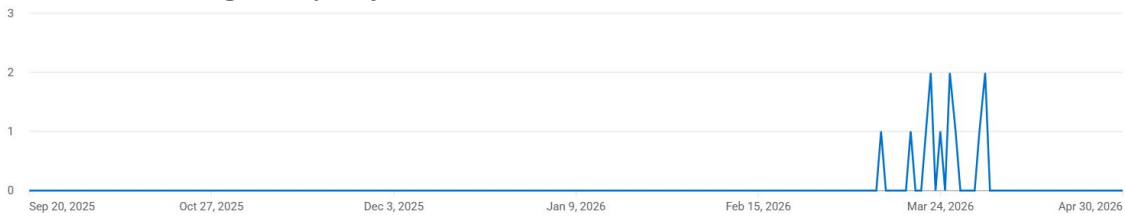
### A Guide to Befriending Goats



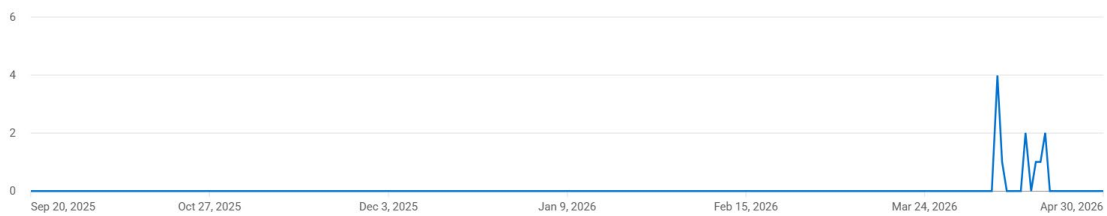
### A Beginning Guide to Breeds



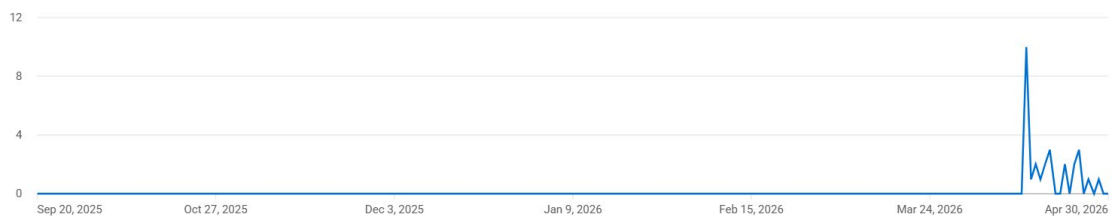
### A Guide to Pregnancy Injections



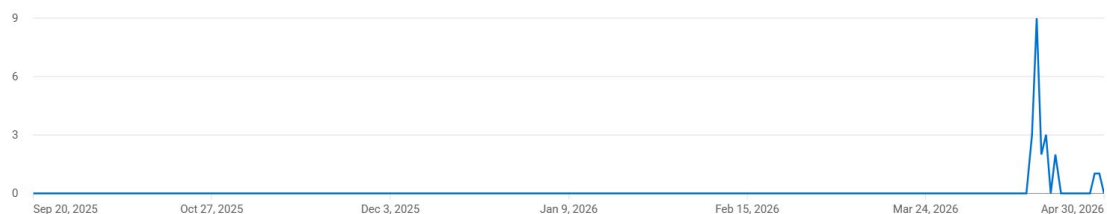
### Anatomical Overview



### The Boer Goat Part 1



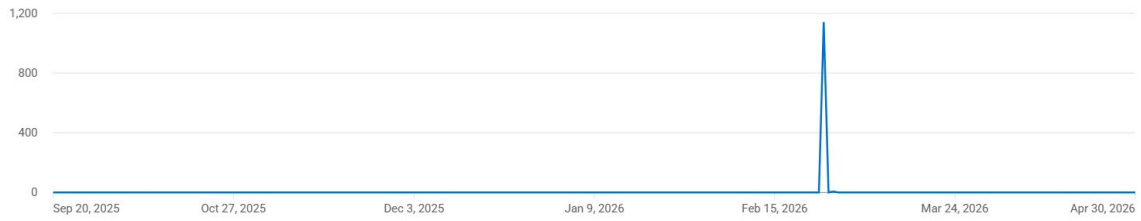
### The Boer Goat Part 2



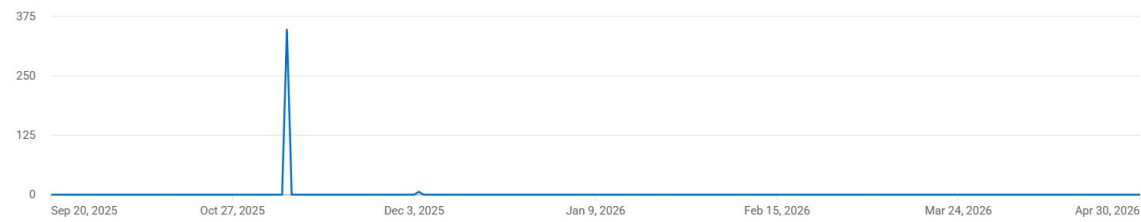
**Figure 5.** Long-form video viewership for each analyzed video over the course of the channel lifespan. The first spike on each graph represents the date the video was posted.

## Shorts

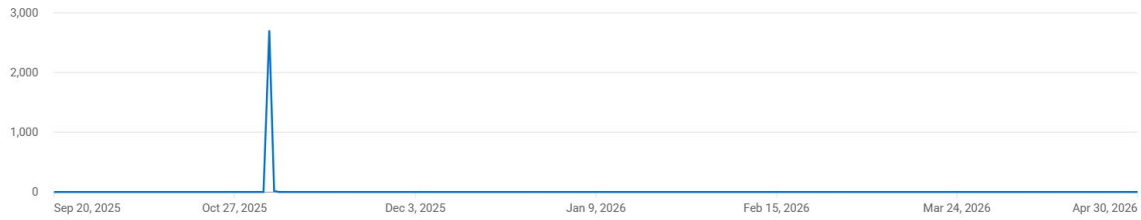
### Georgia then and now



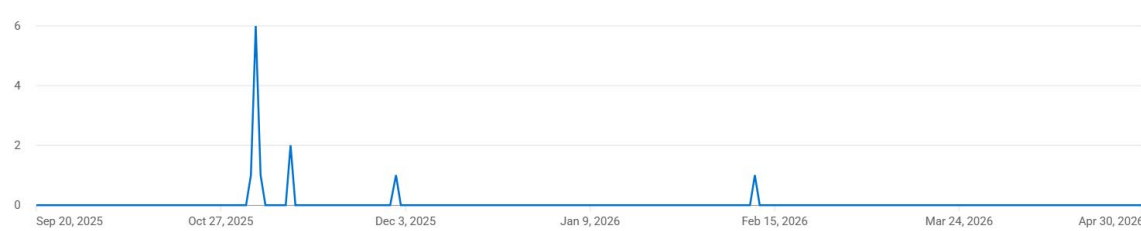
### Georgia and I



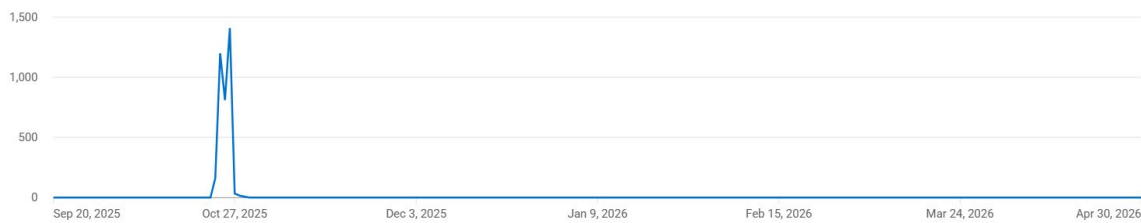
### Gregor



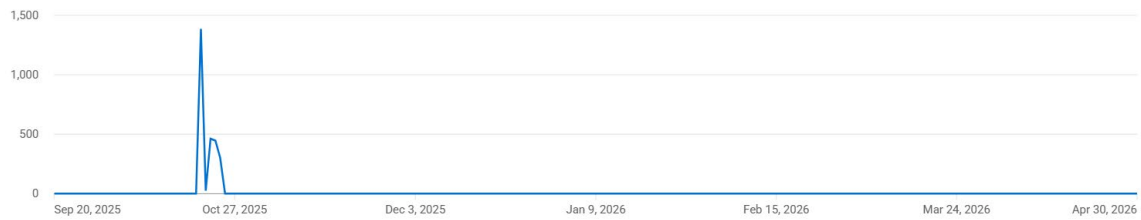
### Tiki



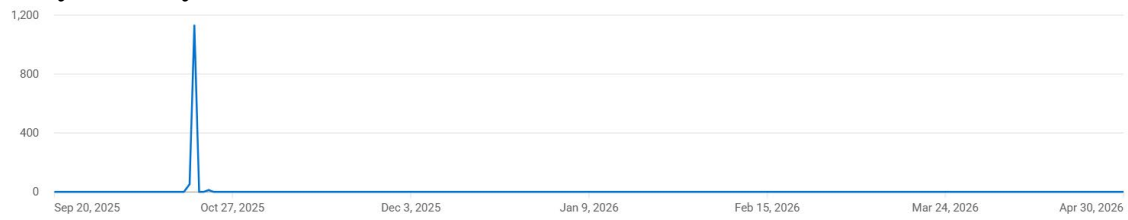
### Georgia Trick



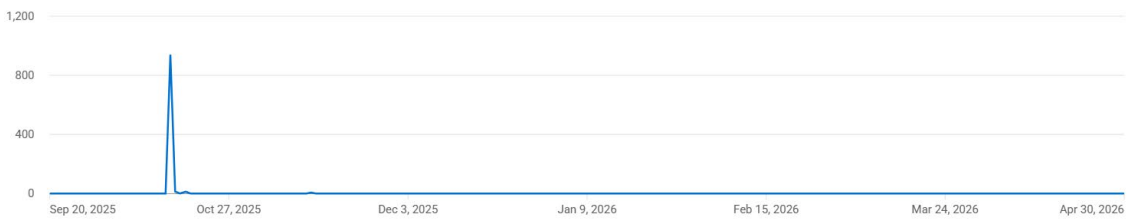
### Baby MJ



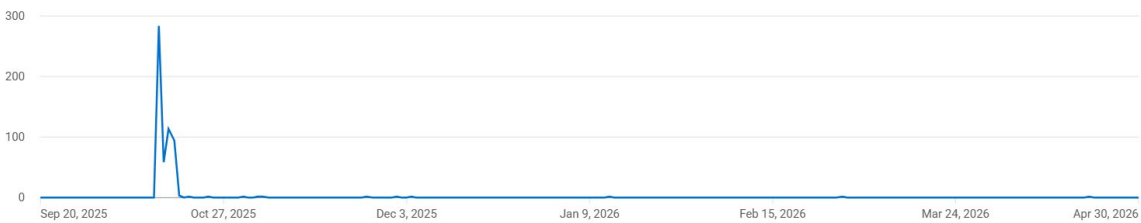
### Baby Bentley



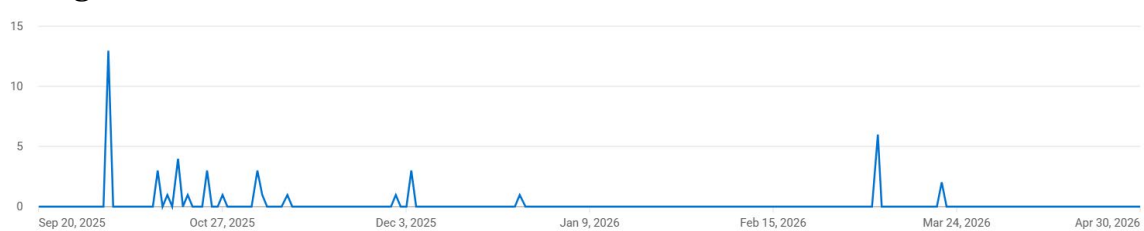
### Baby Dunn



### Baby Georgia



### Georgia With Hat



**Figure 6.** Viewership for each analyzed Short over the course of the channel lifespan. The first spike on each graph represents the date the video was posted.

## **Discussion**

### **Why Videos?**

As mentioned in the literature review, reliance on online resources since COVID-19 have increased. Instructional videos can be shared to the masses, which I determined would have the largest impact on the general public compared to a series of scientific literature review papers.

With a background in public speaking competitions, I determined that filming videos of me presenting the various topics would be easy and feasible to accomplish. I was wrong, but it was a fun process and more engaging for viewers compared to lecturing in a screen capture in front of slides.

### **How Do the Videos Work on YouTube?**

YouTube Shorts are created in a vertical format. These are designed to be enjoyed from a mobile device in small pieces. They are up to 3 minutes in length, with the potential for rapid discovery. They are designed to assist in gaining subscribers, which is how I used them in my project. To select videos, I searched through my archives of funny or cute videos I took in a vertical format. I normally listen to music with my goats, so some videos had to have sound edited out for copyright reasons. These videos are significantly shorter than the informational ones I posted, but drew in a much larger audience.

YouTube videos, or what most people would think when someone says YouTube, are in a horizontal format. These videos are typically longer in length and are designed for more in-depth engagement from viewers. For the purposes of this thesis, I have called them long-form videos to further differentiate them from Shorts. This is the format I selected for my informational videos. The hope is to build a loyal audience of viewers, but also for more informational exposure for individuals searching the platform. Although videos can be up to hours in length, I made my videos 3 minutes and 31 seconds on average. My longest video was 9 minutes and 47 seconds, with the shortest at 1 minute and 59 seconds.

### **Quantification of Results**

When determining the reach of this project, I had to figure out how to quantify the results. Should I go off of impressions, viewership, subscribers, or viewing hours? I could not find the best way to analyze retention from the audience. I cannot read the minds of those watching, even though I can see the average time they spent watching each video. It is a challenging metric to compare when the lengths of the videos were all different.

With the issues with quantifying retention in mind, the best possible way to determine reach became viewership. My philosophy was that just one person watching my video would be someone learning more about an

animal. They could watch a Short for a laugh or watch a video to learn about hoof trimming. This was a perk of having such versatile media.

After graphing the viewership results, it became clear that some math had to be done. How can I compare a Short that gained 3500 views in the span of 48 hours months prior to the project end to a video that was viewed 50 times within a month of project completion. Initially, I planned on dividing the views by the time each video was open for the audience. However, after some analysis, this was not feasible. The viewership over time fails to grasp the dynamic nature of YouTube recommendations and Short success compared to videos.

But, at the height of my analysis struggles, I discovered a feature on YouTube Analytics that allowed me to see each video over time rather than the entire channel. This gave me the upper hand in this arduous task, because I could not show audience retention or adequately explain the viewership over time based on Excel formulas. It saved me from calculator work while still showcasing the impact of the videos.

Figures 1 and 2 examined the viewership for each video. The shorter videos tended to perform better than long-form videos with more content. I also noticed that the breed introduction might have had less views due to a lack of a live goat in the video. The second video regarding Shorts demonstrated that funnier videos had larger view counts over my Shorts that were me bonding with my pets or petting a wild goat for the first time.

This shows the need for more humorous content in Shorts to perform better.

When examining the videos over time, it is clear to see that Shorts perform well immediately, but do not sustain the trend of views. Videos perform better over time and are viewed from searches, but have less views overall.

However, this data analysis primarily exposed the audience trends and viewership factors. The time of day the video was posted, the tags, the length of the video, and other factors can all be attributed to the viewership and audience interaction.

#### **Top 4 Viewership Factors**

Viewership of my channel is small compared to a large proportion of YouTube channels. This is most likely due to a multitude of factors.

However, four main factors became apparent while analyzing the reach of this project.

##### *Promotion and Advertising*

YouTube offers creators the opportunity to advertise content on its platform through paid promotional campaigns. These campaigns can increase a video's visibility and can reach a larger audience than would otherwise be possible through individualized discovery alone. However, because this project was funded entirely through personal resources, I

chose to not utilize paid advertising. Doing so would have increased project costs and potentially skewed viewership data collected during the study.

As a result, the growth of this channel was dependent on passive methods of audience engagement, including search results, recommendations generated by the YouTube algorithm, and word-of-mouth sharing. While this approach likely slowed the growth of the channel, it provided an accurate representation of how educational goat husbandry content performs under typical viewing conditions. The absence of paid promotion demonstrates that the channel was still capable of reaching more than 10,000 viewers through organic engagement alone.

### *Tags*

Tags are descriptive words that can be used to help people find a video. With a complex algorithm like YouTube, using more tags of related topics is more likely to drive traffic to a given video compared to using none at all.

At the same time, using too many tags can also drive viewers away from the content. It is incredibly challenging to know the right way to use tags for different videos, and can explain the Shorts with few views.

It was a large amount of trial and error, but I eventually figured out how to utilize them properly for Shorts. The video tags are still a work in

progress, but I am actively trying to improve my skills in this area for future content.

### *Content*

On YouTube, as mentioned above, there are both short-form and long-form videos. Shorts are designed to be funny or engaging and are viewed in a vertical format. They are intended for scrolling purposes, rather than sitting down to watch an informational or longer video. This is how Shorts tend to go viral quickly compared to other videos. People will scroll through countless Short videos and lose track of time due to the high engagement and cycling of content. This is less achievable when presenting information in the video format.

However, a viewer retention rate of 48.3 percent is significant in Shorts. If someone is disinterested, they can immediately scroll to the next video the algorithm provides. Given the scrolling format of Shorts, the average retention rate metric across YouTube is at 50%. Being able to hit this retention rate without targeted advertisement is impressive. Especially when considering this project is lacking intentionally engaging media targeting a shorter attention span. It is geared to be more informative, which is not typically as successful on the algorithms.

### *Duration*

Duration of a video goes hand in hand with the content. With shorter attention spans, people want to watch videos that are more directly related to their interests or shorter. My shorter long-form videos, like the introduction, the hoof trimming video, and the befriending goats video had a comparatively larger amount of audience engagement. Especially when they are compared to my much longer goat breed overview that had low amounts of viewers.

This could have been attributed to a lack of goats playing while I was speaking, but it is more likely due to the longer duration of the video. When people are choosing a video to watch, they would likely watch 3 5-minute videos rather than one 15 minute video. That is an example not based on my content entirely, but the premise holds true.

### **Implications**

This project analyzed the question, “What can be done to ensure that people treat goats properly and provide the best quality care?” After developing a YouTube series that had over 10,000 views, the answer was clear. Keep making videos and educating others. As I continue educating myself, I should create more videos to impart what I’m learning. Now, whether that will happen is dependent on my course load in podiatry school, but it is an option for future channel growth.

With the number of views given my channel, there is no knowing the behaviors of the people watching me. Are they learning for the use of helping animals, or for their own enjoyment? I will never know the answer. However, as mentioned above, one animal helped is one that may not have been if I had never started this project.

## **Conclusion**

This project examined how online educational outreach can be used to improve goat welfare and public understanding of proper goat care. By developing and analyzing a YouTube channel dedicated to goat husbandry, I was able to evaluate the effectiveness of video-based education as a tool for reaching the agricultural community. Over the course of this project, this channel accumulated more than 10,000 views. This demonstrates the importance of providing accessible educational content to popular platforms. Although the audience behavior was unable to be directly measured, the results suggest that YouTube has the potential to increase awareness of animal welfare topics. This content can connect individuals to educational opportunities and animal husbandry information that may not otherwise be readily accessible.

## **Reflections**

I know now that I could never be an influencer. It is a large amount of work between the time and energy required to be “successful.” I have so much respect for those who choose to pursue lifestyles in film design, but I will only do it as a hobby. It is very enjoyable to share my love of animals with the world, but it will simply be a side-hustle.

## **Challenges**

My breed overview was arguably one of the most challenging to film. I faced a large amount of writer's block and I truly did not wish to learn how to edit videos together. My response? Post part 1, part 2, and even part 3 in some cases for the snippets of video I collected. Towards the end of this project, I came to terms with video editing. After wrestling with a specific short, I learned some basic skills that allowed me to attach two videos together. This new skill became helpful for the leading demonstration and some other Shorts.

My most challenging to write, however, was the pathology segment. There are so many different diseases and conditions. I had started with 5, but the list continued to grow as I thought about conditions I wish I had learned more about prior to getting goats. I spent the most time on these powerpoints to determine the accuracy of the information presented, but it slowly came together into a result I can be proud of.

## **What Skills Did I Gain From This Experience?**

Although I have a strong background in public speaking, I had never intentionally stood in front of a camera to film myself speaking. Normally I would do so to check my speech cadence or timing, not to post it on YouTube for the world to see. Working with filming, video editing, and video captioning, my confidence in my abilities grew. I now know how to

research for a video topic and how to create educational content. The skills gained from this experience can translate into medical education for patients or future students.

### **Next Steps**

In the future, I plan to make more videos as I'm able to during podiatry school. I was hoping to delve more into the more intense pathology or nutrition topics in my videos. As a person fascinated by medicine, these are topics I have researched the most during my time with goats. Even nutrition would have been a wonderful area to make videos on. As I am preparing for continuing my education at the graduate level and simultaneously completing my biology coursework, I was more challenged with time than I would have liked. With these time constraints, I was unable to meet my personal goal of exploring these topics at this time. However, with that said, with the slideshows started and research complete, the stage is set for resuming this channel in the future.

### **Why Does This Thesis Project Matter?**

This thesis project matters because the more views my channel gets, the more people will learn about goats and goat husbandry. People who are looking into purchasing goats for themselves will realize the specific needs of these animals and be in a better starting position than I was when I began this journey.

The idea that over 10,000 people viewed my channel signals that there is a significant need for goat-related education. This could be done by making more Shorts that are educational in the future, but I will likely keep the same setup.

For the future, I hope to post the videos I've already filmed and edited. I have spent a lot of time editing and would love to share more of this project with the world if people wish me to do so. I have not had any comments suggesting content so far, but when that day comes, I will try to meet the needs of individuals in the goat community as best I can.

If I can make more videos, more goats can be helped because their owners will be educated. Goats are known for being resilient and hardy, but people need to know how to help them when they decide to stop acting as such.

This project taught me a plethora of applicable skills I would not have learned otherwise. I learned such amazing things and further developed my research skills. Knowing that I could have helped someone or their animals with this project has been the most rewarding part of this experience.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my amazing friends and loved ones for motivating me to complete this project. The late nights, the coffee runs, and the shared suffering are memories I will never forget.

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It was a long, challenging road, but I am so thankful for completing it.

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