

GOATS AT WORK

Learn how goats help the environment by eating!

Great Grazing

A long, long time ago, ancient herds of grazing animals such as bison, moose, elk, and deer roamed the land and ate grass, plants, and shrubs. They pooped out nutrients, which helped make the soil healthy. As they walked, their hoofs stomped and dug up the soil, which helped new seeds grow. This behaviour helped shape the landscape and plant life of prairies and meadows over and over again for thousands of years.

Back to Nature

Today, many meadows and prairies have been replaced by cities and towns. But experts are finding ways to introduce grazing back into urban green spaces using goats! These animals eat plants, keep the soil healthy, and control invasive species. Munch on to learn more.

Grazers vs. Browsers

Grazers are animals that mostly eat grass. Because grass is short, they eat with their heads down. Browsers are animals that also graze but can move their heads up to reach tall plants and shrubs.

Bison are grazers.



Moose are browsers.



Goats are browsers, too!

City Grass

Many people enjoy spending time in green spaces like public parks. But something has been growing that makes that a little less fun: invasive plants.



Giant hogweed has taken over ditches and streams.



Poison ivy grows around forest edges.



Thistle has invaded roadsides and farmland.



What Are Invasive Plants?

Invasive plants have been spread from another environment and crowd out native species. Plants like giant hogweed, poison ivy, thistle, and buckthorn have taken hold in North America. They grow quickly and take the nutrients meant for native plants.



Targeted Grazing

Gardeners usually use lawn mowers or pesticides to get rid of invasive plants. But goats are another useful tool! Their job is to do something called targeted grazing, where they "mow" unwanted plants by eating them.

Goats to the Rescue!

Invasive plants may sound scary, but goats have special stomachs for eating all sorts of plants. Their stomachs can digest most of the seeds, which means their poop isn't full of seeds that would later grow into problem plants.

Follow the goats to the next page to learn more!

We're off to work!

Let's Go!!



Goats "mow" the grass in Calgary.

GOATS AT WORK

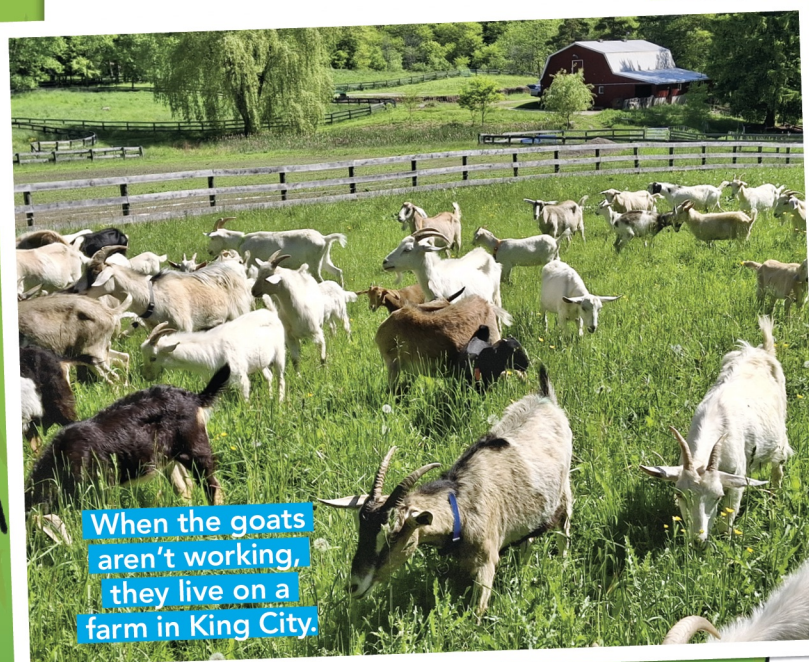
Meet a special herd of goats!

The **Goats in the City** herd is on a mission to gobble up as many invasive plants as possible. Owner Ian Matthews brings his special goats to Ontario cities and towns that need his help with targeted grazing.

Don Valley Brick Works Park in Toronto is one of those places. It's a big park with trails, a meadow, and a wetland right in the city. To help keep the park's grass healthy, the City of Toronto hires Goats in the City to graze this meadow once a year.



Goats in the City owner Ian Matthews.



When the goats aren't working, they live on a farm in King City.

Why Goats are The GOAT at Targeted Grazing:

- ✓ Goats have special stomachs that allow them to digest plants that could hurt other animals.
- ✓ They have special hoofs that let them go into spaces that lawn mowers can't reach easily.
- ✓ Their poop adds nutrients back to the soil and helps native plants grow.
- ✓ Goats love, love, LOVE TO EAT!

Off to Work at the Brick Works!

For two days in June, about 50 goats work in a fenced-off meadow in the park. They can move around safely and pick what they want to eat.



Goats snacking on buckthorn.



Don Valley Brick Works Park in Toronto.

The herd is made up of Kiko goats. They are a large breed that can reach tall trees and bushes.

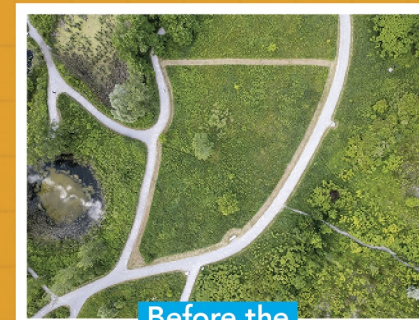


The meadow is like an all-you-can-eat buffet for goats!

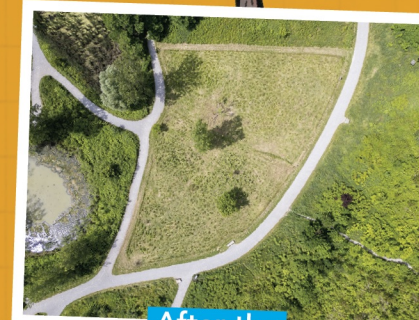
One of the invasive plant species at the park is a shrub called common buckthorn. Goats feed on the leaves and strip off the bark, which destroys it. Bye-bye, buckthorn!

The Results

After two days, the meadow has been grazed and many of the invasive plants have been chomped away. Great job, goats!



Before the targeted graze.



After the targeted graze.