

Goats and Scrub Clearance inc Rhododendron Extracts from Nibblers online discussion group

David B - I thought rhodo was poisonous to all goats! Can you shed any light on this one for GAP please. Is this an exception??

John

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>>> "Welfare Trust" <AB-Welfare-Wildlife-Trust@burials.freemove.co.uk> 26/06/04 >>>
Radio 4 News
Saturday 26 June 2004 c.08:45

Kashmir/Cashmere Goats & Rhododendron

This news report began about local concerns that Kashmir goats are eating rhododendrons. Later, other plants were mentioned such as elder, gorse, stinging nettle, hawthorn and various cultivated plants when the goats get into local gardens.

Eric Medway (who like us is in Harrogate) and may still be the secretary of the Hebridean section of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, does not know of any sheep which will eat rhododendron. As conservationists spend a lot of time, effort and money eradicating rhododendron, it struck me that if these goats really will eat lots of it and assuming they can be contained with adequate fencing, it might be easier to use them to eradicate the plant from some nature reserves.

I assume the news item can be heard again via the BBC's website. Other points I managed to scribble down which may or may not be relevant are:- location is the Great Orme at or near Llandudno on the N. Wales coast; goats were brought to this country during the time of Geo 4th (29.01.1820 - 26.06.1830); Tom Parry may have been the reporter and if with the BBC might be contacted via tom.parry@bbc.co.uk a tentative address to which I've copied this email; those interviewed were Lionel Phillips who owns a local guest house and Sylvia Barret a local councillor.

John Barker alias John Bradfield.
Harrogate Trust for Wildlife Protection.
AB Welfare & Wildlife Trust.

Copies:-

Tom Parry (as above) who may have contact details of significant people in the Llandudno area;
English Nature HQ which may have staff specialising in the eradication of rhododendron and will be able to forward a copy of this email to EN's nearest local office, where staff may know whether these goats do have the potential to help manage nature reserves etc..

John

Feral goats sometimes do eat *Rhododendron ponticum*. When they do they are then reported to produce a green vomit (Greig 1969, MSc, University of Edinburgh). I would have serious welfare reservations about forcing goats to eat this species. Goats eat a variety of species and plant types - they are continually trying new plants and sometimes try *Rhododendron ponticum* leaves. They cannot be forced to eat a monoculture of anything and be expected to thrive. Forcing them to feed solely on a species that is toxic to them surely infringes animal welfare guidelines and laws?

David

Dr. David J. Bullock
Nature Conservation Adviser,
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