

Fenland Goatkeepers and Smallholders Club

Website Membership application form

Subscriptions due 31st January

Please send this form, with your subscription or completed standing order form to: Emma Durston, Longlands, 279 Broadgate, Sutton St Edmund, Spalding, Lincs, PE12 0LT.

£10.00 Membership S.O. form enclosed *(Please tick as appropriate)*

Name(s)

Address:

.....

Tel: Fax:

E-mail Date:

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Standing Order Form

If you wish to pay by standing order, please complete this form and forward with the above to the Treasurer.

To (name and address of your bank).....

.....

Please debit Account No: Sort Code

Account Name

Debit Amount £..... payable immediately and thereafter annually on the 31st January

to be credited to Barclays Bank plc, King's Lynn Branch Sort Code: 204665
Account No: 50669377 Account Name: Fenland Goatkeepers & Smallholders Club

Signature Date:

Fenland Goatkeepers & Smallholders Club



www.fgsc.org.uk

**FENLAND GOATKEEPERS &
SMALLHOLDERS CLUB**

OFFICERS

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Customs

For new initiates the most daunting time is the first club meeting. Dare you go through the door? What will you find? Will they be friendly? Basically it depends on who remembers to turn up, what the lecture is about and what's in the raffle. But there are a few customs and practises that should be observed:-

Don't expect too much of your first meeting, the established members will be as terrified of you as you are of them. The hierarchy of the club is a bit draconian, any member thought to have frightened a new member away is punished by being made to organise the raffle or recruit next month's speaker. So be kind to people.

Do not heckle the speaker. You will get your chance to "put them right" at the next meeting, when they're not there to defend themselves. We find this cuts down the number of arguments (only 'cuts down' as every other member would do it a different way and it won't be the same as you or anybody else)

At tea time DO NOT tell the lady who makes the cakes how good they are. If she asks just say "they're OK" or "not bad" like everybody else. The fear is that if she ever found out that we liked the cakes she'd put the price up.

Chair stacker is a very high office within the club do not be tempted to help unless you have been a member for at least thirty years.

Don't leave first, people will talk about you.

I hope this little piece encourages you to join our happy throng. What have you got to lose? If all else fails you could dine out for years on "*How I became a smallholder and survived*"

Mind of course that if you're talking cows they need to have one calf a year to continue milk production. In ten year's time you could have one milk cow and ten hungry bulls making a total disaster of your herbaceous borders. And because you're that caring you wouldn't have them castrated (notice I didn't use a "nice" word like "seen to" or "done") so they'd be mounting (shagging) the postman's van most of the day. At least it would keep them off the cat.

Taking it to... Here we have a problem, the phrase has two meanings. One as in taking the goat/sheep/bullock to the abattoir the other as in taking a female to be mated. If you're doing a favour for a friend it pays to ask first.

Doing This is a short word with much meaning. Doing basically means faring as in "how are your sheep doing?" The depth of the inquiry is masked by the simplicity of the phrase what is really being asked for is an in depth analysis of not only the health of the animals in question but what methods are being used, what's gone wrong, what's gone right and how much did the vet cost to convert the wrong to a right. NEVER ask a club member a question containing this word just after you've eaten, some members are not past a bit of home pathology.

Committee Meeting It is best to avoid this subject. The inner sanctum of the club is held in very mysterious circumstances. I personally attended (OK so I hid in a sideboard) one of these meetings, in an effort to report to the world the truth on how the subs are spent. I still take the tablets but at least the blue elephants have gone away.

Sanity This word has no relevance to goat club activities.

Goatholder This term was coined to describe members of the club. It sums up the fact that no member in fact considers them self the owner of any animal or land, we just look after them. This is not meant to be sentimental just that old man nature can be so bone headedly cussed on occasion that we realise that the "simple life" is quite the opposite. We do not have the audacity to say that we "keep" goats just that we hold onto them as best we can.

Fenland Goatkeepers & Smallholders Club - the Facts

The Fenland Goatkeepers and Smallholders Club is a practical and social club which forms a network of families who can offer each other advice, support and help and which also facilitates the exchange of produce, skills and ideas. The Club holds monthly meetings, with speakers on different topics and also publishes a bimonthly magazine which is packed with informative and humorous articles, news, views and advertisements.

The Club was originally started, as a goatkeepers society, in the early 1970's, but as fashions changed and goats declined in popularity the membership dropped to only 27. In October 1994 the Club was transformed into the more general smallholders group it is today. Since then the membership has grown to over 150 families spread throughout East Anglia and the East Midlands.

The Club is still centred around Wisbech and the winter programme of meetings takes place in West Walton Village hall, on the last Sunday of every month, starting at 2.30pm. Meetings are largely social in nature, although wedged in between the gossip and the wonderful home-made cakes, there is usually a speaker or demonstration. Summer meetings are held on different members' smallholdings and offer the chance to learn from other members' ideas.

Most of the members run their holdings as a hobby with the added bonus of producing much of their own food. However, some are much more commercial and rely on their produce to make a living.

Club members keep a variety of livestock, including sheep, goats, pigs, cattle, horses, donkeys and deer as well as bees for honey and all types of poultry and fowl. Most members also grow their own vegetables and fruit. Many have practical skills from building and electrical work to spinning and rug making.

As the membership broadens both in area and range of interests, we aim to respond to the membership's needs and interests to maintain a lively and vibrant Club.

Fenland Goatkeepers & Smallholders Club

- Why You Should Join

If you're reading this leaflet it's probably for one of three reasons:

- 1) You're bored witless or;
- 2) You're sitting in a dentist's waiting room and you hope this will take your mind of the unspeakable torment you're about to undergo (sorry shan't mention it again) or;
- 3) You bought this mag at an open day or exhibition because you're interested in smallholding, animals or the "GOOD LIFE" and may even be considering joining our club.

It's the group 3)ers that this article is meant for but the rest of you can read along until something better comes along (or in the case of the group 2)ers worse(sorry)).

Before you consider shelling out your hard earned readies I think you should know what you're in for.

Now don't get me wrong, the members of our club are all hard working honest souls who wouldn't harm a fly, mostly. And to join our ranks is possibly the best move you could make, whether you be the owner of a 1000 head, industrial pig unit or an armchair gardener with a window box. But you must be prepared for the worse.

Take that phrase "The Good Life" as any one whose been around a while will know this refers to a 70's sitcom about a couple who drop out of the rat race and turn their suburban garden into an oasis of self sufficiency. A wacky time is had by all mainly at the expense of the next door neighbours. It is best not to mention this programme in front of goat clubbers they tend to break into a four hour lecture which invariably starts "Of course that's all very well but the reality is....."

Now I'm not saying that smallholders have no sense of humour (I like living in the area) but for people who make their own arrangement viz the food chain certain things are repositioned in the order of acceptabil-

ity. Take, for instance, animals. Any member who was/is/thinks about being cruel or causing unnecessary pain to an animal, be it mice or cow, is immediately shunned or lynched (dependant on how long the evenings stay light). But on the other hand animals that have been trusted friends for years can be slaughtered, frozen and eaten within the week, if there is a drop in efficiency or the VAT on fags goes up (mice are usually exempt from this proviso).

Glossary

Perhaps it is necessary at this point to look at a glossary of some of the more frequently used terms and phrases, if only to save confusion at a later date:

Having a go at..... as in having a go at pigs. This phrase is used to describe the early stage of a smallholders foray into a new venture. It is usually used to start a conversation with other club members to elicit advice and suggestions. The vagueness of the statement is intentional as to actually ask for advice will end up with everybody in the country who knows anything however remote about the subject in question either telephoning or turning up on your doorstep. The advice, equipment and animals, that would follow these initial contacts, would be mountainous. Smallholders are very helpful, generous people who just love to help (see "sanity" below) the only problem is that all the advice would be contradictory. Smallholders come from many backgrounds from strict "Organics" to people who'd give their old mum a drop of weed killer for a cough. So you must be careful.

Put it in the freezer/pot at the level you're about to join the food chain there is absolutely no room for sentimentality. If you keep animals for food or milk there is no way you can avoid what those nice chaps in the military term "collateral damage". You may not want to harm any animal but if you're going to eat them you've got to kill them first (there's laws about this sort of thing). So you're a vegetarian, but if you want to have your own milk then the cow or goat will have to have young to stimulate the production of milk. OK so if the calf/kid is a little girl you can keep it of maybe sell it as a milker. But what if it's a little boy? Are you going to feed water and shelter him for the next ten years for no return? Bearing in