



## **Leave No Trace Ethics for Packgoats**

Pack stock of all kinds have played a role over the years in the development, maintenance, and enjoyment of our recreational areas. Preserving that traditional privilege depends in part on how we manage our animals. It is important to know and follow rules regarding pack stock use on the public lands we visit. In addition, there are matters of trail behavior and courtesy, as well as in-camp practices that will help maintain the image of visitors who use pack stock as good citizens in the backcountry. It is the responsibility of those visitors to minimize the impact of their animals on the environment — to ensure that they Leave No Trace.

Packgoats, like llamas, have soft/light hooves that spread out when they walk, allowing their impact to be minimal. Although goats have been used as packstock for thousands of years in Asia and Europe, their use as recreational packstock is relatively new.

## **Leave No Trace Guidelines for Packgoats:**

### **Plan Ahead and Prepare Before You Go:**

- The more goats you take; the more impact they may leave. Select equipment and food so as to minimize the number of goats needed to support your trip
- Contact local land management agencies for the areas you wish to visit to learn about current trail conditions and visitor use regulations. In particular, find out about any restrictions on stock use or numbers, grazing, campfires, group size limitations, and trail closures.
- When selecting animals for your pack string, remember that calm animals have the lowest impact. It is always wise to see what other trail users are allowed on the trail so you are aware of any possible encounters. Consider leaving goats at home who tend to become agitated or disruptive around other goats or pack animals.
- Prepare for several contingencies in terms of grazing conditions. Find out if open grazing is allowed. Unless you know there is adequate forage to feed your animals without overgrazing, take supplemental feed. Take only pelletized feed or processed grain, and follow weed-free feed rules. Try any supplemental before the trip to

ensure that your animals will eat it in the backcountry. If you take hay for the trailhead, use only certified weed-free hay.

- Goat fur can provide weed seeds a ready host. Grooming your pack goats at home just before loading them and making sure your truck or trailer is free of hay and seeds will help guard against carrying weeds into the backcountry. Advance grooming will also reduce the amount needed at the trailhead.

### **On the trail:**

- Walk single file on narrow trails to avoid trampling vegetation and widening trails. Goats should follow their handler, also staying on the trail. Do not allow packgoats to shortcut trails on switchbacks. Stay on steps on steep trails where they are provided.
- Be aware of your surroundings on the trail to help avoid unfortunate encounters with wildlife or other trail users. Always be sure to yield to other visitors when using packgoats by stepping to the side of the trail. When encountering groups with larger pack stock ask the lead rider where you and your string should stand. Do your best to keep a safe distance between you and other stock users on the trail. Packgoats should use stock trails when available.
- During rest breaks, step off the trail onto a durable surface (e.g., dry grass, rock, gravel, or sand) and give a verbal announcement to approaching groups with pack stock.
- When traveling where there is no trail, spread out and take different paths to disperse your impact. Do not travel single file. Stay out of wet areas or sensitive areas.
- While on the trail, water your goats at an established ford or low, rocky or gravelly spot in the bank to avoid doing damage to either fragile vegetation or stream bank integrity.
- Kick dung off the trail – whether from your animals or other stock that passed before you.
- Prevent goats from defecating in water. If crossing a stream or river, stop and allow goats the opportunity to drink before entering the water and then once you begin across, proceed directly and prevent them from stopping. Another strategy is to lead goats into water briefly and then return them immediately to the near bank. Frequently goats will then relieve themselves, after which the crossing can be made without incident.

## **In Camp:**

- In a frontcountry setting always use stock or horse campgrounds. When camping outside of developed campgrounds, select a campsite with a safe and unobtrusive area to highline/ground tether the goats. Be sure that your camp and the area where goats are tied is at least 200 ft. from water sources.
- The use of a highline or ground tether will keep goats from eating and damaging trees around camp. This may also keep goats from browsing around camp, leaving the area less impacted and more pristine look for future visitors. Use of a prusik knot will allow goats to move along the line without being able to get to trees or get tangled with other goats. For your highline, select a tree that is at least 8 inches in diameter. Protect the tree trunk by using a wide nylon strapping or tree saver wrap.
- If allowed, be sure to take goats 200 ft. or more away from camp to browse. Do your best to disperse goats in different areas around camp for browsing to reduce impacts on ground vegetation.
- At a lunch break or campsite, water should be brought to goats. Collapsible plastic buckets are lightweight and easy to have handy. If you leave small containers near individual goats for an extended period, be sure to fasten them to something (e.g., a tent stake) so that they do not blow away and become litter.
- Always be sure to leave your camp better than you found it.

Please note that this document includes only information specifically relating to minimizing the impact of packgoats. Leave No Trace principles and practices that apply to other types of outdoor recreation are available from the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics: [www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org) or 1.800.332.4100

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