

The Goat Grazing Bible

The pocket guide to targeted grazing — the animals, the plants, the fire science, the law, and the money. Ten chapters, no fluff.

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Ebook edition — July 2026. The full living guide with sources lives at rentagoat.com/goat-grazing-bible

1. What targeted grazing actually is

Targeted grazing ("prescribed grazing" in law and grant programs) is the deliberate use of livestock — matched by species, timing, and intensity — to hit a defined vegetation goal: fuel reduction, brush clearing, invasive control, defensible space. It's ancient practice made newly official: California's SB 675 (2024) wrote it into fire-prevention law, NRCS keeps a federal practice standard, and fire agencies from LA County to Laguna Beach run their own herds. It earned that status by solving a modern problem: enormous amounts of fuel grow where machines can't work, chemicals can't touch, and crews can't affordably clear.

Go deeper: rentagoat.com/glossary

2. The animals: goats, sheep, and the mixed herd

The most important fact in this guide: goats and sheep eat different landscapes. Goats browse — heads up, brush and vines to six feet, sure-footed on impossible slopes. Sheep graze — heads down, mowing grass low and even. Grass, sheep; brush, goats; both (most properties), a mixed herd. Around them: guardian dogs against predators, electric netting for containment, herders adjusting daily. The animals are the engine; the management is the machine.

Go deeper: rentagoat.com/resources/sheep-or-goats-for-grazing

3. What they eat (and won't)

Goats preferentially eat the plants humans struggle with most: poison oak/ivy/sumac (urushiol doesn't affect them), blackberry with the thorns, kudzu, English ivy, broom, thistle, starthistle (fatal to horses, safe for goats), pampas, arundo. Honest limits: no trees or stumps; some plants (oleander, azalea, hemlock) are toxic to goats, so projects start with a hazard survey; and everything regrows — invasive control means repeat passes that drain roots and seed banks, not one heroic clearing.

Go deeper: rentagoat.com/plants — 18 plants, one honest verdict each

4. Grazing and wildfire: what the science says

Grazing doesn't prevent wildfire — nothing does. It reduces the fine fuels that carry flame and the ladder fuels that lift it into canopies; peer-reviewed work (iForest 2014, Fire Ecology 2021) supports it as an effective, low-impact treatment used alongside structure hardening. The famous proof: 500 goats grazed a buffer around the Reagan Library in May 2019; in October the Easy Fire surrounded it, and firefighters credited the grazed line. Fuel breaks don't stop fires — they give firefighters the ground and time to stop them.

Go deeper: rentagoat.com/resources/do-goats-prevent-wildfires

5. The law, the insurance, and the money

California made fuel management an obligation: PRC 4291's inspected 100-foot defensible space, 2025 hazard maps adding 1.4M acres to high-severity zones, Zone 0 ember rules incoming — and insurers enforcing it all fastest, with the FAIR Plan past 680,000 policies and mandatory mitigation discounts under Safer from Wildfires. Money flows back too: CAL FIRE grants explicitly fund prescribed grazing, SB 675 built a grazing grant pathway, NRCS EQIP cost-shares it. Fuel reduction is required, discounted, and subsidized at once.

Go deeper: rentagoat.com/resources/grants-to-pay-for-goat-grazing

6. How a project actually runs

Assessment (photos or site walk: vegetation, acreage, terrain, access, water, toxic plants) → mobilization (animals, netting, water, dogs by trailer) → cell grazing (fenced sections sized for thorough results, herder checks daily, fence moves when each cell hits standard) → demobilization. Days to weeks depending on density. What's left: grazed land and dry-pellet fertilizer. No slash, no hauling, no dump fees. Your job: access, ideally water, and not feeding the goats snacks.

Go deeper: rentagoat.com/how-it-works

7. What it costs and why

Price = mobilization + goat-days: total vegetation volume, cell layout, logistics. The key economics: terrain difficulty barely moves a grazing bid — goats climb free, eat poison oak without hazard pay, dispose of vegetation internally — while difficulty inflates every crew and machine bid. So grazing wins on steep/dense/hazardous ground, loses on small flat lawns. Per-acre quotes sight-unseen are guesses; density varies 10x between neighbors. Real numbers come from photos, free.

Go deeper: rentagoat.com/cost

8. Who uses grazing — the proof

Google (Mountain View, 2009, 200 goats). LA County Fire and Laguna Beach FD — official programs. Santa Rosa, on city open space. SoCalGas, around facilities. O'Hare Airport. National laboratories, as a documented herbicide alternative. Railroads, against kudzu. And 113,000+ sheep on ~129,000 acres of U.S. solar farms (NREL/ASGA census). Roughly a third of BLM fuel-treatment acres in California involve grazing. When fire marshals and procurement departments keep buying it for decades, the vetting is done.

Go deeper: rentagoat.com/resources/who-rents-goats-big-brands

9. Hire a herd or run your own?

Landowners: hire. A working herd is daily husbandry — care, fencing, water, predators, veterinary knowledge, and somewhere to live the other fifty weeks. Two backyard goats will not clear your hillside; they'll clear your roses and scream about it. For the genuinely committed, targeted grazing is a real trade — operators can join our provider network, and crews are perennially hiring.

Go deeper: rentagoat.com/providers · rentagoat.com/careers

10. Where to start

Homeowners: the two-minute assessment at rentagoat.com/property-assessment, or the free defensible-space checklist. HOAs and agencies: the board packet and RFP guide at rentagoat.com/resources/buyer-kits. Everyone else: the guide library goes as deep as you want — and if you're staring at a brushy hillside right now, send photos. The estimate is free, and the goats are ready.

Go deeper: rentagoat.com/contact

The living edition — with sources on every claim — lives at rentagoat.com/goat-grazing-bible

Free estimates for California properties: 1-858-751-GOAT · info@rentagoat.com