

Working Goats Permit

Goats are used throughout Minnesota to help with long-term management of invasive weed and tree species. At least once a herd of working goats was used in Sunfish Lake to help clear and control buckthorn on a property near the Windy Hill area. To an outside observer, it appears that the goats successfully munched down the invasive weeds and left the valuable mature native trees. This was before we really had a formal permit for working goats.

As of 2026 we have a permit for working goats and other working animals and it is easily found on the City website in the section called Permits and Forms. Contact the City Forester for additional information, completing the permit, administrative approval, and paying the permit fee (currently \$50.00).

Goats working on an invasive weed species project are not pets. They are very good at eating weeds, small trees, brush and when those have been consumed, they will move to larger trees even begin chewing the bark off large trees. Goats are typically hired as part of a long-term buckthorn management plan, and they can be a very effective. Usually, goats are used two or three times over two or three years to strongly suppress small buckthorn sapling regeneration. When a herd of goats is hired, the area being worked is defined by electrified fencing to contain and focus the goats toward eating invasive species. There is signage cautioning neighbors that working goats are not pets and identifying the electrified fencing. When the goats finish in one fenced area, they may be moved into an adjacent area to continue the project. Goats are usually on site for one to two weeks depending on the size of project area and number of goats in the herd. Sheep are not used for buckthorn suppression because they prefer eating grasses.

Again: working goats are not pets. A pet goat is not a working goat. A pet goat requires substantial hands-on care, and would not likely be trained to consume invasive vegetation. Also, a pet goat requires a different permit and would require the City Council's approval. Working goats are fun to watch and I hope that they will be used more with ongoing invasive species management projects. More information and the names of several working goat operations can be found by Googling: "working goats MN."