



International Journal of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry



ISSN: 2456-2912

NAAS Rating (2026): 4.61

VET 2026; SP-11(9): 87-91

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www.veterinarypaper.com

Received: 02-07-2026

Accepted: 09-08-2026

Niteesh Patel BN

Senior Veterinary Officer,
Department of AH & VS, Govt.
of Karnataka, Karnataka, India

Guruprasad R

Associate Professor & Head,
Department of LPM, Veterinary
College, Hassan, KVAFSU,
Karnataka, India

Jaishankar N

Professor, Veterinary College,
Bengaluru, KVAFSU,
Karnataka, India

Jagadeeswary V

Professor, Veterinary College,
Bengaluru, KVAFSU,
Karnataka, India

Corresponding Author:

Guruprasad R

Associate Professor & Head,
Department of LPM, Veterinary
College, Hassan, KVAFSU,
Karnataka, India

Assessment of goat marketing systems and practices in the southern transition zone of Hassan district, Karnataka

Niteesh Patel BN, Guruprasad R, Jaishankar N and Jagadeeswary V

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.22271/veterinary.2026.v11.i9Sb.3767>

Abstract

This study investigates goat marketing practices in Arakalagodu taluk, situated in the Southern Transition Zone of Hassan district, Karnataka, where goats constitute 35.81% of the total livestock population. A total of 100 goat farmers were involved to analyse the marketing systems, price determination, and sale patterns of goats. Results revealed that the primary drivers for goat sales were domestic financial needs (92%), loan repayments (89%), and surplus stock management (70%). The majority of farmers (57%) determined prices based on both market demand and body condition, indicating an informal pricing system. Direct sale to consumers was the most common marketing channel (58%), often leading to non-remunerative pricing. Goats were predominantly sold between 6 to 12 months of age (59%). Most farmers accessed nearby markets within 10 km based on the cost-effectiveness and availability of vehicles. The study highlights significant gaps in marketing infrastructure, price transparency, and organized sale systems. Findings emphasize the need for improved market literacy, structured marketing channels, and farmer cooperatives to enhance profitability and reduce dependency on intermediaries. Addressing these issues is essential for promoting sustainable goat farming and increasing income security for smallholder farmers in the region.

Keywords: Arakalagodu, goat, Hassan, marketing

Introduction

Goat is often referred to as the “poor man’s cow” and a form of “movable wealth” for nomadic communities, small and marginal farmers, and landless labourers due to its significant contribution to household nutrition security, milk and meat production, and rural livelihoods. Goats are particularly well-suited to resource-poor settings because of their adaptability to harsh environmental conditions, resilience during prolonged droughts, low maintenance costs, small body size, high fertility, short gestation period, efficient feed conversion, and minimal capital investment requirements. Consequently, goat rearing has been traditionally practiced across India as a sustainable livelihood option^[1]. However, the marketing of goats remains a critical challenge in the value chain. The profitability of goat farming largely depends on the effective sale of productive stock, which is often hindered by unorganized marketing practices, lack of price transparency, and absence of scientific valuation mechanisms. Farmers frequently encounter non-remunerative prices for their animals, undermining the economic viability of goat rearing. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of existing goat marketing systems and practices is essential to inform evidence-based policy interventions and promote efficient husbandry practices in the Southern Transition Zone of Karnataka.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in Arakalagodu taluk, located in the Southern Transition Zone (STZ) of Hassan district, Karnataka, which represents one of the four distinct agro-climatic zones of the district. This region is characterized by a substantial goat-rearing population, with goats accounting for 35.81% of the total livestock in the area. Given the direct influence of agro-climatic conditions on livestock production systems, Arakalagodu

taluk was purposively selected as the study area. Administratively, Arakalagodu taluk is divided into five revenue blocks known as 'hoblis'. From these, four representative villages were randomly selected to capture variability in goat husbandry practices across the region. Within each selected village, five goat farmers maintaining a minimum flock size of 20 goats were chosen using a simple random sampling technique. This yielded a total sample size of 100 goat farmers for the study.

Data were collected using a structured interview schedule developed specifically for this study. The schedule was pre-tested for validity and reliability to ensure clarity, consistency, and practical applicability. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to gather comprehensive information on various aspects of goat husbandry and marketing practices followed by the respondents. The collected data were systematically compiled using Microsoft Excel and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means were employed to interpret the husbandry and marketing practices among the goat farmers in the study area.

Results and Discussion

Profitability in goat farming is closely associated with the effective sale of productive animals and profitability is influenced by multiple factors [1-5, 8]. In the present study, the reasons for the sale of goats and associated marketing strategies adopted by farmers in the Southern Transition Zone of Hassan district were investigated. As shown in Table 1, the primary reasons for the sale of goats included the need to meet domestic financial requirements (92%), loan repayment (89%), management of surplus flock size (70%), and other reasons such as fodder scarcity and disposal of unproductive animals (63%). These findings indicate that economic necessity¹¹ and flock management are the principal drivers of

goat sales in the study area.

The pricing of goats was influenced by multiple factors⁷. A majority of farmers (57%) reported that the price was determined based on both market demand and body condition of the animal. In contrast, 26% of the farmers relied solely on market demand, while 17% determined the price based only on body condition. This highlights the informal and variable nature of pricing in the region's goat markets. Regarding the marketing channels, the most commonly adopted was the direct sale from producer to consumer (58%), followed by producer–middlemen–consumer (31%), producer–middlemen–wholesaler–retailer (14%), and producer–retailer (12%). This indicates a mix of direct and intermediary-based marketing routes, with a preference for minimizing intermediaries where possible [2].

The study also examined the seasonality of goat trade. The preferred period for purchase was between January and March (63%), followed by April to June (37%). Conversely, the optimal period for sale, as perceived by farmers, was during October to December (79%), followed by August to September (21%). These trends are likely influenced by climatic conditions, festival demand, and fodder availability. In terms of transportation, 64% of the farmers reported travelling less than 10 km to market their goats, while 36% travelled a distance of about 10–20 km.

The modes of transport used included three-wheelers/autos (62%), two-wheelers (21%), and jeeps/trucks (17%), indicating reliance on locally available and cost-effective transportation methods. Age at sale was another parameter of interest. The majority of goats (59%) were sold between 6 to 12 months of age, while 27% were sold at less than 6 months, and the remaining 14% at more than 12 months. This age preference aligns with economic goals of optimizing return on investment and reducing maintenance costs.

Table 1: Goat Marketing practices adopted by goat farmers

Sr. No.	Characteristic	Respondent (N=100)	
		Number	Percentage
Reason for sale			
Need of cash for domestic purpose			
1	Yes	92	92%
2	No	8	8%
To repay loan			
1	Yes	11	11%
2	No	89	89%
Surplus animals			
1	Yes	30	30%
2	No	70	70%
Other			
1	Yes	63	63%
2	No	37	37%
Marketing Channels used			
Producer – Customer			
1	Yes	58	58%
2	No	42	42%
Producer- Middlemen-Customer			
1	Yes	31	31%
2	No	69	69%
Producer - Middlemen - Wholesaler – Retailer			
1	Yes	14	14%
2	No	86	86%
Producer - Retailer			
1	Yes	12	12%
2	No	88	88%
Marketing plans			

1	Yes	0	0%
2	No	98	98%
Best time to buy goat			
1	January – March	63	63%
2	April-June	37	37%
Best time to sell goat			
1	August-September	21	21%
2	October-December	79	79%
Travelling distance			
1	< 10 Kms	64	64%
2	10-20 Kms	36	36%
Age of selling male			
1	< 6 Months	27	27%
2	6-12 Months	59	59%
3	> 12 Months	14	14%
Transportation of Goats			
1	Jeep/Truck	17	17%
2	Three Wheeler/Auto	62	62%
3	Two Wheeler	21	21%
Price determination			
1	Judging by Body Condition	17	17%
2	Market demand	26	26%
3	Both	57	57%

Reasons for sale

The decision to sell goats among farmers in the Southern Transition Zone of Hassan district was primarily driven by financial exigencies, as revealed through interviews with the respondents. A majority of farmers indicated that raising money for domestic needs—such as household expenses, medical emergencies, education, and social functions—was the foremost reason for disposing of their stock ^[8]. Goats, being liquid assets with relatively high marketability, were often perceived as readily convertible financial instruments, akin to "livestock ATMs", particularly in times of economic distress. This perception underscores the critical socio-economic role of goats in rural livelihoods.

In addition to financial needs, flock size regulation was another major reason cited by the respondents. Farmers with relatively stable income sources preferred to maintain a constant flock size throughout the year, selling excess animals periodically to avoid overstocking and associated resource constraints. This management practice reflects an awareness of the limitations in feed resources and the importance of optimizing the flock size based on available inputs. Other commonly reported reasons for the sale of goats included seasonal scarcity of fodder, lack of adequate grazing land, and the outbreak of diseases, particularly during the dry season⁹. These factors significantly influence the decision-making process of farmers, especially when the cost of maintenance outweighs the expected returns from continued rearing of the animals. In such scenarios, sale becomes a strategic option to minimize losses and ensure overall herd health and sustainability.

The findings of the present study are consistent with previous research studies. It was reported that, the majority of goat owners sold animals primarily to meet immediate family expenses, emphasizing the economic security function of small ruminants in rural agricultural systems ^[8]. These studies affirm that goats serve not only as a productive asset but also as a buffer against financial shocks for vulnerable farming households ^[10, 11, 12]. In summary, the sale of goats in this region is influenced by a combination of economic necessity, management strategies, environmental limitations, and animal health considerations. Recognizing these motivations is essential for developing effective marketing systems and

extension strategies that support sustainable goat production and enhance farmer incomes.

Marketing channels and Price determination

The current study revealed that middlemen exert significant control over the goat marketing system in the Southern Transition Zone of Hassan district. This dominance can be attributed to several interconnected factors. Notably, a majority of goat producers in the region were found to be less business-oriented and lacked organized marketing strategies, resulting in the prevalence of unstructured and informal marketing channels. This situation has led to unstable and fluctuating goat prices, undermining the economic returns from goat rearing. The limited marketing skills and technical awareness among farmers made them particularly vulnerable to exploitation by intermediaries, who often capitalize on the producers' inability to assess market trends, price fluctuations, and valuation of animals based on body condition. As a consequence, farmers frequently receive non-remunerative prices, which directly impacts the overall profitability of goat farming enterprises.

Despite the influence of middlemen, the study found that the majority of goat farmers (58%) sold their animals directly to consumers, bypassing intermediaries. This trend may be explained by the relatively low volume of goats available for trade in the region, which may not attract large-scale buyers or organized traders. Additionally, strong community ties and higher bargaining power within local networks enabled direct sales, thereby allowing producers to retain a greater share of the final sale price. Direct selling also reflects a preference for localized, trust-based transactions, which is common in traditional livestock economies.

With respect to price determination, it was observed that in most cases, the sale price was based on a combination of the animal's physical condition (body weight, appearance, and health status) and prevailing market demand. However, in some instances, the price was determined based solely on either market demand (26%) or the animal's body condition (17%), indicating a lack of standardized pricing mechanisms. This ambiguity in pricing reflects the absence of formal grading and valuation systems, further contributing to inefficiencies in the goat market.

The findings of this study are in parallel to the previous observations^[10, 11, 13]. It was also noted that, middlemen play a significant role in price setting and market access, often to the disadvantage of smallholder producers^[12, 14]. These studies collectively emphasize the need for capacity building, market education, and the establishment of producer cooperatives or farmer marketing groups to improve price realization and reduce dependency on intermediaries. In summary, the current marketing system for goats in the study region is characterized by informality, middlemen dominance, and inconsistent pricing practices^[13, 15]. To enhance market efficiency and farmer incomes, there is an urgent need to develop organized marketing infrastructure, standardized valuation systems, and promote direct-to-consumer sales through cooperative or digital platforms.

Age of the animals and time of marketing

The findings of the present study indicate that a majority of goat farmers preferred to sell their animals between 6 and 12 months of age. This practice suggests that farmers possess a reasonable understanding of the growth patterns and market readiness of goats, aiming to maximize returns during the phase when animals reach optimal body weight and condition. Selling at this age allows farmers to benefit from better price realization, while also minimizing feeding and management costs associated with keeping older stock. However, the decision to sell goats at a particular age was also influenced by market seasonality, carrying out the business at their doorsteps^[16] and socio-cultural factors. In certain cases, animals younger than six months were also marketed, primarily as a strategy to regulate herd size in response to resource constraints such as limited fodder availability or space for housing. Early sale was also used as a means to prevent overstocking, especially when rapid reproductive turnover led to increased herd pressure.

The timing of local festivals and cultural events was observed to have a significant impact on marketing decisions. Festive periods, especially during religious or community celebrations, were perceived by farmers as opportune times to trade goats, due to increased consumer demand and higher market prices. The alignment of supply with festive demand is a strategic practice that enhances profitability and market engagement for smallholder farmers. These observations are in agreement with earlier studies^[14, 6] wherein, similar trends in goat marketing across various regions in India was observed. Their findings emphasize that market-driven decisions, herd management goals, and cultural calendars collectively shape the timing and age at which goats are sold. In conclusion, while farmers demonstrate knowledge of optimal marketing age based on growth performance, external factors such as seasonal demand, resource availability, and cultural events play a decisive role in influencing marketing practices. This underscores the importance of market literacy, planning, and forecasting to support better decision-making and income optimization in goat farming systems.

Other aspects of Marketing of goats

An important logistical aspect observed in the goat marketing practices of farmers in the Southern Transition Zone of Hassan district was the preference for proximity-based market selection. Goat producers primarily opted to sell their animals in the nearest available markets, guided by their localized understanding of demand trends, buyer behavior, and seasonal price fluctuations. This approach reflects the informal but experience-based market intelligence employed by

smallholder farmers, who often lack access to formal market forecasting tools or advisory services.

Transportation arrangements were typically self-managed, with farmers independently organizing the movement of their animals to market. The most commonly used means of transport was the three-wheeled vehicle (auto-rickshaw), utilized by a majority of goat vendors (62%). This mode was considered cost-effective, readily available, and practical for short distances. The compact design of three-wheelers allowed for easy navigation of rural roads and required minimal financial investment, making it a preferred choice for transporting small batches of animals.

Additionally, some farmers (21%) used two-wheelers, especially when transporting fewer or younger animals, while others (17%) relied on jeeps or small trucks for longer distances or when handling larger flocks. These choices were typically influenced by economic constraints, flock size, and distance to the market. The lack of organized, livestock-specific transport services compelled farmers to adapt creatively, often relying on personal or locally hired vehicles to meet their marketing needs. The preference for nearby markets and informal transport strategies is consistent with the earlier findings^[11, 12] where it was shown that, the majority of smallholder goat keepers in various regions of India preferred to market their animals locally due to ease of access and familiarity with local demand dynamics.

Overall, these practices highlight the adaptive behavior of goat producers in addressing market access challenges. However, they also underscore the need for policy interventions aimed at improving rural livestock infrastructure, including the development of organized transport systems, livestock collection centers, and market information dissemination platforms. Such measures could reduce transaction costs, minimize animal stress during transit, and ultimately enhance the economic viability of goat farming for small and marginal farmers^[18].

Conclusion

The goat marketing system in the study region was characterized by unorganized and informal practices, with an absence of structured marketing plans among producers. This lack of organization facilitated the dominance of middlemen, who exerted substantial influence over market operations and pricing mechanisms. Goat sales were predominantly driven by immediate financial needs, including meeting domestic expenses, mitigating drought impacts, repaying debts, regulating flock size, and managing disease outbreaks. Price determination was largely based on a combination of market demand and the physical condition of the animals, reflecting farmers' practical, experience-based valuation methods. The majority of goats were marketed between 6 to 12 months of age, indicating farmers' awareness of optimal growth stages for sale. Additionally, sales were often timed to coincide with periods of heightened market demand, such as during local festivals or seasonal peaks. Farmers exhibited a preference for nearby local markets within a 10-kilometer radius, facilitated by improved road infrastructure and availability of suitable transportation options. This proximity reduced logistical challenges and transaction costs, enabling easier market access. Overall, the findings underscore the need for interventions to organize goat marketing systems, enhance producers' market knowledge, and reduce middlemen dominance, thereby improving price realization and the economic sustainability of goat farming in the region.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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How to Cite This Article

Patel NBN, Guruprasad R, Jaishankar N, Jagadeeswary V. Assessment of goat marketing systems and practices in the southern transition zone of Hassan district, Karnataka. *International Journal of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry*. 2026;SP-11(9):87-91.

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