

This is the VOA Special English Agriculture Report.

Goats are valuable not just for their milk and meat. Or for their ability to control weeds and help renew grasslands. Or even for their ability to be gentle around children. Goats can also be valuable for their hair.

Cashmere goats produce cashmere and Angora goats produce --

Did you think we were going to say angora? No, angora fiber comes from rabbits. Angora goats produce mohair.

Mohair is used in sweaters, scarves, coats and other products, including floor coverings and doll hair.

The United States is a leading producer of mohair, along with South Africa and Turkey. America's top producing state is Texas.

An adult Angora can produce as much as seven kilograms of hair each year. As the goats grow older, however, their hair becomes thicker and less valuable.

Hair from white or solid-colored goats is the most popular, but the appeal of mixed-color mohair has grown.

Angora goats are also used as show animals. They require little special care. The animals need milk from their mothers for three or four months.

They reach full maturity when they are a little more than two years old. But even then they are smaller than most sheep and milk goats.

Cashmere goats are usually larger than Angoras. They can grow big enough to be kept with sheep and cattle.

The outer hair of the animal is called guard hair. Behind it is the valuable material on a cashmere goat. Cashmere is valued for its softness and warmth without much weight.

Some farmers comb their cashmere goats to remove the hair. But if the animals do get a haircut, it often takes place at the time when they naturally lose their winter coat -- between December and March.

Angora goats generally get their hair cut two times a year, in the spring and fall. The job can be done with simple cutting tools or by hiring a professional shearer. Angoras may need special protection from the cold for about a month after shearing.

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The value of an animal's coat depends on the age, size and condition. But whatever kind of goat you choose, be sure you have a good fence. Goats love to explore.

And that's the VOA Special English Agriculture Report, written by Jerilyn Watson. To learn more about agriculture, go to voaspecialenglish.com for transcripts and MP3s of all of our reports. We're also on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube at VOA Learning English. I'm Steve Ember.