

From these findings, it seems that the more successful farmers are investing in sheep since half the owners had more than ten. Sheep are expensive animals when compared to goats and most poor farmers cannot afford them. This explains why few farmers own sheep. Only the wealthier farmers have the resources to rear sheep.

Most sheep owners live in Umm Ramad (7 of 8). Only one lives in El Kharta and none live in El Geifil. As with cattle, sheep are easier to maintain in Umm Ramad because of the permanent water source and the availability of fodder. The lack of these resources make sheep rearing more difficult in the other two villages. In fact, the sheep owner in El Kharta is forced to graze his sheep to the south of El Obeid where fodder and water are more abundant.

Although few farmers owned sheep, the majority did own goats. Eighty percent (32 of 40) of the farmers interviewed owned a few goats. Fifteen owned one to five goats, while ten had six to ten. Only seven farmers had more than ten goats. The largest number of goats owned by a single farmer was fifty.

The majority of the farmers had less than ten goats. This is because most households only keep a few goats to provide milk for consumption, primarily for their tea. Aside from their milk, goats also serve as one of the main meat sources for the households. For many farmers goats represent a meat reserve to fall back on when cash is in short supply and the household cannot afford to purchase meat.

The main reasons for the large percentage of farmers who maintain goats are, first, goats are relatively inexpensive when compared to sheep and cattle, so poorer farmers can afford them. Second, goats are very adaptable animals and can subsist on a wide range of plant resources which other animals cannot. Therefore, fodder is less a constraint for goat rearing than it is for cattle and sheep. Unfortunately, the fact that goats can eat nearly anything has detrimental consequences for the environment. Goats denude the landscape of what little foliage there is, which contributes to wind erosion and desert encroachment. Ironically, their ability to adapt to adverse environmental conditions leads to the worsening of these conditions.

Donkeys are another important animal to the farming system of this area. Sixty-three percent of the farmers surveyed had a donkey. Most of these owners did not have more than one although one rich farmer did have six.

Farmers' use of donkeys for hauling and transportation make it an important asset. However, not all farmers own a donkey. Many poor farmers cannot afford to buy one although they frequently may borrow a donkey from a relative when one is needed. Also, farmers who own camels have little need for donkeys because camels perform the same functions.

As for camels, only eight of the farmers surveyed owned one. Four of these farmers owned one each while the other four owned two each. Four of these owners were from El Kharta, three from Umm Ramad and one was from El Geifil. Very few farmers own a camel because they are an expensive