

Woolly Goat Winterizing and Ethnoecology



Ethnoecology: the cross-cultural study of how people perceive and live in their environment.

Picture an ethnobotanist treading through the rainforest, trying to keep pace with a local elder in order to learn about the native plants and their uses. Ethno-**ecologists** also delve into other worlds or ancient archeological ruins in search of how people managed to live in sync (or not) with their natural environment.

But, there's knowledge to be gleaned from contemporary cultures and even next door neighbors as well. How are people responding and adapting to the environment in their own backyards? What can we learn and apply that will support and restore our local ecology.

So, back to the dribbling sheep. Anyone, who's ever shepherded livestock through the winter, knows firsthand the chore of keeping water from turning to ice or breaking it up and thawing it out once it eventually does freeze solid. With our sunny, western winters we don't have to revert to coal or gas-fueled water

warming methods. Neo the sheep is drinking ice-free water from a solar heated tank.

This low-tech tank has kept the barnyard water liquid for the last four winters at Woolly Goat Farm. The idea came from a 2010 article in *Mother Earth News*. The *Mother Earth News*



authors calculated their tank kept 50 lbs of carbon in the ground compared to heating a typical galvanized water tank with an electric water heater.

[https://www.motherearthnews.com/diy/tools/solar-stock-tank-zmaz10onzraw\)](https://www.motherearthnews.com/diy/tools/solar-stock-tank-zmaz10onzraw)

A little black paint and a bit of corrugated plastic leftover from the greenhouse is a low tech, low carbon solution. Sheep wool would be a handy insulation but we had some leftover foam to reuse.

If the temperatures dip below 20 degrees we shut the lid at night. Opening up the lid to a full tank of liquid water on an icy morning is almost as satisfying as raising a cold frame panel to find bright green spinach in January.

Come spring, the tank cover turns into a barnyard bench and the black side of the tank is repositioned to face north.



See the *Mother Earth News* article cited above for detailed directions on how to build your own. You'll notice a few differences. The tank cover at Woolly Goat is single glazed and has a larger opening with a hinged lid. Let us know if you come up with a good design for a smaller chicken sized waterer.