

All done with your Christmas tree? These farm goats will happily eat it for you

Before you throw out your holiday centerpiece, consider dropping it off at a local farm instead.

By [Steve Annear](#) Globe Staff, Updated December 27, 2021, 11:11 a.m.



Christanie Channell tended goats at the Channell Homestead in Hanson as they chowed down on used Christmas trees last year. JIM DAVIS/GLOBE STAFF

It's the most wonderful time of the year — when you can strip down your Christmas tree, and let some goats joyfully pig out on it.

Farm owners around the state [are once again](#) reminding people that instead of leaving your holiday centerpiece on the curb for trash collectors to haul away, you can bring it to their property so that goats and other farm animals can enjoy a toothsome alternative to hay and pellets.

“Don't throw away that Christmas tree,” the [Carl E. Dahl House](#), a therapeutic farm and livestock rescue program in Gardner, wrote in a Facebook plea on Sunday. “Our goats would love to recycle that tree for you.”

Don't throw away that Christmas Tree!! Just a reminder that our goats
would LOVE to recycle that tree for you! We will...

Posted by [Carl E. Dahl House](#) on [Sunday, December 26, 2021](#)

In what has become something of an annual tradition for both public and private farms across New England, social media posts began sprouting up like shrubs in the days leading up to — and soon after — the Christmas holiday, imploring people to pump the brakes on tossing trees in the garbage and instead drive them to nearby farms and sanctuaries that might accept them.

At [Firefly Fields Farm](#) in [Southwick](#), where they make homemade goat milk soap, host goat yoga classes, and have farm animal parties, getting used trees is an exciting event in the eyes of their livestock.

“All the animals here especially the goats love Christmas trees. They are a very healthy snack for them,” farm operators [wrote on Facebook](#) on Christmas Eve. “Please [feel] free to bring them by after the holidays. There will be a pile going, behind the basketball hoop.”

At [Hidden Hill Farm](#) in Spencer, discarded trees are also a sought-after post-holiday treat for the hooved residents there.

“This is just a friendly reminder that we will be taking Christmas trees again this year,” the farm’s owners said on Facebook Christmas Day. “Last year we received close to 300 trees. ...This year we will be taking in trees until Jan. 9. ...When you drop off your tree, please put it on the left side of the house where the big barn is.”

Merry Christmas 🎄! This is just a friendly reminder that we will be taking
Christmas 🎄 trees again this year. Last year...

Posted by [Hidden Hill Farm](#) on [Saturday, December 25, 2021](#)

[Channell Homestead](#), in Hanson, similarly announced that it was gearing up for another round of tree-collecting after a successful bounty last holiday season.

“Keep us in mind to repurpose your Christmas tree and give it a second life,” said a post on the farm’s Facebook page. “The goats thank you.”

[Last year](#), Christanie Channell, one of the owners, said the goats are like trash compactors, and “go nuts” when a tree is tossed into their pen.

We will be accepting Christmas Trees 🎄 again this year for the goats! 🐐

The goats love them and the trees are a natural...

Posted by [Channell Homestead](#) on [Sunday, November 28, 2021](#)

Kathy Halamka, executive director of [Unity Farm Sanctuary](#) in Sherborn, said in an e-mail that the trees are “an entertaining distraction” for their farm animals — not just goats — “adding enrichment to their days.”

“Dudley, our Scottish Highland bull, plays with the trees as well, tossing them around with his horns before settling in to munch,” said Halamka. “This is an ecological way

to recycle the trees. When the goats, sheep, and cows are done, we then chip the trunks and spread the chips on our trails.”

When it comes to a good tree, the benefits go far beyond the joy of watching farm animals chew through branches and greenery like buzzsaws, said Rob Halpin, spokesman for MSPCA-Angell.

“The pine needles provide small amounts of nutrients, antioxidants, minerals, and fiber,” he said, “all of which is excellent for goat health.”

Of course, there are some important rules to follow when it comes to donating a tree to hungry goats.

Farm operators are urging people to make sure that any donated Christmas trees are completely void of ornaments, tinsel, or other decorations, to keep the goats from getting sick — or perhaps worse.

Trees should also be free of any pesticides, sprays, fake snow-coating, or fire-retardant. Locally grown and chopped-down trees are typically preferred. (If you’re unsure about whether your tree has been [treated with chemicals](#), contact the seller or avoid donating it).

As for brittle or browning trees? Well, don’t bother. Goats don’t have time for such food options, farm owners say.

“If your tree is dried out and dead we cannot accept those,” according to Channell Homestead. “Sorry.”

Firefly Fields Farm concurred: “No dried-up trees please; they don’t like them as much.”

Who would?

Don't rush the Season, but when you're ready... Accepting trees anytime at
the farm 63 Moroney Rd, Pascoag, RI

Posted by [Stonehenge Farm RI](#) on [Saturday, December 25, 2021](#)

Below is a list of farms that take trees. For details about drop-off hours and locations,
contact the owners or message them online:

[Channell Homestead, Hanson](#)

[Carl E. Dahl House, Gardner](#)

[Hidden Hill Farm, Spencer](#)

[Firefly Fields Farm, Southwick](#)

[Unity Farm Sanctuary, Sherborn](#)

[Goats To Go, Georgetown](#)

[Oak Tree Homestead & Forge, Lunenburg](#)

[Sage Meadow Farm, Easthampton](#)

[Slightly Off Course, Ashburnham](#)

[Iron Leaf Farm, Litchfield, Maine](#)

[Red Barn Farm, Stonington, Maine](#)

[Stonehenge Farm, Pascoag, R.I.](#)

[Anderson Farm, Charlestown, N.H.](#)

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