The State of Goatlings and Transparency

Recently, I believe the situation on user feedback and transparency from the site has reached a plateau.

We are seeing major daily discussion between members in the discord, and users are upset their voices are seemingly going unnoticed. I personally believe that the state of Goatlings and the state of the Goatlings Staff, site, servers, and functionality is reaching a peak of dissatisfaction.

I want to preface this by laying down the following. I am not directing any of this to Discord mods, site mods, site artists, or site volunteers, in any way shape or form. This responsibility should lie solely on the site owner.

Contest closures are happening 1-5 days late. Redraws are being released weeks late. Yet, at the same time, actual tangible updates to the site are only occurring once an issue arises, like duping at an all time high. Battle Center has not been consistently on time in years.

Personally, I think the fact that Goatlings has reached this state is extremely disappointing and was entirely preventable. We, as a player base, have no idea or clue when Goatlings "updates". There is no schedule. There is no roadmap. There is no feature map.

On that note, Goatlings is known to have ONE coder, and they remain anonymous. I have no issue with their privacy and anonymity, but Krisgoat herself has shown to not know where the coder is at with updates. We, as a playerbase, get no scheduled updates. The goatlings player base is extremely forgiving. The site has been running like this for ten years. I have been personally active since 2022 and I am personally seeing this become an extremely large issue.

Ten years with no updated new bee page. Ten years with no updated design rules, aside from copyright help, ten years with no arcade update, ten years with no battling updates.

Transparency and Understanding user feedback

I, personally, have noticed a lot of user neglect from this site. We, as a playerbase, do not get any routine or scheduled worded updates, we get no dev log, we get no transparency on where the money goes, how the money is used, what staff is paid, what upcoming updates look like, when they are coming, how things will be updated.. I could go on.

This is player neglect.
How can this be helped?

These are some spitball ideas on how to make your playerbase feel heard and cared for.

- A fun "shady hacker" NPC with an update page that is made to explain and show what the coder is working on. Could easily hire writer volunteers to help spice up these updates. Could make them cryptic and fun. Anything is better than nothing. Worded updates can become monthly.

- A roadmap or feature map. I think this is self explanatory on how that would work.

- A patch notes page.

- Scheduled monthly Q&A with Kris and Coder. Could be in the Gazette.

Understanding the future of Goatlings

I also believe that we as a player base have no clue what is going to happen to goatlings. We don't know the end-goal, or what the site wants to become, we have no idea how major updates are going, we get barely any previews, there is no information stream.
We **need** some kind of open communication on the goals and site/company mission.

Fairness on Diversity Inclusion and Real World events

Now, compared to most, Goatlings is incredibly inclusive and has a very diverse, and loving team and player base. I don't think anyone can deny that. In fact, I would say that's why many of us have been here so long.

In the same breath, while this is still true, diversity updates still continue to suffer.
The BLM fundraiser was only proposed by members and added after, which is amazing, listening to feedback is great, but it was done late.
MANY Pride items were only added after large user push despite the items being predesigned and ready to be released.

Another issue is lopsided diversity. We have many East Asian and white-cultured goats, but very little South or West Asian, Mexican, or Indigenous goats, HA items, and collectible items. There are WAY more than I can list, cultures that go ignored time and time again for other more favored items. I understand Goatling's operates on User Generated Content (UGC), however, marginalized and/or nonwhite users should not have to put THEIR valuable time and energy to improve someone else's business and capability to make revenue. These people, at a base level, deserve inclusion.

About Palestine

A situation occurred in the discord where a user mentioned Palestine very briefly.

This message was silently deleted, which caused MULTIPLE users to question this decision, which eventually led to the channel being closed from messages for about a day. The reason was cited to be aggression from the user, as well as breaking discord rules about politics.

Now, what is happening in Gaza and Palestine is not political. It is an issue of human rights. I will not be divulging further as not to breach site rules, but that is ultimately the way a situation like this is classified.

Now, not only is this a really horrible optics, this is also a silencing of a user. The original message, that when deleted, caused this situation;
the message said, along the lines of "I wish the site would have a fundraiser for Palestine."

When you pride your website on inclusion, diversity, love, etc. You need to be making statements for these worldwide occurrences as soon as you hear about them. If I care enough to sit down for 30 minutes and write this message, you should care enough to take an hour to organize support, a statement, as well as resources, and post them on-site AND the discord as soon as you can.
When your site is FUNDED BY users, you need to be on the side of the people. People deserve to know who and where their money is going.

Handling site-wide updates and game design

Now, I want to preface this by saying I have no experience in game design as a professional or hobbyist. I have drafted and had extensive fleshed out ideas for games, but no current products exist. On that note, I cannot find any previous experience from Krisgoat. Which is fine, plenty of people can learn game design.

But the lack of understanding, and knowledge, MIXED with the lack of transparency creates a very murky and confusing user experience. We all understand the nostalgia feeling of goatlings, we all understand its core design and functions. However, anything built on top of that has not been decided.
The canon lore is, extremely hard to find and almost in shambles,
There are no patch notes, no roadmaps, no scheduled Q&As or devblogs, players have absolutely zero idea what is next ASIDES from more Goats.

And, when we do get gameplay updates, the user feedback on those updates remain unaddressed and users are left in the dark, and sometimes even silenced. Many users can feel scared to voice their opinions in lieu of getting banned.

When you don't know what your users want, and you have no previous experience in a game design role, it feels almost like this is a "small personal project." And, again, that would normally be okay, but you have users spending hundreds of dollars every 4 months, and their money is not being put towards the right things. Updates happen almost yearly at this point.

Understanding what users deserve to know

Now, I want to be very careful about this section.

Players do not deserve to know private details about anyone running or helping with this website. Players do deserve to know the salary range and how the employees' hard work is being compensated.

Not to say we have no details on that, we actually do, which is great. On that note,
We also deserve to know where players' money is going.

I am unsure if Goatlings cannot sustain itself on its current staff count.
Aforementioned, redraws are getting to be 1-2 weeks late, for Shill, it took almost a year. Support tickets can go months and months with no answer. There has been no major gameplay update since the Training Center.

There have been no community resources updates (think New Bee guide).. as far as I can remember
Most updates have included monetary necessities, such as the Design pass. This is 5 different areas of the site.

This all being said, I think Goatlings is heavily benefitting on the ignorance of the playerbase. Through this entire post, I want to detail something, nobody knows what is coming next with Goatlings, and sometimes, not even staff. Due to this, when you bring up issues to some players, they have no clue what you're talking about.

Even knowing about issues in the game requires a certain level of community, which is why the discord has been so active lately. Players, at large, are beginning to see issues clearly, and while they are pointing these issues out, there has been very little communication from the Head of Site.

Conclusion

I hope this post did not come across aggressive, I am a player who cares a lot and I have been brewing on these thoughts for so long. I have tried to voice them many times with many players and I have seen no change. I am heavily active in the idea discussions chat and I even made a masterpost of player ideas from that that got nothing.

I have monetarily supported Goatlings in the past. I hope you can see that I am someone who loves Goatlings. I want to see Goatlings thrive and do amazing.

I think some Q&A's, Kris to Player interaction, would seriously help. Change isn't immediate. But change can only happen if you make it happen.