

Breeding Buck Soundness

You can't afford to skimp on the price of a buck. You want to get the best possible animal within a reasonable price range.

It has been found that the kids will more resemble the buck than the doe. If the Buck is young, and you purchase him, he has the potential to influence between 200 and 300 kids before you are finished with him.

Quality

You want to pick the best buck possible. He should have good size and bone, be vigorous and active, and have a strong and masculine appearance.

He should have a broad muzzle, straight back, thick chest, and deep hindquarters. He should be standing square on all four feet, be up on his pasterns, and have a healthy hair coat.

Purchasing

You should purchase your buck early, at least one month before breeding time.

This will allow time for you to purchase the right buck and also allow him to get adjusted to the farm. This will also give you ample time to keep him separated from the herd to insure he is not carrying any contagious diseases such as foot rot or sore mouth. You will need approximately one adult buck for 35-40 does on your farm. Younger bucks can breed up to 15 to 20 does.

Breeding Soundness

In general, bucks will become more active and aggressive in the fall when most does are cycling. This will vary with some breeds that have the ability to breed "out of season." Bucks from breeds such as Boer and Spanish meat goats are likely to be aggressive all year, but will tend to be the most aggressive in the fall.

Prior to breeding you can conduct a physical examination of the buck for breeding soundness. The examination should include palpation of the testicles and epididymis, and visual appraisal of feet, legs, and eyes. In addition, be sure to check the body condition of the buck.

Testicles of the buck should be firm and be adequate in size. The size of the testicles relates to the ability of the buck to produce larger quantities of sperm. This in turn will allow the buck to breed a larger number of does. The tail of the epididymis is located at the bottom end of the testicle. It should be slightly rounded and free from any hard knots. This is important because the tail of the epididymis is where most of the sperm is reserved for breeding of the does.

A visual appraisal of the feet and legs should include any lameness and evidence of foot rot or foot scald. Pick up the bucks feet and check between his toes for any sign of redness or infection.

Also check the bucks eyes for signs of anemia. The tissues near the eye should be bright pink in color. If they are gray or white in appearance, the buck probably needs dewormed.

Checking the body condition of the buck is easily done by handling him across his top and along his ribs. The buck should have some extra condition or fat reserves, but not be overly fat. As the breeding season progresses he can lose as much as 10% of his body weight. Overly fat bucks may be lazy and not want to breed. These bucks are also more susceptible to heat stress which can decrease sperm quality. On the other hand, thin bucks will have less energy for breeding and may have a lower sperm quality.

If you have any question of the breeding soundness of your buck, you can ultimately check his ability to breed does through either a semen evaluation or by marking the does as they are bred. Semen evaluations can be conducted by a veterinarian or by a breeding service. Evaluations will involve collecting semen and then viewing under a microscope to look for numbers of live and motile sperm, plus numbers of abnormal sperm.

Marking does as they are bred is a relatively easy method to check if a buck is settling does. Bucks wear a marking harness with a crayon that marks the does as he breeds them. Some bucks are very good at removing the harness, so you can also simply use a special marking paint and "paint" the buck's chest. You will need to "repaint" the buck every few days as the paint wears off. Change colors every 21 days (average length of a doe's cycle). If the buck re-marks a large number of does after the first heat cycle, you may want to have his semen evaluated.

Taking a few minutes prior to the breeding season can save you a lot of headaches in the future. Healthy bucks with adequate sized testicles will more than likely breed your does very quickly. Keep bucks in with does for no more than 45 to 60 days to keep does kidding as a group. Kids born more than 45 days apart will vary in size and be more difficult to manage: you will have more than one weaning group and will sell kids that aren't uniform in size.

<http://extension.psu.edu/courses/meat-goat/reproduction/billy-soundness>