

1 **Antelope Creek**
Fred C. Homeyer
Box 47

Robert Lee, TX 76945-9403

915-453-2863 / 800-2941052/Fax:325-453-4400

Email: ancreek@yahoo.com

Websites: www.antelopecreek.com, www.tarzant66.com, www.idealboergoat.com

SELECTING POTENTIAL MEAT GOAT HERD SIRES FROM MONTH OLD BUCKS

by

Dr. Fred C. Homeyer

South African Boer Goat Breeder and Judge

Antelope Creek Ranch

Robert Lee, Texas USA

Anyone that is serious about breeding better goats is always looking for a better herd sire to improve their herd. In the case of breeders involved in goat meat production the production traits of rapid weight gain and meat production, and the traits of a calm disposition for ease of handling, high fertility, strong maternal traits of mothering and milk giving, good confirmation with sound feet and legs, a strong constitution and of course survivability, and adaptability to various environments are all valuable attributes of a meat goat. Being able to make a living under harsh conditions with low quality food is also very valuable in most parts of the world. The South African Boer goat has proven itself to be the meat goat of the world with an abundance of these traits and the ability to be an efficient meat production system in a pasture environment in many parts of the world.

Most successful breeders are always striving to produce a goat to meet visions of future needs. A vision of the future is important for business success. The KOS method described by Dolf Lategan in his excellent book on Dorper Sheep describes a method for being successful in the meat goat business as well as other livestock related enterprises. KOS stands for Knowledge, Organization and Selection. The word kos is the Africaaner word for food. When embarking on the meat goat business the first consideration is to gain as much knowledge as possible about the animals involved, the market and availability for these animals, the demand for the product (goat meat), genetics, availability of breeding stock and several other considerations. Once the potential meat goat producer has acquired what he feels to be adequate knowledge of the area then the next part of the KOS method is Organization. Organization involves such things as where the meat goats are going to live, amount of space and land needed to raise the animals, food availability and cost, and maintenance concerns such as medical and health issues. Considerations also depend upon whether the producer operates in an extensive or intensive production environment. Also important is the sustainability of the land involved in the production effort. Of course, one of the primary considerations at the beginning is where the animals are going to come from to start the enterprise and how many animals it is going to take to have a viable and profitable operation. Initial start up costs also come into play. Under capitalization in the beginning often spells doom for an enterprise before it even starts.

After considerable effort has gone into gathering knowledge and performing the organization exercise it is time for Selection of breeding stock to begin the enterprise. Often times a potential operator will do the selection first before gaining knowledge and doing some organization and they get "SOKed" because they did not use the KOS method in the beginning. Getting SOKed is sometimes called paying tuition for the education of getting into business.

The goal of the breeder should always be to produce the best product possible to improve the breed and meet the demands of the market. You cannot produce quality without the proper ingredients. Selection of the proper genetics is of prime importance to the ongoing success of a meat goat operation. It should be remembered that "THE BUCK IS HALF OF THE HERD - THE DOE IS HALF OF HER KIDS". Therefore selection of the best herd sire or sires is of critical importance to the success of the business. It seems that the most successful breeders are the ones that are able to select potential herd sires when they are at a very young age and that is the primary thrust of this article. What are the physical traits that can be used to predict potential herd sires from baby bucks?

There are several things to remember that are of prime importance in realizing efficient meat goat production in the pasture. I would imagine that most everyone has seen a flock of chickens in their lives. Could you imagine a flock of one hundred chickens with only a single rooster? Do you think this would be a happy rooster as he is surrounded by a hundred beautiful "girls". Why of course he is happy. If this rooster belonged by me what would his name be? I think his name would be "MY FUN LOVING ROOSTER". If you take the first letters from each of these four words they would be M, F, L, and R. These letters will help you remember the most important traits for a meat goat living in the veldt or pasture. The letters stand for Mouth, Feet, Legs and Reproduction. The goat has to be able to eat, it has to get around effectively in the pasture as it searches for food and to be valuable and provide sustainability to the herd the goat must be able to Reproduce in order to increase the species. These are all very valuable traits of a meat goat herd sire as well as the females in the herd. Having a breed standard is important because in the case of the South African Boer Goat the breed standard describes all of the physical traits that contribute to an efficient meat production system in the pasture that thrives on low quality food in a harsh environment. The Boer goat is used in many places around the world to cross on native goats to produce a faster gaining goat and thus more meat production in a shorter period of time.

Having a mouth with jaws that fit and allow the goat to browse the leaves, twigs and weeds that form the majority of its diet is critical to survival. There is no room for an undershot or overshot jaw where the teeth do not make contact with the pad in the upper jaw and permit the cutting of browse for eating. It should be noted that goats raised in an intensive environment and fed concentrate feed from a sack don't necessarily have to have jaws that fit but feeding expensive feed to a meat goat will not prove profitable in most cases in the long run.

As many South African Boer goat breeders have said to me over the years, it is important to be able to select the good ones at a very early age. Considerable research has been done on Dorper sheep as reported in the book, "Making Money with Mutton Sheep" by R. Q. Campbell. Many of the statistics and studies on Dorper sheep would seem to carry over to the Boer goat as both small ruminants are bred for the same meat producing traits. There seems to be a strong correlation between Boer goats and Dorper sheep. Both breeds are hardy and survive under harsh conditions. One of the reasons that Boer goats and Dorper sheep seem to do so well in Texas is the fact that Texas is the same distance above the equator as South Africa is south of the equator. These are areas of the world where the clouds have given up their moisture and the climate is semi-arid desert land. Notice that Australia is "just around the corner" at about the same latitude as South Africa and as a result the Boer goat thrives on this continent as well. The Boer goat is able to adapt to other climates besides desert as evidenced

by their living in semi-tropical places as well as high in the mountains in such places as Germany. They can survive from sea level in the heat to 12,000 feet in the snow. They are truly remarkable animals.

I have had the privilege of participating in numerous Boer goat and Dorper sheep judging schools taught by South Africans, the originator of both breeds. I have also taught many judging schools as well. The South Africans have been breeding and improving Boer goats for over sixty years and have learned much in this period of time. The South African prize good head shape and feel that head shape can be used to predict the best animals. I have heard many South Africans say, "breed the head, if you breed the head properly the body will follow." The shape of the head is an indicator or skeletal dimension and is a tool that can be used to predict potential herd sires. In Africa an animal is sometimes evaluated with just its head sticking out of a hole in a board where you can't see the body.

What is the proper head shape? The South Africans discovered the secret long ago. They say, "wide set eyes, strong nostrils and a powerful under jaw." A strong head indicates a strong, robust goat. High headed goats are more thrifty and healthy as a rule and the size of the skull is a good indicator of overall skeletal dimension as stated previously.

A powerful head also predicts body width as the width between the eyes is directly proportional to the width of the shoulders and the width of the loin. Wide set eyes predict overall width from shoulders through loin and rump (hook to pin). The distance between the eyes stays the same proportionally through out the animal's life. As the animal grows wider so does the distance between the eyes. Sometimes you can think of the Boer goat's head as looking like a cape buffalo - it looks like your banker. It looks like you owe him money. A wide triangular head with a strong jaw is very desirable.

The length of the head from the horns to the muzzle is also important as the length of the head predicts the length of the rump and overall body length. You want a goat with a long face in order to have a long rump. You want a long rump in order to have a long body as you cannot have a short body if the goat has a long rump. The length of the head is directly proportional and in some cases equal to the length of the hook to pin bone or rump and this length is also directly proportional to the long muscle that runs down the back of the goat. An extensive discussion of this issue can be found in the paper by Craddock and Faris entitled, "Selection and Evaluation of Meat Goats".

If you will examine a herd of goats and notice the goats with weak narrow heads you will discover that a weak narrow head predicts frailty. A narrow head predicts the undesirable traits of a shallow body, narrow width, lack of loin length, slab sided, long in the shank and a total lack of meat on the carcass.

The circumference of the forearm is an excellent predictor of growth, size and muscle. The forearm is a muscle surrounded by skin that does not get fat and is a primary predictor of mass and muscle in a mature animal. The width of the chest floor and length of the canon bone are excellent predictors of growth potential in young animals. The wider in the chest the better up to a point. Caution should be realized for making the chest too wide as structural problems can sometimes result such as extruded scapula or hyper-extended scapula where the shoulders and front end assembly do not tie in properly resulting in an animal whose structure will cause it to break down in the pasture over time. Animals with extruded scapula will have a "bulldog appearance" when viewed from the front. They will also tend to stand with their front legs placed slightly back toward the center of the body rather than directly under the body. You will notice this when viewing the animal in a profile from the side.

The next consideration is balance. Referring to balance, someone once said, "I don't know what it is but you know it when you see it." Many people have tried to give a definition of

balance. I think that balance in an animal is when you let your eyes track from nose to tail and your eyes never stop; then the animal is balanced. If your eyes stop the place where you eyes stopped is where the animal is not balanced or does not fit together properly. If you let your eyes track from nose to tail and they never stop and the animal is easy to look at and “makes you smile” and when it stops it looks like a statue carved in stone - that’s BALANCE. When we look at the world around us our brain is always trying to solve a “symmetry puzzle”. If the puzzle does not go together properly it makes us frown and feel uneasy. If the puzzle parts all fit properly we feel comfortable. If we will just relax our brain will do a lot of the work for us when evaluating animals for proper structure, conformation and balance.

Another consideration in herd sire selection is what the South Africans call “Eye of the Eagle”. Is the animal proud and “in love” with himself? Does the animal pose as if to say, “I am the most beautiful buck in the world and I give you the privilege of looking at me?” You may have noticed this trait in some animals. It is not common. Even young kids can have the eye of the eagle. They are the first ones to jump up on a rock or the one to run in front of the others as if to say, “Look at me, I’m great.” I have noticed when judging goats in the show ring that many times when you turn two or more goats loose in the ring the best one will always want to fight with the others as it to say that “You do not belong in the ring with me, I am the best.”

So there you have it - the criteria for herd sire selection at a young age:

WIDE SET EYES

LONG FACE

WIDE CHEST FLOOR

LONG CANON BONE

BIG FOREARM CIRCUMFERENCE

BALANCE

PROUD BEARING (EYE OF THE EAGLE)

and we must also remember MY FUN LOVING ROOSTER:

MOUTH

FEET

LEGS

REPRODUCTION

It should also be mentioned that good record keeping is crucial to the success of a goat meat production operation. Time and frequency of kidding, number of offspring, number born versus number weaned, growth rate of offspring that is, birth weight, pre-weaning weight and post-weaning weight and pounds of meat produced per doe per kidding are all valuable statistics. Data can often be used give the EPD’s (expected progeny differential) for sire, dam and for the breed and can be used in the selection criterion if available. The NSIP (National Sheep Improvement Program) under the direction of Dr. David Notter at Virginia Tech is currently involved in gathering statistics from meat goat herds in order to provide the industry with such things as EPD’s on different genetic lines of Boer goats in the US.

References utilized:

“A Study of the SA Boer Goat or ‘n Studie van die SA Boerbok”, South African Boer Breeders Association, Middelberg Eastern Cape, South Africa, 2006.

“Selection and Evaluation of Meat Goats”, a paper by Preston R. Faris, Preston’s Perspective Agri-Resource Consulting and Dr. Frank Craddock, Texas Cooperative Extension.

“Making Money with Mutton Sheep” by R. Q. Campbell, South Africa

“Dorpers Into the Next Century”, by Dolf Lategan, South Africa.

“South African Boer Goat Breed Standards”, South African Boer Goat Breeders Association.

“Boerbok News” various editions, South African Boer Goat Breeders Association.

“Breed Standards of the Improved Boer Goat”, American Boer Goat Association.

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Fred C. Homeyer is a retired college professor of Computer Science having taught at the University of Texas at Austin and Angelo State University at San Angelo, Texas for a total of 38 years. He has been raising South African Boer goats and Dorper sheep at his Antelope Creek Ranch in Robert Lee, Texas for 14 years. He lacked one college course attending medical school and as a result goat health and goat medicine are primary interests. He receives emails from around the world on goat health issues every month.

He is considered to be an international Boer goat judge having traveled around the world judging Boer goats and presenting seminars about goats and goat raising. Dr. Homeyer has judged over 50 Boer goat shows in numerous countries around the world including national shows in Brazil, Austria, Germany, Dominican Republic and Jamaica. He was the first American to judge Boer goats in Australia when he judged the RNA Queensland Royal Show in 2006. He has judged many Boer goat shows in the United States for both the American Boer Goat Association and the United States Boer Goat Association. Dr. Homeyer is the only person certified as a Boer goat judge by both ABGA and USBGA.

He includes a significant amount of educational information about Boer goats in the shows that he judges.

Dr. Homeyer has raised and shown several national champion Boer goats in the United States including the 1997 National Champion and Reserve Champion Percentage Boer Bucks and the 2002 National Reserve Champion Percentage Boer Doe. He is the only Boer goat breeder to have won the American Boer Goat Association National Premier Boer Goat Breeder Award for both percentage Boer bucks (1997 ABGA National Show) and percentage Boer does

(2002 ABGA National Show). Dr. Homeyer imported the famous Tarzan T66 Boer buck from Australia in 2002 and continues to line breed this bloodline at his ranch in Texas. Recognized around the world for his knowledge and expertise of Boer goats, Dr. Homeyer has attended National Championships in South Africa and Australia as well as visited Brazil 9 times, Australia 4 times, Germany twice, Austria twice and South Africa twice. He has also given seminars on Boer goats in England as a guest of the British Boer Goat Society and in Germany as a guest of the European Boer Goat Association that includes members from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Holland. Dr. Homeyer can give reasons for placing goats in the show ring in English, Spanish, German and Portuguese. He has written over 350 articles on the Boer goat and goat raising that have been published in over 30 magazines around the world. Dr. Homeyer has a passion for the Boer goat and is internationally recognized for his efforts and international travels. He is truly a worldwide ambassador for the South African Boer Goat.

Supporting Document

BREEDING BETTER BOERS

REASONS BEHIND BREED STANDARDS

by

Dr. Fred C. Homeyer

Antelope Creek Ranch

Robert Lee, Texas

The first set of breed standards for the South African Boer goat was established around 1959 by the South African Boer Breeders Society. The primary reasons for establishing breed standards were to assist the Boer goat breeders in setting goals and guidelines to maintain and improve the breed and to provide for uniformity in production.

I first encountered the South African Boer Goat Breed Standards at an ABGA judging school in 1997. After reviewing the standards several times and reflecting upon their meaning it occurred to me that what the South Africans had done was a work of genius. On a single sheet of paper they had set forth all the physical characteristics necessary for an efficient goat meat production system in the pasture. They described a goat that had survivability, adaptability, a calm disposition, fertility, good mothering ability, and made a living under harsh conditions with low quality food. I realized that each of the physical properties set forth in the standards contributed to one of the desirable properties mentioned above.

The standards described a robust animal that was healthy and thrifty. The animal had medium bone and a lot of meat on the carcass. The Boer goat was intended to be the meat goat of the world and has gained wide acceptance all over the world as just such an animal.

Recently a new publication has come from South Africa that enhances a discussion of the standards in that this book details what undesirable characteristics can be expected when an animal has certain undesirable traits. The experience that the South Africans have had raising Boer goats for perhaps a hundred years or more can provide us with insights to improve the Boer goat in the U.S.

The calm disposition of the Boer goat is reflected in the gentle brown eye and the soft pendulous ear. An animal with a calm disposition is easy to handle and manage. A goat with a

wild eye and/or stiff protruding ears will be wild and hard to manage. The rounded dark horns with adequate separation also contribute to a calm disposition and a buck that will not break the legs of other bucks when sparing and won't get their horns caught in a tree and hang themselves. Flat or bladed horns that flare rapidly from the body indicate a wild animal that is hard to handle. Horns that are too tight on the neck will rub the neck and can cause skin irritation, sores and infections. In addition horns that are too upright predict a rounded bulging forehead and a concave nose bridge that may result in an underdeveloped lower jaw. A flat sharp-edged horn is usually too heavy and the points of the horn bend outwards. The forehead is usually too prominent with a hollow between the eyes. Does with this type of horn tend to be too masculine in appearance and the buck's horns tend to be too close together.

Soft pendulous ears that flow down the head are desirable. An animal that has short, stiff protruding ears may produce an animal that is wild and difficult to maintain. A folded ear with the fold coming from the head is undesirable and can cause an unhealthy situation. If the animal is dipped for external parasites such as lice or mites the South Africans feel that this type of folded ear can hold moisture and create an environment for bacteria and infection. A flipped ear or one that is folded at the tip of the ear is not considered a cull fault because it can be fixed by cutting the ligament at the fold or pulling the ear straight shortly after birth. Both types of folded ears can be highly inheritable.

The wide set eyes, strong nostrils and powerful under jaw insure that the animal will be wide in the shoulders and wide in the loin and possess a powerful presence. The width between the eyes is directly proportional to the width in the shoulders and the width in the loin.

A long powerful head with a Roman nose or oval shape from the tip of the horns to the muzzle is an indication of breed character. Since a goat does not have teeth in the upper jaw it is imperative that the teeth in the lower jaw match perfectly with the pad of the upper jaw. Since the primary diet of the Boer goat is leaves, twigs and weeds (they are browsers and eat primarily a meter and above the ground as opposed to grazers such as sheep and cattle that eat primarily a meter down to the ground) the teeth and pad must match in order for the animal to cut the weeds, leaves and twigs that consist of 80% or more of their diet in the pasture. Raising the goat in a pasture is desirable as the trace minerals in the browse help the goat get a more balanced and healthy diet. Too much separation between the teeth and upper jaw pad in either direction (underbite or overbite) produces an animal that cannot eat properly in the veldt or pasture. The standards allow for a 5 mm separation between the teeth and the pad of the upper jaw with the lower jaw teeth extended out past the upper jaw (underbite or overshot jaw) when the animal is 24 months or older in the ABGA standard and a 6 mm separation when the goat is 36 month old in the South African standard. In both cases 5mm or 6 mm is about the diameter of a cigarette filter or a pencil eraser. Prior to 24 months or 36 months in each respective case the jaws must match perfectly. (I saw a young buck dismissed from the ring at the national show in Sydney, Australia national show this year that had less than 1/64" space in the teeth and jaw separation - the standard says the jaws must match and even 1/64" is a separation. It was a shame to see this buck dismissed as I felt he had the potential to be the champion if his jaw had not been misplaced.)

It is important that the body depth have balance. If the body depth is too shallow the chest becomes smaller and the flank becomes higher. If the body depth is too deep the neck will be too thick and the flank will be lower. Does with these characteristics are less fertile and poor breeders. When the body depth is cylindrical or too shallow the chest is weaker, the curve below the shoulder is too sharp and in many cases the goat has a serious devil's grip. Also the legs are thinner, the back is slightly concave, the buttock is weaker and in some cases the muzzle is pointed which may result in parrot mouth or overbite in the jaw.

The legs to body ratio in immature or young animals should be 50 - 50 and in mature animals the ratio should be 60% body to 40% legs. Goats that are too cylindrical in the body may be too high in the chest floor and the legs to body ratio may still be 50-50 at two to three years of age.

The shape of the rump is important when considering the reproductive ability of the doe. If the rump is too steep the doe will have birthing problems as the kids cannot exit the birth canal successfully resulting in death of the kid and possibly death of the doe. A buck with a steep rump may put this steep rump on his doe kids resulting in birthing problems in the herd in subsequent years. It should be remembered that the buck is one-half of every kid in the herd while the doe is only one-half of her kids. A steep rump seems to be highly inheritable. When the rump is sloping the tail is lower in the back, the back is hollow and the buttocks are flatter. An animal with a sloping rump often has either a hollow or flat head. When the rump is too short the buttock becomes round like that of a pig, the hock straight like that of a chicken and the back is too straight. (Taken from the new South African publication, "A Study of the SA Boer Goat" or "n Studie van die SA Boerbok".)

When the buttock muscling is too short the flank becomes higher, the hock straighter and the front leg muscles disappear. When the goat is flat chested the neck is also thinner. A goat that is too heavy chested lacks angularity. The chest will be lower and more prominent, the stomach line will be straighter and the neck considerably thicker. The doe is less fertile than a more angular animal. When the chest is too sharp and too shallow the curve of the stomach line tends to go upwards, the chest is smaller, the neck is thinner and the front leg muscle disappears.

When the neck of the doe is too fleshy and too masculine and there is too much dewlap around the throat, the doe is usually less fertile and will have weaker mothering characteristics than a more angular doe.

If the legs of the doe are too thick this indicates a tendency toward masculinity and reproductive problems. Also this may result in lack of muscling on the front leg and a flat thigh on the hind legs. These characteristics are undesirable because they result in lower production of meat.

The requirement that the doe must have kidded or be visibly pregnant by 24 months is in the standard to insure that the goat is fertile and reproducing the species. An animal that cannot reproduce is of little value other than the meat it carries on its carcass. A doe with a well defined wedge that reflects in the underline of the body being deeper in the rear than in the front is a sign of fertility and indicates a capacity to carry kids.

The shape of the testicles (two equal size testicles in a single sac of adequate circumference) with no more than a two inch split insures that the reproductive organs of the male will have proper structure and that the male should be highly fertile. Perhaps some day a correlation may be made between the shape of the testicles and the shape of the udders on the doe kids the buck produces.

The shape of the udder being tight near the body with a teat structure with no more than two functional teats per side of the udder provides a situation where the newborn kids can effectively suck and survive. If a teat is split the split must be at least 50% split for ABGA so that the baby can nurse. If the teat is large with two orifices it may be so large that the newborn cannot get the teat in its mouth. If the udder is too pendulous and hangs near the ground a newborn kid will have difficulty getting its first drink. Until the kid is several days old it will not be athletic enough to nurse on a large pendulous udder. The udder cannot have multiple nonfunctional teats that distract a new born and provide no nutrition. One of the more dangerous teat configurations is a long (about one to one and one half inches) nonfunctional teat that is about eye level of the kid.

The kid will latch onto this teat and suck until it is exhausted and eventually dies due to getting no milk. The South African Standard requires that the teats be totally separated with no more than one non-functional teat located high, middle or low on a functional teat. The proper teat requirement contributes to survivability of offspring.

Strong, powerful legs that properly support the body under all four corners are necessary so that the animal can get around the pasture and eat. Legs that are cow hocked, bandy or crooked will not function properly over time and the goat will break down. Legs that are too straight in the rear (posty legs) or too much angle (sycle hock) will create animals that break down in the pasture over time. Structural correctness set forth in the standards produces a goat that is mobile and adaptable to various range conditions. Pasterns that are too straight or too slanted indicates that the animal will eventually break down and not be able to move around effectively.

The breed standard suggests a medium size goat. Goats that grow to be too large are functionally ineffective as they may be unable to maintain themselves in a pasture setting. They are also prone to leg problems such as weak pasterns and may also develop a hollow back.

A round barrel with well sprung ribs are necessary for a healthy goat to carry considerable meat and have capacity for rapid growth. A goat with a big foreleg will typically be an animal that carries a lot of meat and muscle. The circumference of the foreleg is sometimes regarded as an indicator or predictor of mass and muscle as the goat matures. A goat that is too broad in the shoulders may produce kids that create difficult birthing. A goat that is too narrow in the back end will lack the desirable amount of meat.

Having dark pigment on the hairless parts of the body, that is, around the eyes, nose, udder and under the tail insures a goat that will not be prone to skin cancer. In the semi-arid desert climate of South Africa the sun can be very hot and without pigment the goat could readily get skin cancer. The climate in Texas is particularly good for raising Boer goats as much of the terrain is similar to that found in South Africa. South Africa is the same distance south of the equator as Texas is north of the equator and both of these areas of the world are places where the clouds have given up most of their moisture and as a result have a semi-arid desert climate. It should be noted that Australia is approximately on the same latitude south of the equator as South Africa. That is why the Boer goat thrives in Australia as well. Boer goats are highly adaptable as they can survive at sea level in the desert and even at 12,000 feet in the mountains and snow in Europe.

It is desirable to have Boer goats with a long face from horn set to muzzle as this distance is directly proportional to the distance from the hook to pin bones or the rump and also directly proportional to the longissimus dorsi muscle that runs down the length of the back. A goat with a long rump cannot have a short body. A short rumped goat will have a pig like butt where the muscle only comes down a short distance on the back leg. This may not be desirable.

The loose pleated skin on the front of the South African Boer goat provides a larger skin surface to cool the body in a radiator type fashion. The newer style American Boer goat with very tight skin on the front may not cool the body as efficiently and it remains to be seen if this deviation from the South African standard produces the desired effects that were anticipated by this change.

A wide chest floor and a long canon bone may be good predictors of growth potential. Care should be taken not to have too much width in the chest floor as scapula problems and front end assembly problems can arise where the shoulders do not tie in correctly with the body creating a bull dog like appearance. This is sometimes called extruded scapula. Structural weakness eventually produces an animal that breaks down under pasture conditions.

Good skeletal dimension with a large skull is desirable in order to produce a skeleton that supports lots of meat and muscle. A large amount of muscle or meat is what makes the Boer goat desirable in the first place.

The standard that requires bucks to be masculine and does to be feminine provides for animals that fulfil their part of the procreation process. Bucks that are too feminine may tend to produce ultra-fragile does with very light bone that may not have survivability in a pasture environment. Does that are too masculine, that is, too short in the neck, flat in the face or too deep in the body may be hard to breed and probably lack good mothering skills. The long graceful neck and feminine head of the Boer doe would indicate that she can be readily bred and will be able to mother and raise multiple kids. A doe that produces and raises multiple kids per breeding is ultimately a greater red meat producer than a doe that raises only a single kid per breeding.

In South Africa when the goats are gathered up from the mountains perhaps twice a year; if the doe is not trailing twin kids by her side she is sold for meat. Good maternal traits with multiple kid production annually is a very desirable property. In South Africa it is all about efficient meat production and commercial viability of the animal. Eventually this will be the case in the United States as well.

So there you have a short discussion of why certain desirable physical traits are necessary in the South African Boer goat in order to insure a goat that has survivability, adaptability, fertility, a calm disposition, good mothering ability and can make a living under harsh conditions with low quality food. When raised according to the South African Standards the Boer goat truly is an efficient meat production system in the pasture that is the meat goat of the world.

References:

“Breed Standards of the Improved Boer Goat”, American Boer Goat Association.

“A Study of the SA Boer Goat or ‘n Studie van die SA Boerbok”, South African Boer Breeders Association, Middelberg Eastern Cape, South Africa, 2006.

“Selection and Evaluation of Meat Goats”, a paper by Preston R. Faris, Preston’s Perspective Agri-Resource Consulting and Dr. Frank Craddock, Texas Cooperative Extension.

Contact Information

You may contact, Dr. Fred C. Homeyer, at Antelope Creek Ranch, Box 47, Robert Lee, TX 76945: Phone:toll free - (800)294-1052 and (325) 453-2863. Email: ancreek@yahoo.com, and websites: www.antelopezcreek.com, www.tarzant66.com, www.idealboergoat.com and www.boerbuckles.com