



Browser's Bulletin 58:

Selecting Bucks

This month, I have been fortunate to have a final year CSU vet student doing their 'State Veterinary Placement' with me. Katrina Swift is not only a keen veterinary student, but she also has an avid interest in goats. Katrina runs a goat/cattle enterprise with her partner in the Riverina Region. I asked Katrina to write this month's Browser's Bulletin on what characteristics she selects in her breeding bucks, to give other Boer/Kalahari meat goat producers her insight and findings.

Selecting for a meat carcass

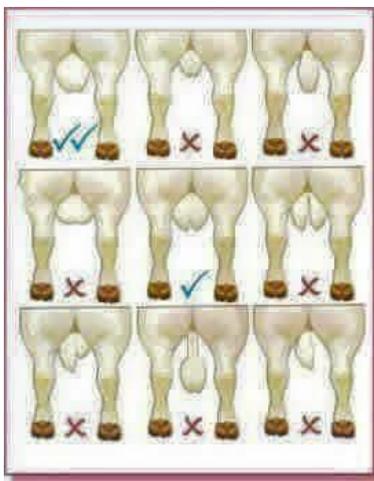
Flat bone/depth/length

1. Flat bone on the front shin indicates heavy bone structure. Heavy bones can carry a bigger animal
2. Depth in the flank – So there is more muscle in the rear end that's where all the money is.
3. Overall length- Big gaps in between the ribs. More meat to bone ratio = more money. Measure how wide he is behind the ribs (loins/eye muscle area= most expensive meat cut). Large eye muscle area is an indicator of heavier muscling all over.



Selecting for breeding

1. Pelvis size of buck's mother. For ease of birthing larger animals.
2. Testicle size and evenness. Large with no split in scrotum. The larger the scrotal circumference of the buck, the higher his libido and fertility. B. Vincent (Farming Meat Goats) recommend for the scrotal circumference to be >25cm at maturity. If you are selecting from a young group of bucks, then compare circumference with others of a similar age group and select from those with the larger circumference.

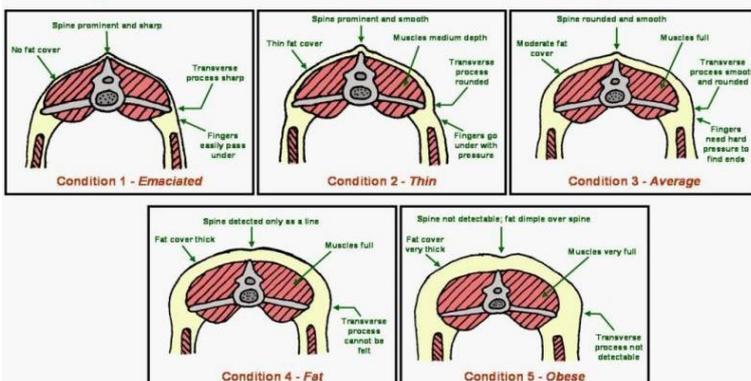


3. Don't want too long of a sheath over the pizzle more likely to get damaged during mating.
4. Forward facing pizzle for mating ease. Less exerted energy from a down facing pizzle as buck is trying to maneuver himself to the right position. They lose more condition as a breeding animal also.
5. Temperament for ease of handling
6. Soundness: a) soundness of the shoulder blades. Their positioning in relation neck and spine and shape of topline. They should be square to hold a heavy frame. Also, soundness of the front and back legs. Taking note of the angulation of the hocks and pasterns to the hoof and the shape of hoof and toes. This is important for a breeding buck for mounting and for the soundness of offspring.



7. Not too fat- or he won't do the work. He needs work ability and a level of fitness. You are aiming for a 'Body Condition Score' of 3 (average) '**Fit but not Fat**'. See the illustration below, demonstrating how to body condition score sheep and goats by feeling over the backbone and short ribs.

Body Condition Scores – Sheep/Goats



Adapted from "Body Condition Scoring of Sheep" by J.M. Thompson and H. Meyer (Oregon State University)

Selecting for health

1. Checking history of Footrot/ Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis (CAE)/ Johnes Disease (JD) from seller- possibly even buying CAE free certified animals.
2. Sleek coat = less external parasite trouble – flies, lice etc.
3. Selecting on soundness (jaw alignment, leg positioning)
4. Selecting on mothering ability (boer goats are notoriously bad mothers, try to select bucks who came from a line of good mothers)
5. Shape and soundness of the udder plus the number, placement, and shape of the teats. There should be two square teats on the udder and the udder should not be hanging too low to the ground. As Boer goats have been line bred for some years now, we start to see 3 and 4 teats appearing. This is technically a defect however some of these 'extra' teats are functional while some are not. On the rare occasion an extra functional teat that is not in the way of the other two can be a viable teat for a kid. However, usually extra dysfunctional teats get in the way and can dishearten kids from suckling their mother, as no milk will come out. This can be a problem for kids' growth at an early crucial age. If the Doe is a valuable breeding animal and there is an extra teat causing issues a veterinarian may be able to surgically remove the teat. It is, however, more important for the future of the breed to be breeding and selecting for good conformational teats as producers.



If you have other questions for Katrina, please send me an email at kylie.greentree@lls.nsw.gov.au and I will pass on your question. Selecting bucks is a massive topic and every producer may have different priorities. I have really enjoyed discussing with Katrina what traits she has been selecting for over the last couple of years to improve meat characteristics and productivity.

References:

- Solaiman, S. 2010. Wiley-Blackwell. Goat Science and Production,
- University of Kentucky; Body Condition Score of the Sheep/Goat.
- Vincent, B. 2005. LandLinks. Farming Meat Goats.

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