



Buckeye Meat Goat Newsletter



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Our Mission: To enhance the production and marketing of meat goats through educational and practical experiences.

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Changing Demographics Open Market Opportunities. By Dave Mangione, Extension Specialist, Agriculture and chairperson of the Ohio Meat Goat Industry Task Force.

The ethnic diversity of our nation's population has provided for decades market opportunities for agricultural commodities. Livestock producers during this time produced the more traditional commodities related to beef, pork, lamb, dairy and poultry. Immigrants entering the country during the 30's and early 40's represented ethnically and religiously a European; Christian based population which preferred what we labeled traditional livestock products in their diet. Additionally, the same immigrant population had a significant Jewish-based faith that also preferred traditional livestock products. However, the Jewish population had restrictions associated with their diet based upon religious belief. The religious ceremony is termed Kosher, which refers to the religious connotations associated with the preparation of certain foods in their diet.

Over the past twenty years there has been a significant change in the ethnic make-up of this country. People immigrating from such countries as Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, India, Africa, Turkey, Indonesia and people from the Caribbean changed the face of a once European-based population in the U.S. Immigrants from these countries ethnically and religiously represent a large Hispanic character-based population along with a significant Muslim based population, having a preference for goat meat. The Muslim population, like the Jewish community, has some religious restrictions to their diet based upon religious belief. The term Halal refers to

the religious ceremony associated with the harvesting of goat, lamb, beef or poultry for human consumption.

So where have these new ethnic populations settled in the U.S.? The Hispanic population in the country is predominantly located in Texas, California, southwest New York City and cites of the northeast. Immigration figures project that from 1995-2050, 57% of the immigration to the U.S. will be represented by the Hispanic nationality. Additionally by 2050, the Hispanic population will represent 25% of the total U.S. population. The Muslim communities are concentrated in the urban belt from Washington D.C. to Boston and found in many other urban centers across the country. Census reveals a population of Muslims greater than 7 million in a geographic region from Detroit to Louisville. Caribbean immigrants, who represent the third largest group of new immigrants, have settled in Miami and New York City. Current census data estimate population numbers as Hispanics greater than 19 million, Muslims greater than 14 million and people from the Caribbean less than 2 million.

The numbers of meat goats slaughtered at USDA inspected slaughtering facilities in 1977 (Fig. 1) was approximately 45,000 head. By 1998 approximately 450,000 head, a 1000% increase, were processed at USDA inspected plants. This does not account for the number of goats processed privately under a non-inspected environment. During 1989 exporting of goat carcasses exceeded imports by 300-400 metric tons. By 1998 the exporting of chilled/frozen goat carcasses is practically non-existent, which is directly correlated to the demand

for goat presently in the U.S. Australia and New Zealand are the major exporters of whole frozen goat carcasses into the U.S.

This scenario presents another question; just what are the preferences of these new ethnic populations? As mentioned earlier, the preferred livestock commodity is goat meat. The Hispanic population prefers young kids, referred to as cabrito, weighing 15 to 25 pounds, or young goats yielding a 25-pound carcass. The Muslim community prefers slightly heavier carcasses of 35 to 50 pounds, which is lean and processed in Halal fashion. People from the Caribbean prefer mature goats for the purpose of making goats head soup and goat curry.

How does a producer access these new ethnic based markets? First, it is important to understand the culture of the population. In most cases we are dealing with cultures, placing a great amount of importance on building lasting relationships. Additionally, the process of bartering or haggling to establish price is part of their culture. Our traditional methods of marketing livestock will be challenged and in many cases not accepted in this new ethnic arena. The Muslim community in particular prefers to buy direct from one person, be that a farmer, order buyer, etc. Customers buy their own animals direct from the farm or from order buyers from two of the largest goat auctions located in New Holland, Pennsylvania, or Hackettstown, New Jersey. The goats are then trucked to one of the largest Halal processing plants in the northeast, Halal Meats, Inc., located in Paterson, New Jersey. This growing ethnic population has accepted the procurement of frozen goat carcasses, because their demand far exceeds the

supply. The preference is for fresh product processed in the Halal fashion. It is the fresh goat market that creates a significant niche opportunity for farmers across the U.S.

Ohio Meat Goat Industry Task Force.

Over the past year a Meat Goat Industry Task Force was formed in Ohio to investigate this enterprise as a viable and profitable opportunity for farmers. This task force associated with The Ohio State University Extension is comprised of Ohio State University extension agents, specialists, meat goat producers, OSU Animal Science Faculty, Ohio Cooperative Development Center, Somalia and East Africa Development and Economic Coordinators, and Heifer-International. The focus of this group is accessing markets along with production and research. A recent study tour to the northeast revealed the markets unique to this industry.

Currently, the goat industry lacks any kind of infrastructure that we associate with our traditional livestock species. Meat goats, unlike their dairy counterparts, are very muscular and stout in stature. The two main breeds used for meat purposes in the U.S. are the Boer and Spanish goats. There are other meat-type breeds that can be used in the production of goat meat. As with all livestock, uniformity is extremely important from a production and marketing perspective. During this transition period, the makeup of many goat herds is a blend of dairy and meat type goats. This variety of type and kind was very evident during our tour of the New Holland market. Currently goats are located and shipped hundreds of miles to access these ethnic markets. There is a real opportunity for farmers to network together through co-ops or other ventures

to build the industry. As with any other livestock commodity, capturing niche and/or seasonal markets can yield tremendous added value. Seasonal trends in the Muslim community follow the lunar calendar with market demand strongly correlated to the Muslim holidays. Although meat goats have worked into our traditional markets, a more non-traditional approach such as direct from farm to consumer may be more appealing to our emerging markets. Changes, which must occur in the building of the infrastructure for the goat industry, include the following:

1. The establishment of uniform meat goat production systems.
2. The establishment of facilities that allow for the processing of livestock addressing the associated religious ceremonies such as Kosher and Halal.
3. Marketing a fresh product in a safe fashion directly to this emerging consumer base to capture the most value.

As the saying goes “if you build it, they will come”, meat goats just may be our field of dreams for animal agriculture.

The objectives of the Ohio Meat Goat Industry Task Force are as follows:

- To identify and access emerging ethnic markets having a preference for goat meat in their diet.
- To assist with the building of the infrastructure of the meat goat industry.
- To develop producer networks, alliances and or cooperatives to supply and meet the demands of emerging markets.
- To provide leadership for

education and research.

Accomplishments of the task force include the following:

- Published Ohio Meat Goat production and budgeting Fact Sheet.
- Collaborative multi-state initiative for marketing and production of meat goats
- Designed and conducted regional workshops, seminars and on-farm tours.
- Organizing producer and marketing networks
- Participated in marketing study tour to eastern Pennsylvania and New York State.
- Initiated on-farm meat goat research
- Conducting on going feasibility studies of ethnic markets, Ohio processing and development of farmer cooperatives.
- Future development of a producer website to enhance the exchange of information related to production and marketing to allow greater access to emerging ethnic populations having a preference for goat meat.

For more information feel free to contact a member of the task force.

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Producer Highlight: Chris Cooper, Athens County

Our producer highlight in this first meat goat newsletter is Chris Cooper of Athens County. Chris is currently serving as a member of the Ohio Meat Goat Task Force and is interested in helping to develop marketing strategies that will allow meat goat producers to increase profitability.

Chris and his wife Kathryn raise meat goats on their farm south of Athens, a couple of miles from the little village of Shade. Chris and Kathryn bought the 80-acre farm in 1997, and in 1999 purchased 7 head of cashmere producing Spanish goats. In 2000 they purchased an additional 75 head of improved Spanish

breed goats with the idea of having a dual-purpose breed that could be used for the cashmere they produce, as well as for meat. Currently the Coopers have 75 Spanish breed does and 10 bucks. In October 2002 the Cooper's purchased 30 head of high percentage Boer breed does that began kidding in December.

Making use of the farm's forage/pasture is a priority for Chris and Kathryn. Since goats are naturally browsers, the acres covered with multiflora rose and other brushy species are actually a preferred food source for the herd. Chris says that the way the goats have been able to eat away the brush and open up land after just a single grazing season is amazing. The Coopers participate in the Athens County grazing council and last April hosted a grazing council meeting and pasture walk at their farm where they asked for ideas from veteran graziers about pasture divisions and water systems. "I found the suggestions about fencing and over wintering animals on stockpiled forage especially helpful" Chris said. This year Chris and Kathryn plan to do some experimenting with electro-netting to see if it will allow them to pasture their herd more effectively.

When it comes to marketing, Chris and Kathryn are exploring various options. Chris says that even though they have both the Spanish and Boer breeds, they will maintain a separate Spanish herd for the cashmere fiber and breeding stock sales. The Boer herd will produce wethers for the 4-H market and for meat use. Chris likes the idea of direct marketing because of its potential for greater return to the producer when compared to the auction barn model. Living in the Athens area with the mixed ethnic populations that a university town

attracts seems to be a natural target market. In 2002, approximately 70 kids were marketed off the farm directly to consumers.

Kathryn has an interest in pursuing the possibilities of marketing cashmere fiber. This past year she sent cashmere fleece from their herd to Prince Edward Island where it was washed, dehaired and spun. On a recent visit to the farm, Kathryn proudly showed off a sample of the final product. Although a good yield only amounts to 4 ounces per animal, Kathryn is hopeful that marketing the cashmere will add several thousand dollars of revenue to their overall goat enterprise. One of the avenues that is being explored for marketing the cashmere fiber is internet sales. The Coopers maintain a website at: www.cashmeregoat.com that provides background information about their goat herd and cashmere production.

The Cooper's have jumped into goat production and expanded their herd fairly rapidly, while experiencing a learning curve associated with any new enterprise. When asked what advice he might give persons interested in getting into goat production, Chris says, "If I were new to goat farming I would start with a few animals. Develop your management plan; get a feel for the animals and the work involved with raising them. Once you have some experience and have fencing and management systems in place- then you are ready to expand".

The future looks bright for meat goat production given the strong ethnic market demand that currently far outstrips production levels. It is with this in mind that Chris believes this is an opportune time for the producer to exert influence upon the market and set prices that will

insure profitability in the enterprise. “We don’t need to see the meat goat market go the way of the commodity market like other livestock and crop enterprises with the low margin-high volume game. This is an opportunity for the producer to get in on the ground floor of a new and emerging market and help to shape it to benefit the small and family sized farm. We know that the demand for goat meat far outweighs supply. As producers, it is our job to grow a high quality product and demand a premium price in the marketplace.”

Heifer International Partnership

Heifer International is a non-profit organization with the mission to alleviate poverty, hunger, and environmental degradation by supporting food security, income generation, and the sustainable management of natural resources. Since the 1940s, Heifer has been partnering with low-wealth families throughout the world promoting self-reliance and sustainability.

“Passing on the Gift” is one of Heifer’s 12 cornerstones and is central to everything we do. When a family receives the gift of an animal, a living loan, they pass on the first female offspring to another family in the project or community.

Heifer partners with low-wealth farmers/communities in the Appalachia region and is interested in the possibility of an Extension-Heifer partnership. As a development organization, we can provide funding for livestock, agricultural supplies (e.g., fencing), and training to groups of families in the region.

If anyone is interested in receiving

additional information about a possible partnership with Heifer International, please contact Jan Henderson at (440) 617-1848 or jan.henderson@heifer.org or Steve Muntz at (859) 497-0603 or steve.muntz@heifer.org.

Vegetation Management Using Goats

Characteristics of goats that make them especially suitable as vegetation management tools include diet diversity, an ability to select a high quality diet, and resistance to many plant toxins and antinutritive factors. Goats are capable of defoliating most plant species, many of which cattle will not utilize. One of the factors that influences what plant species goats will consume and, thus, control, is exposure when young. Time of the year can influence consumption of particular plants, such as eastern red cedar, which appears most palatable in the winter. Although considerable research has demonstrated the usefulness of goats in controlling undesirable plant species like shinnery, blackjack, and post oak, sericea lespedeza, and many others, this method still is not widely employed. Environmental concerns and increasing costs of chemical and mechanical means of vegetation management, however, are providing impetus for greater utilization of such biological management techniques for removal of unwanted vegetation. Goats have an advantage over other biological controls in that a saleable product results from their consumption of brush and weeds, and they can be co-grazed with cattle. Moreover, goats increase cycling of plant nutrients in undesirable vegetation, typically increasing prevalence of grasses. A significant limitation to use of goats for vegetation management is the social

stigma attached to goats by cattle producers. However, constraints of a small number of animal markets, few sources of large numbers of adapted animals, and little producer experience and knowledge of production practices are gradually being overcome as the goat industry grows. Most appropriate production systems need to be developed for specific environments, which entails proper kidding date, parasite management, predator control, fencing, and marketing strategy. Nonetheless, there appears a bright future in use of goats for vegetation management because environmental conditions have become more conducive to growth of weedy plant species and, in most cases; goats are the most cost-effective, nontoxic, and nonpolluting solution available.

Hart, S. P. 2001. Recent perspectives in using goats for vegetation management in the USA. Journal of Dairy Science 84(Electronic Supplement):E170-176.

Meat Goat Fact Sheet by Tony Nye

The first OSU Extension Fact Sheet pertaining to meat goats is AS-14-02; **Meat Goat Production and Budgeting**. It is general and introductory in the information given to help potential producers get an idea of what the meat goat enterprise is all about. This fact sheet addresses the different breeds of meat goats, some basic production practices, comments on fencing and pasture needs, and an enterprise budget to help potential producers understand start up costs, production cost and returns from this enterprise.

This fact sheet can be found at

<http://aede.osu.edu/People/Moore.301/AS-14-0211.pdf>

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