



# *Buckeye Meat Goat Newsletter*



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An educational publication of the Southern Ohio Meat Goat Task Force

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

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**Somali Focus Group Report** by Yi Yang;  
Ohio Cooperative Development Center

Russ Wolford served as the facilitator for the Somali focus group consisting of two meat market owners (one male and one female), a male consumer of halal meats and a woman who works with Somali women and is a consumer. The group indicated that goat meat and lamb meat are virtually substitutes in their diets, but that 85% of Somalis would prefer goat meat if a good quality product is available for a reasonable price. They use lamb when goat meat is not available to them during certain times throughout the year. The Somalis will also substitute halal chicken and beef if lamb and goat meat are not available. They perceive goats providing leaner meat compared to lambs. When asked about the difference in carcass preference between the meat goat and the dairy goat, they responded that there is only one kind of goat in Somalia. They generally eat the males and use the females for milk production and reproduction of kids.

The Somalis prefer a 35-40 pound carcass because their perception is that carcasses over 40 pounds are from older goats and will lack quality. They believe that 35-40 pounds is a "Rule of Thumb" range for a trim, tender carcass that will cook fast, but they will use carcasses from 20-40 pounds. The smaller carcasses are usually stuffed and served whole with vegetables at larger family dinners. They prefer a lean grass fed carcass to a grain fed goat. Most indicate that they can tell the difference between grain fed and grass fed in the taste and texture of the meat. The group indicated that the smell when you cook the goat is an indicator of whether it is grain fed or grass fed. The frozen goat meat is mostly

imported from New Zealand and Australia and is leaner meat because it is totally grass fed. The meat market owners purchase most of the frozen goat meat from a local Columbus food distributor. The Somalis were very assertive in saying that they prefer fresh goat meat to frozen goat meat if available at a reasonable price. Their biggest meal of the day is the noon meal especially on the weekends.

Somalis eat goat meat 1-2 times a day year round. When buying goat meat at the market, most people that are feeding families will buy a whole carcass while individuals will buy 5-6 pounds at a time. The participants estimated that the average consumer eats 60 pounds of goat meat per month. They indicated that there is a preference for certain cuts of the carcass, but the group was divided on what the preferred cuts were. One consumer indicated that they preferred the shoulder and ribs especially if they are hosting others for dinner. The other three participants indicated that the legs are the preferred cut (similar to lamb) and the meat market owners agreed that they sell more legs than any other cut. Consumer preference and fewer bones constitute the higher price that consumers will pay for a leg of goat meat in the local markets. The desired preparation of the focus group for goat meat is stewing. The Somalis make a goat soup (similar to the American chicken noodle soup) that they believe will make you feel better and keep you healthy. Most restaurants in the Somali community will use the frozen goat meat from the local food distributor instead of fresh meat. The main reason is that the frozen product is cheaper and available year round with a consistent quality.

There is more to a goat than the meat on

a carcass. Livers and kidneys are a desirable breakfast food, but are in short supply from Detroit because they do not take the time to remove them and clean them for consumption. Skins can be harvested from the goats and are shipped to Italy and made into purses and wallets. Organs and entrails are processed into cat and dog foods. The heart and brains can be eaten, but are not desired by many Somalians as a food source. The group indicated that there would be a market for stomachs in Ohio if it were easier to clean them without using chemicals. Cleaning the stomachs without chemicals is a very time consuming and laborious effort for a low value product. Somalians are accustomed to feeding their babies goat milk back in Somalia, they now use cow milk because of the limited availability of goat milk in Ohio and the U.S. They use goat cheese but do not prefer it to cow cheese, they really like using goat butter. They indicate that a market for goat butter exists, but the supply available is very limited today.

The birth of a baby is a special tradition in the Muslim faith. Somalians are encouraged to go and get a live goat and sacrifice it to baptize their child. They are killing the goats on the farm by slitting the throat and are dressing the carcass themselves. The group indicated that they have a connection with a producer in Mansfield that provides the goats for these celebrations. The parents of the child go to the farm and select the goat, which is then killing (sacrificed) in order to baptize the baby.

The focus group conveyed that there is little difference between the halal and kosher slaughter practices. They will eat kosher meats just as they eat halal meats. The person that cuts the throat of the

animal does not have to be a Muslim. They must believe in a religion and be trusted by the Somalian community, but the preference is that someone of the Muslim faith slit the animal's throat. Somalians will NOT consume animals that are slaughtered with the same equipment or in the same facility as pork. Even a thorough cleaning of the equipment and facility will satisfy the Somalian population. There is a demand for halal slaughtered beef, chicken, fish and camels in Ohio.

Pricing is a key determinant for the producer as well as the consumer of goat meat. The Somalians are currently paying \$.80 - .85 per pound live weight or \$60.00 a head for goats from the Mansfield producer. The focus group identified some average retail prices they would be willing to pay for goat meat. These are average prices so they would be willing to pay a little above and below these prices. They identified \$1.99 per pound for frozen goat meat and \$2.99 per pound for fresh goat meat. Mecca Market (Asad Ahmed) said that he uses 25-30 goat carcasses a week in fresh product in his operations. He sells to some smaller stores, but most are retail sales to the end consumer. He estimated that 15-20 % of retail price is the transportation costs to and from Detroit to obtain the product.

There have been numerous mentions of the Detroit plant that slaughters goats daily. The Somalians talked about the plant briefly and you can find a report later of our visit to the plant and discussion with the general manager. The focus group said that it is very hard to get goats from the Detroit plant from Thanksgiving (October) through New Years (January). The Somalians feel that the plant resembles a monopoly because there are

very few other outlets for getting fresh goat meat. They feel that they cannot buy the cuts and quality they want when they go to Detroit. They are suspicious that the best carcasses are not in view and are reserved for the local customers in the Detroit area. They feel that they are labeled out-of-towners and are treated unfairly most of the time. The plant gets its supply of goats by the semi load from New Mexico, Texas and Arizona. There are 3-4 slaughter facilities that the meat market owners have used for product acquisition before, but rely on the main slaughter facility, Berry and Sons. The group estimated that Berry kills 200 goats per day in the Detroit plant. There is also a plant in Memphis, Tennessee that the meat market owners have used before and they are still processing goats as far as they know. The Somalians were very enthusiastic and committed to a local supply of goat meat because they are running to Detroit 2-3 times per week to purchase fresh goat carcasses. They would support a processing facility for Ohio goats or a location where they could go to obtain fresh local goat meat year round at a reasonable price. A large demand exists just in the Somalian community in Columbus for Ohio goat producers.

### **Marketing to Restaurants**

Rory Lewandowski, Extension Agent  
Ag/NR Athens County

Have you ever considered selling to restaurants as a marketing option? After all, someone is growing the food and selling it to the restaurants, why couldn't you do that as well? What about goat meat? You have a unique product, a meat that is very much in demand among certain segments of our population. Now,

how do you go about marketing it to restaurants?

Mike McKniff of Casa Nueva Restaurant in Athens works with a number of local farmers, purchasing their vegetable, fruit, dairy and meat produce to use in the restaurant.

At a recent meeting in Athens, I asked Mike to give a presentation on "What Producers Need to Know to Market to Restaurants". His comments and suggestions provide some useful guidelines for any agricultural producer interested in exploring this marketing alternative. I'll attempt to summarize some of the main points of Mike's presentation in this article.

One of the most important steps is doing some background research to determine which restaurants to approach with your product. You will want to target restaurants that can appreciate quality products and have some flexibility in purchasing. Avoid chain restaurants, they do not have the flexibility to try alternative products or sources and they most likely would not pay a premium for your product. Instead, identify restaurants that have an interest in working with local produce, have flexible menus, support seasonal products, show a willingness to try new products and can pay a premium for quality. Often, but not always, these may be higher end restaurants. Many restaurants have web sites and you can learn a lot about a restaurant and it's potential receptiveness to a new product by spending some time on-line.

Once you have identified a restaurant or restaurants that may be open to considering your product, the next step is to make a visit. One method is to call

ahead and schedule a visit. The advantage of this is the restaurant will know you are coming and will expect you. The disadvantage is they may say no without even seeing your product. The other option is the “surprise” visit. If you elect to go this route, you may still get turned down, but there are a couple of things you can do to at least get a hearing. First, recognize that meal preparation and meal service are the primary functions of a restaurant; therefore do not visit during these times. Good times to visit are probably between 9 and 10:30 am in the morning and then again in the afternoon from 2 to 3:30 pm. Second, the chef is the person you want to talk to. Access to the chef may be easier if you are carrying a box of your product, enter the back door and ask for the chef. Make your visit quick, have a planned presentation that will take no more than 5 minutes. Bring a raw sample of your product, and depending upon the uniqueness of the product, maybe some recipes about preparation or a prepared dish. Mike suggested this might be a good idea for goat meat because many chefs probably have some preconceived taste problems associated with the word goat.

To market to restaurants successfully you must be accessible, organized and dependable. Leave a price list with the chef following your visit. Do not ask the chef how much he or she would be willing to pay. It's your product and you should know the price you need. It's not their job to price your product. Provide a listing of the product, the quantity available, and when it could be delivered. Provide information about your production schedule, in the case of goats, what time of year meat available. Is it available year round? Seasonal? Which days of the

week could you provide meat? The easier you make it for a restaurant to order from you the more likely you are to get the sale. Leave contact information and make sure you have an answering machine. If you are too hard to get a hold of, even with a good product, the restaurant will look elsewhere.

Deliver what you agreed upon and deliver it at the agreed upon time. The quickest way to kill a relationship with a restaurant is to be inconsistent with your delivery times, miss a delivery time or show up with only part of what you agreed to deliver. If a problem comes up, talk with the restaurant, giving them as much lead-time as possible to find alternatives. Present yourself and your product in a clean and pleasing way, show you care and that you have pride in your product.

According to Mike McKniff, the food service world is changing and there is a growing trend for restaurants to try new foods and/or return to traditional foods, to work with local producers and to develop seasonal menus. These trends may offer meat goat producers the opportunity to market to restaurants, keeping in mind some of these marketing guidelines.

### **Thoughts On Out of Season Breeding** by Terry Hutchens; Kentucky Meat Goat Specialist

Some animal scientists classify the Boer goat as seasonal in the northern hemisphere while others classify the goat as a partially seasonal breeder with no complete anestrus or period without an estrus cycle. But for all practical purposes the Boer goat should be considered seasonal and managed as a seasonal animal.

In Kentucky, estrus activity begins in mid-June and increases in intensity through the summer months and peaks during August and September. As would be expected, estrus activity declines slowly through the fall and early winter followed by extremely low levels of estrus activity occurring in January through April. (D. B. Barry & R. A. Godke, Dept. of Animal Science, LSU: Potential for cross breeding)

Therefore, the first best means of having breeding does out of season is to select individuals from the herd that cycle early or cycle closer to year round. Always in a discussion such as this, someone has a doe that will breed anytime of the year. With good record keeping and observation, these individuals should be marked as *out of season cyclers* and female offspring from these individuals can be incorporated into the herd genetic pool.

Secondly, if the breeding cycle of the Boer goat is taken into account, breeding and fertilization can be accomplished within a given number of days following kidding. This is true if the doe is in good body condition and health.

Table 2 readily shows the major differences in the number of days occurring before the doe's first estrus cycle and where the kidding date falls within the breeding season. If does kid in late fall, the first estrus cycle will occur in about 40 days. This gives time for rebreeding in little more than a month following birth. On the contrary, when kids come in a time of low estrus, primarily in the spring, a minimum of 60 days is needed before does can be bred.

**Table 2**

<b>After Kidding Anestrous Periods for Boer Goat</b>	
Fall kidding season (Oct. – Nov.)	37.3 days
Spring kidding season (March – April)	59.9 days
D. B. Barry & R. A. Godke, Dept. of Animal Science, LSU: Potential for cross breeding)	

**Producer Spotlight - Jay & Don Saylor**



Twisty Creek Farm is the home of Jay and Don Saylor along with daughters Julia and Amanda. Their operation has about 180 goats with 150 of those being breeding does. Most are 50% or higher Boer goats. The goat herd was started in early 2002. While having had a previous herd of Angora goats, the meat goat herd is a new and very challenging adventure and the barn has become the most interesting spot on the farm.

Getting the right combination of genetics to produce a fast growing animal is of top priority for meat goat production. To meet this need, the Saylor's have brought in commercial Boer does from Texas to

be used as breeding stock. These does combined with their core herd of Registered Full Blood Boer goats are their plan for beginning meat goat production.

Conversion of the existing tobacco barn to a facility suited for goats, usable fencing, as well as water issues are some of the necessary herd care preparations. Use of portable fencing has extended the number of areas available for graze and browse. Changing the existing plant combination to extend the grazing season and broaden plant species to include some of the goats favorites is on the schedule for this fall and next spring. The Saylor's have planted Sudan grass as a way to increase hay production to meet herd needs this winter. Due to the wet summer season this has had limited success.

Daughters Julia and Amanda have become involved with the goats by assisting in the barn when needed. Amanda will be showing one of the first Purebred does at the Brown County Fair this fall.

Jay will be happy to show their setup to anyone interested in beginning their own project and serve as a resource person if needed. Her phone number is 937-444-3204.

### **Ohio Meat Goat Task Force Update**

The Ohio Meat Goat Task Force continues to focus on areas related to meat goat production and marketing.

#### **Education:**

- Three sessions at the Farm Science Review were attended by 120 persons.

- Established a committee to develop a program on "Forages for Goats"

#### **Leadership:**

- Task Force members have initiated the "Buckeye Meat Goat Association"
- Task force members helped secure a grant from the Ohio Tobacco Foundation. Funds will be utilized to do a study on "Ethnic Consumer Demand and Preferences"

#### **Research:**

- On-farm demonstration/research. Evaluate production systems, genetic alternatives, and cost of production.
- Processing capabilities and infrastructure in Ohio and the region.

### **The Buckeye Meat Goat Producers Association**

The Buckeye Meat Goat Producers Association, is a newly formed livestock association in Ohio for producers of meat goats. The initial goals are to support and enhance the marketing of meat goats as well as providing educational seminars and information to producers. They plan to continue some of the cooperative efforts first started by the Meat Goat Task Force. The BMGPA is currently working on an up to date buyer's list for the Ohio area, and a fall forage workshop to be held possibly at Wilmington College. The BMGPA will not be organizing shows for registered breeding stock.

“We look forward to providing marketing, and educational materials to producers” said Mark Brooker, newly elected president of the BMGPA. “This organization will not only help new producers with useful information, but also will be able to help some of the folks that have been in the business for awhile and have goats to market right now.”

Anyone with questions may contact any of the officers listed below. To join the BMGPA, simply send a check to:

Chris Cooper, Treasurer  
BMGPA  
12840 Cowan Road  
Athens, Ohio 45701

Initial fees are \$45.00. Renewals annually are \$25.00.

Officers: Mark Brooker, President  
937-383-1200  
Bob Hare, Vice-President  
937-695-0340  
Chris Cooper, Treasurer  
740-594-3350  
Jay Saylor, Secretary  
937-444-6924  
Dick Northrup, Director

## **OSU Sheep Team Newsletter**

The OSU Sheep Team Newsletter is a bi-monthly newsletter produced electronically by the OSU Sheep Team, comprised of OSU/OARDC faculty and staff, Extension Agents, and industry representatives. Many of the topics are relevant to goat production and some folks are interested in both species.

*In the latest issue ...*

- A) Extended Grazing Conference: A Fresh Look at Saving Feed Costs
- B) Brassicas
- C) Stockpiling Fescue
- D) Oats for Forage
- E) Foot Rot or Scald: Which Is It?
- F) Wool LDP Rates
- G) New ASI Sheep Production Handbook Available Soon
- H) 2003 Ohio State Fair Skillathon
- I) 2003 Ohio State Fair Performance Tested Market Lamb Contest
- J) Sheep Calendar of Events

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