

# Marketing of Meat Goats

Jodie Pennington  
Professor - Dairy

Mike McCarter  
County Extension Agent -  
Staff Chair, Pike County

## Introduction

Meat goat production is one of the oldest and the most widespread of animal enterprises in the world. At this point, it is the fastest-growing animal enterprise in the U.S. The economics of goat production is important to most people who raise goats, thus marketing is a major concern for most producers. The price of market animals dictates what can be spent on the practices associated with their production.

Most producers will not tolerate a nonpaying hobby operation. The enterprise must sooner or later become a paying operation, or it will cease to exist. A producer who cannot successfully market what he/she grows will not be in business for an extended period of time. A few people keep goats as pets and companion animals; however, the economics of goat production is such that most producers sell the animals, either for meat or for breeding purposes.

Some type of marketing plan is a necessity. It can be as simple as setting up a breeding plan to meet market demands, including places and types of customers. A good marketing plan is a complete description of how to get your product on the ground and off to market. Parts of the plan become templates and schedules for specific

management activities and practices in the years to follow.

Most goats, regardless of the initial use, eventually end up in the meat market cycle. The meat market itself consists of all ages and types of animals. The amount a producer receives for a market animal depends on several factors including, but not limited to, the following: breed, size, age, sex, body condition and/or state of health.

## Marketing

The first question most producers ask is “What do I charge for my animals or my product?” Getting the price structure correct for your business is the most effective marketing tool you have. The price you get for your goats will vary with the type of goats you sell and the methods used to market the goats.

Marketing initially is split into two phases: on-farm and off-farm. Both phases usually consist of selling



**Figure 1. Various breeds and sizes of goats serve the meat market.**

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**Figure 2.** Young sheep or goats may be used as Easter kids, up to 40 pounds of weight.



**Figure 4.** Extra feeding of grain to young goats can increase their rate of gain.



**Figure 3.** Nursing kids may be sold as Easter kids.



**Figure 5.** Older goats usually also are marketed for meat.

by the head as is done with most other meat animals. Certain markets sell only graded animals. The meat markets for goats consist of different types and ages of animals (Figure 1). Some are listed below.

- **Easter Kids** – This is a seasonal, usually ethnic, market. Goats should not be disbudded or castrated. Dam-raised animals are preferred, weighing from 16 to 40 pounds (Figures 2 and 3). Prices paid for these animals vary by year; however, in recent years, prices for Easter kids have averaged well above routine market prices, depending on size and condition of the animal.
- **Cabrito** – Cabrito is the meat of a milk-raised kid, usually 25 to 40 pounds in size, generally not castrated or disbudded (Figures 3 and 4). Presently, prices range from 70 cents to \$1.40 per pound or more. As with other animals, price is usually determined by quality and demand.
- **Chevon** – Chevon is the meat from goats of any size and age, and the definition varies. Often,

chevon is from a goat over 60 pounds and under two years of age. Bucks and does of older age are also used as chevon and generally bring from 30 cents to \$1.00 per pound (Figure 5), with condition of the goat having a significant effect on the price. According to the American Meat Goat Association, chevon may be from goats that are 48 to 60 pounds and six to nine months of age.

The price of market goats often is higher prior to major ethnic holidays (see Table 1). If you plan to market goats at these times, the breeding season must be planned accordingly. For example, if you market kids at four to five months of age, then the does must be bred nine to ten months prior to the time of marketing.

## Auctions Versus On-Farm Marketing

Goats may be sold individually to consumers on-farm or transported to auctions in the state or nearby states or to slaughter facilities, usually

**Table 1. Ethnic Holiday Calendar, 2008-2010**

| Holiday                               | 2008           | 2009           | 2010             |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| Eid ul-Adha Festival of Sacrifice     | December 8     | November 28    | November 17      |
| Muharramn/Islamic New Year            | January 10     | ---            | December 8       |
| Mawlid al-Nabi Prophet's Birthday     | March 20       | March 9        | February 26      |
| Start of Ramadan Month of Fasting     | September 2    | August 22      | August 11        |
| Eid ul-Fitr Festival of Fast Breaking | October 2      | September 21   | September 10     |
| Passover/Pesach                       | April 20-27    | April 9-16     | March 30-April 6 |
| Rosh Hashanah                         | September 30   | September 19   | September 9      |
| Chanukkah                             | December 22-29 | December 12-19 | December 2-9     |
| Western Roman Easter                  | March 23       | April 12       | April 4          |
| Eastern Orthodox Easter               | April 27       | April 19       | April 4          |
| Christmas                             | December 25    |                |                  |

outside the state. One advantage of auctions is that little effort is required in finding a buyer. Auctions usually have to be bonded, thus guaranteeing a producer prompt and reliable payment. The disadvantage is that there is little or no control over the price you will accept for your animals. This can result in a financially risky exchange. However, there are a few steps a producer can take to either make the venture less potentially risky or use to make contact with future direct buyers.

If you have more than one auction within reasonable driving distance, contact several to find the most recent prices and if buyers are expected to be there when your animals are sold. This contact allows you to compare their projections on market demand, when prices will be highest and also determine who is most enthusiastic about getting your business. It is acceptable to ask for an estimate of how many goat buyers and what price range the auctions expect.

To minimize risk, producers can seek out larger, regional auctions that are supported by numerous buyers. However, this larger market may require additional travel. Several large auctions have average prices publicized on the web or in various marketing publications, making it easier to track price trends compared to smaller, local markets. A good web site for goat auctions is <http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsmnpubs/gauction.htm>. In addition, if the regional auction is near any large private treaty buyers, you may want to make arrangements to take your load of animals to the buyer for a bid first, before going on to the auction later if you can't agree on a price.

Extremely fat goats may be penalized because fat is viewed as waste. The standard Boer buck in show condition would be considered extremely fat as would many dairy does at the end of lactation. Does that look possibly pregnant also may be penalized by some buyers. Suckling kids usually can be fat without any penalty. However, it is critical that goats for sale be in good condition or the price will be decreased, sometimes markedly, if the goats don't appear to be healthy.

There are several consignment sales that can be successfully utilized in marketing. Consignment sales are usually auctions where people are asked or invited to sell their goats. Consignment sales vary in the amount charged for selling animals, so it is necessary to understand the fees and policies before consigning animals. Consignment sales tend to be more for breeding stock, but the quality at these sales can vary greatly. Usually, the selling costs are greater at a consignment sale than at an auction barn.

On-farm sales eliminate the sales commission and the risks and costs associated with transportation. The primary disadvantage is that the producer assumes all of the risks associated with marketing, and the sale can be time consuming. It also is often necessary to negotiate the price with prospective buyers. Local ethnic markets can be utilized for on-farm sales. Bargaining or negotiating for prices often also can be a factor on the farm; some love to bargain, others do not.

When selling at an auction or consignment sale, consider the shrink of the goat. *Shrink* is a term used to describe the loss of weight associated with the

handling, transporting and marketing of livestock. It is usually estimated based on animal weights and can be from 4 to 10 percent of the live weight of the goat.

## Private Treaty Sales

Private treaty sales are usually between individuals for a single goat or many goats. These sales may be conducted anywhere, either with animals present or not. There is no sales commission. However, you need to understand the terms of the sale, especially pertaining to guarantees, time to exchange money and animals, location of exchange, price of animals, what the price is based on (weight, dressing percentage, etc.) and effects of delayed exchanges. Buyers need to be reputable. **Cash is often required in private treaty sales if the buyer is not known.**

Some producers with very stylish and meaty animals may sell goats to youth for the market wether project. Generally, these sales are as a private treaty or at auctions.

## Breeding Stock

The sale of individual animals as breeding (Figure 6) or show stock can be the most profitable if good animals are selected initially and quality is maintained. Generally, breeding and show animals sell for more money than animals sold at livestock markets. Usually, these sales will be by private treaty or at consignment sales and may include advertising costs.



Figure 6. Good breeding animals are essential to a goat enterprise.

## Value-Added Marketing

Value-added marketing is selling meat and other products from goats. The use of value-added marketing, either on-farm or off-farm, should not be

overlooked in the marketing plan. A producer can double or triple the value of an animal by on-farm processing and add to profits by producing other products, such as hides and horns. However, additional time is required for value-added marketing. Again, it is important to deal with reputable buyers to ensure prompt and reliable payment for the products. Off-farm sales may be at a local grocery and/or in conjunction with other producers. As with goats, internet sales or sales through personal contact may be additional options.

## Summary

Goats can be marketed in many ways. The most common methods of marketing are through livestock auction markets, private buyers, consignment sales and on-farm sales. Methods of marketing will vary in sales costs and effort for the producer. Other methods of marketing include local grocery stores, internet sales and personal contacts.

## Livestock Markets for Sheep and Goats

**Most auction owners will buy goats at the farm on days other than sale days for the auction. Also, goats may be sold after hogs or other livestock on sale day; in some cases, different species are sold at specific times on sale day. Check with other individuals who have sold at these locations and buyers as prices may vary greatly. Also, consider the costs of hauling, marketing and convenience of sales. The listing of livestock markets is for informational purposes only and is not meant as an endorsement. In addition, this list is not all inclusive.**

### White's Equine Sale and Services

1863 Highway 59  
Diamond, MO 64840  
North on Hwy. 59 1-2 miles; SE of Joplin  
417-325-4141  
Day and Time of Sale: first Thursday of month at 4 p.m.; 1,000-1,500 sheep and goats for sale

### Buffalo Livestock Auction, Inc.

West Highway 32  
Buffalo, MO 65622  
417-345-8122 or 4514  
North of Springfield  
Day and Time of Sale: fourth Tuesday at 6 p.m.

### CRS Sales Company

Roger Smith  
199 Glossip Avenue  
Highlandville, MO 65669  
417-839-8480 cell; 417-443-1180  
Barn on Hwy. 160 East  
Day and Time of Sale: third Thursday at 6 p.m.

**Centerton Livestock Auction**

Tim and Kathy Schlegel, Owners  
2210 Kinyon Road  
Centerton, AR 72719  
479-795-2397

Day and Time of Sale: Saturday at 7 p.m.  
Order of Sale: horses, sheep, goats, hogs, other livestock

**N.E. OK Feeder Pig and Livestock Market**

Sam Warren, Leach Sale Barns  
HC 67, Box 120 (on Hwy. 33)  
Leach, OK 74347  
918-868-2634

Day and Time of Sale: Friday at 6:30 p.m.  
Order of Sale: hogs, goats, other

**Beebe Livestock Auction**

P.O. Box 507  
Beebe, AR 72012  
501-882-5553

Day and Time of Sale: Saturday at 10:30 a.m.  
Order of Sale: hogs, goats, other livestock

**Cattlemen's Livestock Auction**

6751 Highway 65 N, #A  
Harrison, AR 72601  
870-356-3182

Day and Time of Sale: Thursday at 12 noon  
Order of Sale: goats (if any), cattle

**King Livestock Goat and Sheep Auction**

8894 Hwy. 31 North  
Lonoke, AR 72086  
501-351-1867 cell; 501-676-6343

Day and Time of Sale: second and fourth Saturday at 1 p.m.

**Somerville Livestock Sales**

Will Grisham  
P.O. Box 382270, Enterprise Drive  
Somerville, TN 38068  
Exit 35 I-40, then 9 miles south  
901-465-9679

Day and Time of Sale: Tuesday at noon

**Perkins Livestock Sales, Inc.**

Hwy. 33 and Western (3 miles west of town)  
Perkins, OK 74059  
405-547-7522

Day and Time of Sale: first and third Saturday at 1 p.m.

Order of Sale: registered sheep and goats, guard animals (no dogs), grade or commercial sheep and goats in order of arrival

**OKC West Livestock**

Gary Bunger  
7200 East U.S. Hwy. 66  
El Reno, OK 73036  
405-262-8800

Day and Time of Sale: Wednesday at 8:30 a.m. until last sold

**Poor Boy Livestock Auction**

Old Hwy. 270 and 271  
Wister, OK 74966  
918-655-3174

Day and Time of Sale: Saturday at 1 p.m.  
Order of Sale: hogs, goats

**Tennessee Livestock Producers Graded Goat and Sheep Sale**

Hwy. 31, P.O. Box 17  
Thompson Station, TN 37177  
12 miles west; off I-65, exit 61  
615-794-3330; 931-388-7872, ext. 2235  
Affiliated with TN Farm Bureau (800-327-6021)  
Day and Time of Sale: second and fourth Friday at 3 p.m.

**Salem Livestock Auction**

P.O. Box 118  
Salem, AR 72576

Off Hwy. 9 on Fairview Road, near Hwy. 62  
879-895-3231; 870-458-2738 (J. W. Guffey)  
Day and Time of Sale: Thursday at 6:30 p.m.  
Order of Sale: goats sell first

**Oregon County Goat and Sheep Market**

Route 2, Box 2018  
Koshkonong, MO 65692  
(Buying Station) South 1 mile on Hwy. 63  
417-280-0371; 417-867-3336  
Day and Time of Sale: last Saturday of month, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. (call on Thursday before for prices)

**Commercial Goat Sale**

Hope, Arkansas Fairgrounds  
Jesse Duckett, Goat Producers of Arkansas  
870-777-4751  
Time of Sale: 7 p.m. (expect quarterly sale); call for information

**Salah Abdalla**

Badr Halal Packing Company  
711 Woodlawn Avenue  
Brighton, TN 38011  
Office: 901-475-1700  
Cell: 901-212-9267

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**DR. JODIE PENNINGTON** is professor - dairy, Little Rock, and **MIKE McCARTER** is county Extension agent - staff chair, Pike County. They are employees of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service.

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