

Boer Goats

The Breed

The Boer goat is considered to be one of the most desirable goat breeds for meat production. The name is derived from the Dutch word “boer” meaning farmer. The first full-blood Boers were imported into the U.S. in 1993 from South Africa after a quarantine stop in New Zealand. Boer goats are large-framed with short white hair and black or brown markings in the head and neck.

A kidding rate of 200% is common in this breed. Boer goats are partially seasonally breeders. They will cycle virtually year-round if favorable rearing conditions are provided. In the northern hemisphere, sexual activity peaks during the autumn months and declines in the spring and summer. Most does are bred for the first time at about 9 months, or approximately 100 lb. The gestation length is 150 days. A mature doe weighs between 200 and 225 lb. The Boer goat is a low maintenance animal that has sufficient milk to rear a kid. A Boer buck can begin breeding at 7-8 months of age. The mature Boer buck weighs about 250-300 lb. The birth weight of Boer kids averages about 7-8 lb. Kids at weaning, weigh about 50 pounds. The average daily gain for Boer goats is 0.4-0.5 lb/day.

The Industry

The growth of the meat goat industry can be attributed to the ethnic demand for the product. The largest goat-consuming populations are Hispanics and Muslims. Many meat-goat sales are by the head at the farm gate.

A typical meat goat enterprise system has the kids born in February/March with a portion of the kids (those born earliest in the season) sold for the Easter market at about 30 pounds live weight. The remaining kids are sold at 70-100 pounds live weight.

Feeding Program

Does: The primary feed for does is pasture during the summer and hay during the non-pasture season. This may be supplemented with about 1.5 lb of grain during the last 4-6 weeks of gestation and 2 pounds of grain daily while nursing kids. Feed about 1 pound of grain starting one month before introducing the buck through the breeding season (flushing). Provide access to a free choice mineral while on pasture.

Kids: To improve weight gains provide access to a creep feed beginning at one week of age. Kids grow rapidly during the first 3 months of life. At 3 months of age they can be weaned. Feed a grower mix (14-16% CP) after weaning. Start feeding at the rate of 1.0% of bodyweight and gradually increase to about 3.0% of bodyweight over a 2-3 week period. Hay should be available free choice to start—and then reduced as goats come on feed. Thereafter, limited hay should be fed at the rate of ¼ - ½ lb per goat daily.

Additional Considerations:

- Coccidiosis is a problem in young goats. Medicate the feed with Deccox or Rumensin.
- Calcium to Phosphorus ratio should be at least 2:1 to prevent urinary calculi; in addition many commercial feeds contain ammonium chloride.
- The most common health problem is internal parasites. A control program is essential.
- Goats should be vaccinated for enterotoxemia before going on full feed.

