

The meat goat selection process

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Last week, I started a article on meat goat production in Bartow County. Raising meat goats is a growing sector of our agriculture community. We have a market for goats plus meat goat production is a venture that someone does not have to own large tracts of land in order to participate. Today's article will take about meat goat selection plus will share information on showing meat goats in Georgia. Information again will come from a publication put out by Calvin Alford, retired UGA Animal Scientist and James Strickland, UGA Extension Veterinarian.

First, with any livestock venture you must start with quality animals. It is true that management of the herd is critical to your overall success, but selection of quality breeding stock is also a key. You must select animals that visually fit the part and have the genetics for performance. When discussing performance, you can not leave out record keeping. Keeping records of the performance of the nannies in the herd is a must in order to deciding on which animals to keep or to cull. For the most part, meat goat producers want females that will produce more pounds of kid per year. Keeping records of birth dates, sale dates, weaning weights, sale weights, etc. of the offspring are important selection tools. If you want to raise your own herd sires and replacement females, make sure you are keeping the best performing offspring. It is a good idea

to change out your bucks every two years to prevent inbreeding.

When deciding on what is a good producing nanny, you should know that many producers in Georgia can wean goats that weigh thirty pounds or more when weaned at four months and up to fifty pounds if weaned at six months of age. Keep or select those nannies that have that type of performance. Also, visually traits are large body size, structural soundness on the feet and legs and adequate muscling. You also want to keep or select nannies on udder quality.

Showing meat goats is a growing activity in Georgia. The meat goat project in Georgia 4-H is rapidly growing with youth showing meat goats all around the state. The neat thing about showing goats is that it is an activity for even the pre-club member that is in the first grade as compared to some of the larger species that requires the youth to be nine years of age. A youth could start showing meat goats in the first grade and continue this activity until they graduate high school. Addie Evans, Bartow 4-H'er, has been representing our 4-H club at shows around Georgia. Addie recently won 2nd place in the Georgia State 4-H and FFA meat goat record book competition. Showing is a great family project that teaches animal husbandry and responsibility.

For more information on meat goat production or showing meat goats, call 770-387-5142 or e-mail gbowman@uga.edu.