South African goat breeds: Boer goat

SCOPE: This Info-pack provides a brief description of the Boer goat breed.
KEY WORDS: Type, Origin, Description, Production, Products, Distribution, Numbers.


Type
Locally developed meat goat.

Origin of the breed
The improved Boer goat originated in the Eastern Cape through selection from the indigenous goat breeds and other European breeds of the area. Around 1930, breeders in the Bedford and Somerset-East areas started a more intensive breeding and selection program to improve the goats. Their aim was to breed a more uniform goat with excellent meat characteristics, growth ability and fertility, but without losing its hardiness and adaptability.

A Boer Goat Breeders’ Society was formed in 1959 to improve the breed, to establish breed standards and to develop training, inspection, promotion and marketing capacity. Boer goat breeders started participating in the national Goat Performance Testing Scheme in 1970.

Description
The Boer goat is a red-headed large framed goat with a white body. The ideal is an average sized heavy goat for maximum meat production.

A desirable ratio between length of leg and depth of body should be achieved at all ages. It is a goat with a fine head, lob ears, round horns that are bent backwards, a loose, supple skin with folds (especially in bucks). The doe must be feminine, wedging slightly to the front, which is a sign of fertility. The buck is heavier in the head, neck and forequarters and must be masculine.

A variety of colour patterns occur, but the ideal is a white goat with a red head and ears, a white blaze and fully pigmented skin. Shadings between light and dark red are permissible. It has short, smooth, glossy hair.

Production norms
It is a non-seasonal breeder and, therefore, suits most management systems. Multiple births are the norm. Triplets and quadruplets are fairly common. The ovulation rate for Boer goats ranges from 1 to 4 eggs/doe with an average of 1.7.

Age at first breeding: 6 months
Number of kids born / number of does kidded: 154
Number of kids weaned per number of does kidded: 120

100-day weaning weight buck kids: 27 kg
100-day weaning weight doe kids: 24 kg
Mature weight does: 80 kg.

**Products**
- Meat – Tender tasty meat at a young age. Healthy, low fat meat.
- Excellent quality skin (value-added trait)
- Good quality white cashmere, although in small quantities (value-added trait)
- The Boer goat is being used very effectively in South Africa in combination with cattle due to its browsing ability and limited impact on the grass cover.

**Normal production environment**
- Coastal bush veld to mixed sweet and sour bush veld.
- Adapts well to both extensive bush veld and intensive pasture systems.

**Breed numbers**
There are currently 270 Boer goat breeders who are members of the breeders’ society. There are about 60 000 Boer goats registered with the Boer Goat Breeders’ Society in South Africa. The total number of Boer goats in South Africa is unknown.

**References**
This info-pack was compiled from various sources of information. The text may contain extracts from the following:

www.boerboksa.co.za/goat-breeds/sa.../sa-boer-goat-breed-standards