



South African goat breeds: Saanen

SCOPE: This Info-pack provides a brief description of the Saanen goat breed.

KEY WORDS: Type, Origin, Description, Production, Products, Distribution, Numbers.

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Type

Milk goat.



Photo: Theselfsufficientliving.com

Origin of the breed

The Saanen dairy goat originated in the Saanen Valley of Switzerland, south of Canton, Berne. During 1898 the Cape Agricultural Department imported three Saanen males and twelve females, from Switzerland.

The present-day Saanen in South Africa originated from one male and one female imported from Germany in 1923, as well as from other importations from Switzerland, England and Germany between 1923 and 1976. Various breeders registered animals, yet none of these was transferred and they could not be traced in 1947 when P.R. du Preez wanted to make a fresh start with registered goats. The only breeder with registered goats at the time owned only two females. Du Preez bought one of them and had to import a male from England to serve this female, as there were no others available. From 1958 to 1985, the SA Stud Book and Livestock Improvement Association registered 2388 Saanen females and 530 Saanen males, whilst 139 females and 42 males were registered from 1985 to 1991.

Description

It is a medium to large size goat. The colour of the Saanen is white with no markings, although black spots on the nose, eyelids and ears are an advantage in differentiating them from the undesirable albino. The only drawback to the fair-skinned Saanen is that the harsh South African sun causes skin carcinomas of the udder, while the Toggenburg and British Alpine do not have this problem.

Does should be feminine, and not coarse. The hair should be short and fine, although a fringe over the spine and thighs is often present. Ears should be erect, preferably pointing forward. The face should be straight or concave. A tendency toward a Roman nose is discriminated against.

Production norms

A mature doe can weigh 65 kg, while a buck can grow to over 80 kg. They are well suited to commercial dairy herds with their docile temperaments and high milk yields, even though butterfat tends to be slightly lower than other breeds.



Photo: Mega-milkers.info

Milk production: 2.2 kg/day

Milk fat: 3.1 - 3.8%

Milk protein: 2.7 - 3.3%

Products

Milk and milk products, such as a variety of hard and soft cheeses and yoghurt.



Photo: Fairview.co.za



Photo: Indezi.co.za

Breed numbers

Today 432 Saanen females and 120 Saanen males are registered with the breeders' society in South Africa. The total number of Saanen goats in South Africa is unknown.

Normal production environment

The breed is sensitive to excessive sunlight and performs best in cooler conditions. The provision of shade is essential.



Photo: Scottishgoatkeepersfederation.com

References

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

www.milkgoats.co.za/milkgoat_society
www.dairygoatjournal.com/87-1/saanens_the_great_white_goats