



CANADIAN
MEAT GOAT
Association

CANADIENNE
de la CHEVRE
de BOUCHERIE

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The Kiko Advantage

As goat producers, we are constantly searching for the "edge" that will allow us to increase the production of the herd without increasing the strain on our finances and our backs. Bottom line – to put more meat on the animal in less time and more money in our pocket with less maintenance.

If we can also improve the genetic structure of the herd at the same time, then we definitely have created an "advantage". Whether you are breeding with fullbloods, pure-breds or percentages, the addition of Kiko influence greatly improves the performance at the ranch and at the market.

What is a Kiko and where did it originate? Just what is this "Kiko Advantage" that everyone is talking about?

The Kiko is not a goat of coincidence. The word Kiko comes from the indigenous population of New Zealand and means "meat". New Zealand was discovered in 1769 and colonized by Europeans. Imported "milch" goats escaped into the wild and with no natural predators, thrived in spite of kidding, weather, parasites and disease.

Over the course of years, natural selection resulted in an extremely vigorous and hardy goat.

In the 1970's a group of New Zealand ranchers, known as Goatex Group Limited, organized in order to develop a new meat goat. An unselected population of several

thousand feral goats were captured and subjected to stringent selection for specified, desired traits. Overall, the two main criteria for selection were survivability and weight gain. No shelter was provided. No assistance was given during kidding. No supplemental feeding was offered in range conditions that were generally considered demanding. No hooves were trimmed and minimal parasite control was administered. The animals that performed exceptionally were retained and in 1986 the herd was closed to outside bucks.

The first Kiko genetics arrived in the U.S. in the early 90's. Today the Kiko Goat is a large framed, early maturing goat that demonstrates exceptional conversion rates. They are not as heavily boned as some breeds; consequently they exhibit high cuttability. This trait combined with their lean & succulent carcass yields a product that puts money back into the producer's pocket.

The primary characteristic of the Kiko goat is its hardiness and ability to achieve substantial weight gains when run under natural conditions without supplementary feeding. Mature males display substantial characteristic horns and are of a bold disposition. Mature females are ample, feminine and generally have good udder placement and attachment. The Kiko is a consummate browser and will range extensively when run in the open. It is not affected by broad variations in climate, equally at home in mountain country and arid brushland.

Kiko kids grow rapidly, (averag-



ing 70 to 90 lbs. at 6-months, yielding a large, heavy kid at weaning and saving the rancher additional input in order to reach an acceptable carcass weight. The heterosis that results from crossing any breed of goat with the Kiko is astounding. In cutting trials, the Kiko cross carcass yielded more meat per carcass than a purebred Boer but slightly less than a purebred Kiko. For the commercial meat goat rancher, this appears to be the premier cross.

Kikos come in every color; however most North American Kikos will be white because mostly white goats were imported and white coat color is a dominant gene. There are some breeders who are producing reds and blacks. Everyone who raises Kikos is impressed with the degree of vigor the kids demonstrate at birth. Moms rarely require help kidding, with most kidding in the timber or brush. Kids are on their feet almost immediately and attempt to feed at a speed not usually seen in breeds of domestic goats. Breeders who have been in the meat goat business for several years are continually impressed with the abilities of the Kiko.

To quote Kiko breeder Steve Tomlinson, of Caston Creek: "They're a tough, hardy goat, make good mamas, are fertile and do a good job of raising kids. And that's what you want as a producer. You want to let your goats do the breeding, let the mamas raise the kids and then sell the kids off the mamas. This way you have minimal management input and therefore a minimal amount of cost." Ruble Conatser of Jamestown, TN adds: "The meat goat industry lies on the back of production goat animals. And in my opinion the Kiko is the best production meat goat on the planet; a goat that can take care of itself rather than

needing constant care. Two of the biggest dilemmas facing meat goat producers are parasite and foot problems. The Kiko has a natural hardiness including a genetic predisposition toward being less affected by parasites and their foot problems are almost negative."

A Georgia and Southeast Meat Goat Buck Performance Test is conducted annually under the supervision of the Georgia Small Ruminant Research and Extension Center affiliated with the Cooperative Extension Program and Agricultural Research Station of the Fort Valley State University in Fort Valley, GA. The findings of these tests have confirmed officially what Kiko breeders have been living daily. With small birth weights (and fewer kidding problems), it might seem like Kikos are slow out of the gate the first couple of weeks of life when compared to some of the heavier muscles & larger boned breeds. But the fast growth curve was evident when put to the test at one of the country's leading institutes for goat research.

In his final report, Dr. Will Getz states that: "Traits such as growth, feed utilization efficiency and muscle development are influenced to a substantial degree by genetic makeup. Therefore, knowing the genetic merit of sires used in a commercial or purebred herd is the only way to assure enhanced production. The test design was a compromise between the free range/forage only environment, which is frequently found in a production agriculture setting, and the artificial and non-goat habitat of a feedlot approach. A wide range of forage types and species was available to all bucks."

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