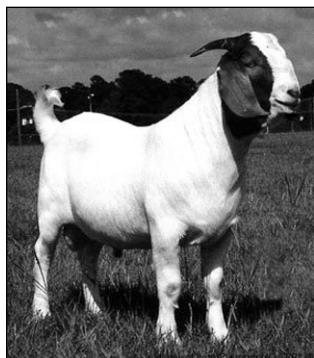




# What is a *meat* goat?

Several strains of goats have been genetically selected by man specifically for meat production. Some of these are actual breeds, while others are just beginning to have distinct traits that pass reliably from parents to offspring. The types of meat goats common to North America include:



## South African Boer Goat

The South African Boer goat is an improved breed, having been developed originally through crossbreeding indigenous goats with European, Angora and Indian goats. The name "Boer" means "farmer" in Dutch and was perhaps used to distinguish these goats from Angora goats imported into South Africa during the 19th century.

South African goat farmers began selecting for muscular and compact animals, and as a result were able to produce a strain of goat that bred true for high growth rate, muscular carcasses and good fertility combined with a very distinct color pattern (white body and red head). The South African registry was established in 1959 and breed standards were adopted.

The first Boer goat genetics from South Africa were exported to Australia and New Zealand in 1987 and, after a five year quarantine, were eligible for export. The Boer goat industry in Canada began in 1993 when a New Zealand company brought the first

Boer goat genetics to North America. Then the following year, Canadian farmers began to import frozen Boer goat embryos directly from South Africa.

## Spanish Meat Goat

Spanish goats are the descendants of goats brought to the U.S. by early New England settlers. They migrated south and probably interbred with goats brought into Texas and Mexico by early Spanish settlers. Their ancestry is as mixed up as that of a mongrel dog. Their rugged environment shaped them into very tough, rather small goats. Specific ranchers have genetically selected Spanish goats for better meat production by keeping only the biggest or meatiest bucks for breeding to females. Nubian bucks have sometimes been crossed with them to improve size, milk production of dams, and fleshiness of the kids. These meatier goats are known as Spanish Meat goats. They come in almost any color and are usually left horned. Their ears are somewhat pendulous but shorter than a



Nubian's. Many of them produce a cashmere undercoat in winter.

## New Zealand Kiko Goat

The Kiko goat was produced in New Zealand by taking feral does

**Several strains of goats have been genetically selected by man specifically for meat production.**

that exhibited good meat conformation and breeding them with Saanen and Nubian bucks to increase their milk yield



and butterfat content. Those bucks and does whose offspring grew best (as measured by weight gain) under rugged conditions were chosen to produce the future generations. Kikos have similar ears to Spanish goats but are usually larger framed. They are often white like their Saanen ancestors.

### **Tennessee Meat Goat**

In 1880 a flock of myotonic goats was identified on a farm in Tennessee. Myotonic means that they have a condition that caused their muscles to lock up whenever they were startled. Sometimes their muscles lock up so suddenly that they fall over. This was the origin of the Tennessee Stiff-Leg or Fainting Goat

population. These goats come in many color combinations and have airplane ears (shaped like Alpine ears but not erect, instead they jut out sideways). Texas ranchers at Onion Creek Farm chose from this population, goats with the largest frames and heaviest muscles to keep for breeding purposes. Gradually they produced a goat that is larger and heavier than the original strain. These selected goats are known as Tennessee Meat Goats. The constant stiffening and relaxing of the muscles of myotonic goats may result in heavy rear leg muscling, tender meat, and a high meat to bone ratio.



*Some text excerpted from New York State 4-H Meat Goat Project Fact Sheet #2 "The Meat Goat Breeds by Dr. Tatiana Stanton. Photos from the Department of Animal Science, Oklahoma State University website.*



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