



Meat Goats in the Caribbean

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● INTRODUCTION

Meat goats form an important part of the Caribbean culture, with varying interest in different territories. However, there is not a single named breed that may be classified as the Caribbean “Meat Goat”. The goats used for meat production in most countries of the Region are a mixture of a number of breeds and breed types, particularly, the Alpine, Anglo-Nubian/Nubian, Boer, Native/Creole goat, Saanen and Toggenburg. There have also been minor influences of less popular breeds, such as, Angora goat, the bastard Ibex, the LaMancha, Nanny goat, Rupee goat, and the Spanish goat (Fielding and Reid 1994). This Factsheet provides an overview of the physical and production characteristics of meat goats in the Caribbean Region and complements the Factsheet on the descriptive characteristics of the major breeds of goats in the Caribbean (John 2006).

● MEAT GOATS IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION

Before the introduction of the improved breeds of goats, the Native or Creole goats (Figure 1) were the principal meat goats of the Region. They are still maintained as the primary meat goat type in French West Indies (Alexandre et al. 1997, 2001, 2008). In most other territories in the Region, crossbreeding of the Native goat with improved breeds has been pursued. Breeds such as the Alpine and Nubian (there has been increased emphasis on the Nubians since the early 1990s) have added size and prolificacy to the native stock.



Figure 1: Male Native goat used for meat production in Jamaica

However, it is the Boer goat, (Figure 2) developed in South Africa in the early 1900s specifically for meat production, that has had the greatest impact on meat goat development in the Region. This breed was introduced into the Region in the mid 1990s and has been used to cross existing breeds and breed-types in an effort to increase meat production.



Figure 2: Boer buck and Native doe used in upgrading programmes

● PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MEAT GOATS IN THE CARIBBEAN

The meat goats of the Region do not have a unique characteristic colour pattern but instead a variation of colours ranging from solid black to solid white with numerous combinations in between (Figure 3).



Figure 3:
Typical meat goats
in the Caribbean

Unpublished data (Miller and Vermont, personal communication) have described the local or native goat in Jamaica as generally small-breed with low growth rate and carcass weight, but it is hardy and demonstrates a tendency for non-seasonal breeding and multiple births. The crossbreds from the introduced breeds with the Native goat usually have no set colour patterns but the white of the Boer and the fawn of the Nubian often dominate. The average mature body weights of the Native goat are around 32 kg and 37 kg for females and males, respectively. With the influence of the improved breeds, mature weights of 40 kg and 55 kg for females and males, respectively, have been recorded.

● PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTIVITY CHARACTERISTICS OF MEAT GOATS IN THE CARIBBEAN

Most meat goats in the Caribbean will reach puberty early but the females are usually bred at 8-9 months of age while males may be introduced to breeding herd in a controlled manner at 10-12 months. The seasonal anoestrus exhibited by some introduced breeds usually is less noticeable in their crosses with the Native goats. It is, therefore, common to obtain kidding intervals of 8-10 months. A kidding rate of over 150 per cent or 1.5 kids per goat per kidding, is common when the Boer, Nubian and Alpine goats are crossed with the local stock.

Purebred bucks are usually preferred for breeding purposes. However, it is usual to use crossbreed females to produce kids for meat purposes. It is a common practice for farmers in the Region to use high percentage bucks to upgrade native stock before exposing the resultant female crosses to the purebred buck. Most meat goat herds, therefore, comprise predominantly crossbred animals.

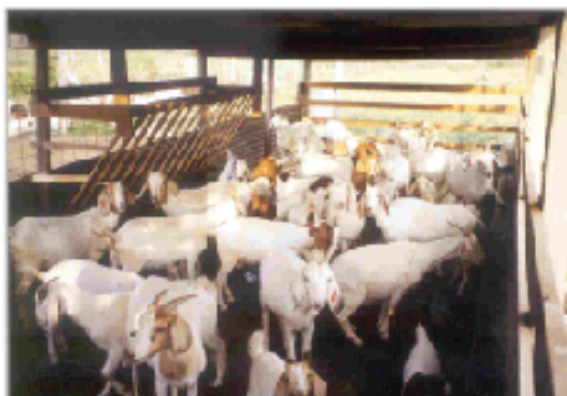


Figure 4:
Crossbred goats resulting from Boer and Nubian breeds in Antigua and Jamaica

The introduction of the Anglo-Nubian and Boer goats in the 1990s has greatly enhanced the production and productivity of meat goat herds in the Region (Figure 4).

This is exemplified with data from Jamaica (CARDI 2008) under a semi-intensive management system (Table 1). Meat goats resulting from crosses of Boer and Anglo-Nubian with the Native goat have shown the capability of attaining pre-weaning and post-weaning average daily weight gains of over 160 g and 125 g, respectively, compared with approximately 100 g and 80 g, respectively for the Native goat. The disposal weights (8-9 months of age) of the Native goat moved from 23.2 kg to 37.3 kg when the Boer was used as a terminal buck on Nubian x Native offspring. Other data showed that carcass dressing percentage in meat goats also increased up to 55% from less than 45% for the Native goat with high Boer genetic composition.

Table 1: Data from Jamaica (CARDI 2008) under a semi-intensive management system

Breed/breed type	Birth wt. (kg)	Weaning wt. (kg)	Pre-weaning daily gain (g)	Disposal (8mth) wt. (kg)	Post-weaning daily gain (g)
Nubian	3.3	16.9	151	33.0	107
Boer	3.3	18.4	167	37.6	128
Native	2.2	11.5	104	23.2	78
Nubian x Native	2.4	12.5	112	25.5	87
Boer x Native	2.8	13.2	116	30.1	113
Boer x (Nubian x Native)	3.3	18.4	167	37.0	124
Nubian x (Nubian x Native)	2.8	14.6	131	28.8	95
Nubian x Boer	3.5	20.7	192	30.4	64

Source: CARDI (2008 and 2009)

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