



# Guide to Goat Breeds for the Caribbean

In the Caribbean, goats are kept primarily for meat. In Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago the meat production capacity of Anglo-Nubian and Boer goats, especially their crosses with the native goats have been and continue to be evaluated. Similarly, milk production capacity of the dairy breeds such as the Saanen, British Alpine, Toggenburg and the dual-purpose Anglo Nubian under local conditions, has been evaluated in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

The following provides an overview of the characteristics of the major goat breeds that form the basis of the Caribbean small ruminant industry.

## Boer

The Boer goat of South Africa owes its name to the Dutch word "Boer" meaning farmer. Although the origin of the Boer is vague, it is believed that this breed is derived from indigenous goats kept by South African tribes, with a possible infusion of Indian and European bloodlines. The present-day improved Boer goat emerged in the 19th century, when South African farmers started breeding for a meat type goat with good conformation, high growth rate and fertility, short white hair and red markings on the head and neck. The Boer goat is primarily a meat goat. It is a horned breed with lop (droopy) ears and showing a variety of colour patterns. The mature Boer buck weighs between

110 and 135 kg and does between 90 and 100 kg. Performance records for this breed indicate exceptional individuals that are capable of average daily gains over 200 g/day in feedlot. More standard performance would be 150-170 g/day. The ovulation rate for Boer goats ranges from 1 to 4 eggs/doe with an average of 1.7. A kidding rate of 200% is common for this breed. Puberty is reached early, usually about 6 months for the males and 10-12 months for the females. The Boer goat also

has an extended breeding season making possible 3 kiddings every 2 years.

## Alpine

The British Alpine breed was developed in Britain by crossing local goats with Alpine goats imported from Switzerland in 1903. British Alpine does are medium to heavy milk producers. Fat yield is usually between 3% and 4%. They are best suited to temperate climates, and



Boer



Alpine

are reported to perform poorly in areas of high humidity. This is a tall, rangy and graceful dairy-type animal, which has a dished or straight facial line and a wedge-shaped body. The average height, measured at the withers (the highest point on an animal's back, on the ridge between its shoulder blades), is about 83 cm for does and 95 cm for bucks. The breed is similar to the Saanen in structure and the Toggenburg in markings. British Alpines are black in colour and the coat is generally short, fine and glossy, although bucks may have longer hair. They have white or cream markings on various parts of the body. These markings may fade with age. Horns and tassels may or may not be present at birth. The ears are erect and point slightly forward. The muzzle is generally squarish.

## Saanen

The Saanen dairy goat originated in Switzerland, in the Saane Valley and is now the most popular dairy goat breed in many countries. Saanen does are heavy milk producers. Fat yield is usually between 3 and 4%. The Saanen is a typical dairy-type animal; it has a dished or straight facial line and a wedge-shaped body. The Saanen is the largest of all the dairy breeds. Does weigh at least 61 kg and bucks 81 kg. The average height at the withers is about 81 cm for does and 94 cm for bucks. The coat is all white or all cream and the hair is generally short and fairly fine although some may have longer hair along the

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spine, hindquarters, or both. Horns may or may not be present at birth. The ears are generally pointed and erect and the head is usually lightly structured. The breed is, however, sensitive to excessive sunlight and performs best in cooler conditions. The provision of shade is essential, especially in tropical conditions, and tan skin is preferable. The Saanen doe has a 'majestic air' about her, which coupled with her milk producing ability, identifies her as "Queen of the Dairy Goats".

### Anglo Nubian

The Anglo-Nubian (Nubian in the US) goat is named for Nubia, in northeastern Africa. It is a dual-purpose milk and meat goat that originated in England in the 1870's from the crossing of Nubians from Egypt, Jumna Pari and Chitral goats from India and Zariby Eritrea. Features of the breed are the high average butterfat (between 4% and 5%) and protein (3.8%) content in their milk and their superior flesh compared to the Swiss breeds. The udder of the Anglo-Nubian is capacious but is sometimes more pendulous than that of the Swiss breeds. A mature doe should stand at least 81 cm at the withers and weigh 64 kg or over, while the males should stand at least 94 cm at the withers and weigh at least 80 kg. The Anglo Nubian breeding season is much longer than that of the Swiss breeds (e.g. Alpine and Saanen) so it is possible to produce milk year round. It is the best suited of the dairy goat breeds to hot conditions, and therefore has been used in grading-up programmes in many tropical countries to increase the milk and meat production of local breeds. The Anglo-Nubian is regarded as an "aristocratic" appearing goat and has very long,



Saanen



Anglo Nubian



Toggenburg

pendulous ears that hang close to the head. Along with the specific ear-type, the 'distinctly Roman nose' represents another distinguishing feature of this breed. The Anglo Nubian is a shorthaired goat with a variable coat colour including black, tan, red, any of which may be carried in combination with white.

### Toggenburg

This breed originated in Switzerland and takes its name from the district of Obertoggenburg. Toggenburgs have been widely exported throughout and are credited as being the oldest known dairy goat breed. They perform best in cooler conditions and as such are the least suited of the dairy breeds to tropical conditions. They are noted for their excellent udder development and high milk production, with a fat yield of between 3% and 4%. Toggenburgs are a compact, robust, dairy-type animal (i.e. with a dished or straight facial line and wedge-shaped body). The breed is medium size, sturdy, vigorous, and alert in appearance. The ears are erect and point slightly forward. The muzzle is generally broad. Slightly smaller than the other Alpine breeds, the does weigh at least 55kg, while bucks weigh at least 72 kg. Ideal height for does at withers is 79 cm and for bucks 90 cm. The hair is short or medium in length, soft, fine, and lying flat. Its colour is solid varying from light fawn to dark chocolate with no preference for any shade. Coat colour may be from light fawn to dark chocolate with white facial stripes from eyes to muzzle, around the edges of the ears, on legs from the knee and hocks to the feet, on the rump and tail. Horns and tassels may or may not be present at birth. As a breed, Toggenburgs tend to group together and respond well to training, so therefore adapt easily to machine milking.

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