

# BOER GOAT BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION



## FAQs ABOUT BOER GOATS (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)



## BOER GOAT BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

The BGBAA is the Breeders' Association in Australia governing the Australian industry.

The Boer goat originated in South Africa in the early 1900s when some farmers began selecting their goats for meat qualities. It has been specifically bred for meat and is recognised as the premiere meat goat.

Boer goat genetics were imported into Australia in the late 1980s and were released from quarantine in the mid 90s. Since this time the popularity of the Boer goat has gone from strength to strength with numbers increasing rapidly.

Boer goat bucks are being used to cross with other goat breeds producing a much faster growing animal that reaches slaughter weight in significantly shorter time and has a higher dressing out percentage than other goat breeds. The Boer goat has also performed extremely well in trials and carcass competitions making it the superior meat goat breed. Boer bucks are the ideal choice for commercial farmers wanting to improve the economic viability of their farming and value add their product through superior genetics.

For the international and local producer, the Australian Boer goat offers:

- A source of top quality genetics.
  - Animals that have been selected to thrive in a range of farming conditions.
  - A highly versatile breed that complements other livestock production.
  - A cost effective meat production resource.
  - A product of a clean pristine sea-locked continent free from many diseases.
- (Source BGBAA Website January 2010)

### FAQs (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS) ABOUT BOER GOATS

#### COMMERCIAL/STUD ENTERPRISES:

1. What is a Crossbred goat?

Crossbred animals are derived from any other breed of goat including, rangeland (bush/feral) cashmere, angora and milking breed goats, which are mated with a Boer Buck. The first generation cross is an F1 (50% Boer), the second generation cross is F2 (75% Boer), the third is F3 (87.5% Boer) etc.

2. What is the difference between a Purebred and a Full blood Boer goat?

A Full blood Boer goat is descended (on both sire and dam sides) from Boer goats that can be traced directly back to South African imported Boer goats. A Purebred Boer goat is the result of upgrading another breed with registered Boer bucks (over at least four generations for does, and five generations for bucks). The studbook was closed to this upgrading system in 2006 so this path to full registration no longer applies (however the progeny of goats that were already of Purebred status can be registered). Purebred Boers and their progeny cannot become Full blood Boers.

3. Which animal should I breed?

Cross-bred and unregistered Boers are bred for the commercial meat market. The females are generally kept as replacements to build herd numbers or sold as breeders to the domestic or export markets.

Depending of their quality and registration status, Boer goats can be sold as stud animals to the domestic and export markets. Only the best bucks that meet the Breed standards (see 5 below) should be kept and registered, the rest should be culled and sold into the commercial meat market. What is purchased depends on whether you wish to focus on a commercial or stud operation. There is a considerable difference in the price of commercial and stud quality animals.

4. How do I register my Boers?

In order to register animals, both the parents (buck and doe) must be registered and the animals should meet the BGBAA Breed standards (see 5 below). If you are breeding stud animals you need to become a member of the BGBAA and have a stud prefix. Animal registration forms are available online at <http://www.australianboergoat.com.au>.

The goats must be either tattooed with their identification numbers or double tagged according to the Associations guidelines. Make sure any registered goats have the correct identification and papers before you purchase them.

5. What are the Breed standards?

The breed standards are written explanations and descriptions of the ideal Boer goat. Presently the Australian Boer Goat breed standard is similar to the South African Boer Goat Society standard. The Australian standard is reviewed from time to time and it is possible that the standard may change in the longer term. The current standards booklet (A Study of the SA Boer goat 2006) is available from the Association c/- ABRI, (02) 6773 5177

6. How many goats can I run per acre/hectare?

The easiest way to answer this question is to talk to your local breeders or Stock Agents such as Landmark, Elders or Rodwells, and find out the DSE (Dry Sheep Equivalent) in your area. It will be slightly lower for goats than sheep. As a DSE is based on a basic unit of a sheep wether, you must consider that a breeding Boer doe will require up to three times as much nutrition as a wether when she is pregnant and raising kids. Consider also that your property may not be able to sustain the goats at this level all year round and supplementary feeding may be required. Another rough guide is that you can run approximately six breeding does to one breeding cow.

## MARKETS FOR BOER GOATS:

7. Where do I sell my goats for meat?

There are a number of buyers in each state who supply to butchers or restaurants. They usually have weight and age specifications to which you must comply. It is simply a matter of weighing your animals and contacting the buyers to find out the latest prices per kg. You may have to deliver to the nearest abattoir. This means a controlled kidding period (see 10 below) will result in your animals meeting specifications at roughly the same time. You can also advertise locally and sell live animals “at the farm gate”.

Some abattoirs specialise in supplying goat meat for export markets however they usually source the manufacturing meat type goats that are not suitable for the prime Australian domestic market and the price paid is considerably less.

In addition there is a live export market for goats both for eating and for breeding stock

#### 8. What are Capretto and Chevon?

These are the two major markets for goat meat.

Capretto is a goat still suckling its mother (milk fed) generally up to the age of three months. It is sold for meat usually in the 6-10 kg carcass weight range (12-20kg live weight).

Chevon is the meat from young goat up to the age of 12 months. Weight range is +/- 16kg carcass weight (30-40kg liveweight). If male goats are to be grown out for the Chevon or older age markets they must be neutered (castrated) as early as possible (for animal welfare reasons three days to three weeks is ideal). This is usually done using an elastrator tool to put a rubber ring on their testicles. The goat is then referred to as a “wether”.

Like lamb, goat meat is considered at its prime up to 12 months. After this it is not as popular in Australian domestic markets. Older animals (culls) may be sold to buyers for a lower price. The meat product of these older goats is acceptable to overseas export markets.

9. Live export markets are available for commercial and registered Boer does and bucks. Prices and market availability varies. It is suggested you contact your BGBAA State representatives to find current markets available.

#### BREEDING:

#### 10. At what age do you breed young does?

Does should not be bred under 12 months. Ideally, they should be joined from 14 months-18 months (when they are at least 40 kg) to kid for the first time before they are two years of age. Young does can start to cycle from 4-6 months, therefore they should be kept well away from any bucks. At this age they are too young to join. Does bred when they are too young/small may result in stunting of their growth for a number of years and their kids will also be stunted as the does cannot provide sufficient milk for them to grow well.

#### 11. How long is gestation and where should I kid the does down?

Gestation is around 150 days (5 months). Kidding is often the busiest time for the goat farmer. Because does usually have multiple kids, the kids are a little smaller than a lamb, and because they do not have a fat layer like a lamb, goat kids are particularly susceptible to cold stress when they are born. Does left to kid out on exposed land under cold wet conditions will not be able to keep their kids warm and many kids will die of exposure. Farmed goats are usually bought into kidding paddocks that are sheltered and have predator protection before the kids are born and for several weeks after.



12. How many kids does a Boer goat have?

Goats usually have twins. In doing any calculations for herd increments, most breeders work on 1.5 average per doe per year. However if the season is favourable, multiple births (triplets/quads) are common. It is rare that the doe will be able to provide enough milk for this number of kids so hand rearing may be necessary.

13. How many does can a buck mate with?

This depends on the size and age of the buck. Young bucks from age about six months can mate with does but should be mated with very few at this age. A well-grown buck at about 10 to 12 months can mate up to 25 does; a mature buck at 18 months can mate with 30-40 does. The rule of thumb is 3% (i.e. 3 bucks for 100 does). Bucks should be left with the does for about six weeks (two three week cycles) and then removed. This makes the kidding period tight and manageable and means that bucks are not running with young does.

In a stud enterprise care must be taken that the buck and his mating does are kept well away from other bucks as you need to record which buck is used over specific does for registration purposes. If you run more than one mating group, two fences would be required between each group during mating time. In a commercial environment several bucks can run together with the does.

14. Do I need to build shelters for the goats?

Goats are hardy animals that can survive in harsh environments, however some shelter for protection in bad weather, persistent rain, and windy cold snaps, is recommended. Heavy tree shelterbelts and bush may be suitable however simple three sided sheds are usually the most satisfactory for intensively farmed goats. There must be sufficient space for all animals to gain shelter including the kids. As there is a strong pecking order with goats, a long, open shed is a better option than a deep shed with one doorway.

Housing can be simple and cost effective. A shed or barn with good ventilation is ideal; however recycling materials such as rainwater tanks can be just as effective. Remember to strap down tanks to avoid them moving with strong winds.

#### FEEDING:

##### 15. What do goats eat?

Contrary to popular belief goats don't eat "anything". What you feed will depend on the pasture available. Goats like to roam and are selective eaters. They are extremely useful in weed control and eating plants other animals will not eat. However feeding will also depend on the stage of growth of the animal, and whether the does are about to kid or are lactating. These latter stages place the greatest demand for nutrition, so depending on the pasture and time of the year, you may need to supplementary feed with hay, grain or other feed as and when necessary. Free access to mineral supplements will help to replace any mineral deficiencies in the soil.

Access to fresh water at all times of the year is essential. Troughs must be at a suitable height for goats and kids to drink without the risk of falling in and drowning.

Take care to introduce grain and pellets to your goats gradually otherwise you may kill your goats with grain poisoning.

#### HUSBANDRY:

##### 16. What kind of health problems do goats have?

It is important to do as much research as possible before buying goats and only buy from reputable breeders. Goats, as with most farmed animals, require vaccinations and treatment for internal and external parasites. It is important not to overgraze pasture as this magnifies problems. Small landholders should consider rotational grazing. See the links at the end of this article for more information. Overfeeding grain and only providing lush green grass may cause health problems. Goats require plenty of quality roughage and nutritious food for high production. Goats stressed by underfeeding, overcrowding, and exposure to poor weather are the ones most vulnerable to health problems.

Proper consultation with a veterinarian should be undertaken when there are any concerns for an animal's welfare.

##### 17. Will I have to trim goats' feet?

How often you will need to trim feet will depends very much on the type of country that the goats are running on. If you run your goats on soft country and/or in wet conditions, they will probably need their hooves trimmed regularly. Hoof type is heritable so some goats will never need their feet trimmed; however this is not the general situation for most goats. On harder or

very hilly country where goats are required to walk a lot over rough ground, feet will not be as much of an issue.

Selection for sound feet as part of your breeding program will eliminate many problems. Always check the hoof condition of any stock prior to purchase and ask the breeder for goats who have excellent feet if hoof trimming is going to be a big issue for you.

Depending where you buy your goats and what else is running on your property, goats can have foot problems such as foot-scald/foot rot. This can be treated in a number of ways. Some farmers treat regularly in wet country with footbaths of dilute zinc sulphate, and small numbers of goats can be individually sprayed between the toes. Talk to local breeders and ask about foot problems when you buy your goats, as foot scald/foot rot is a highly contagious condition. Always keep goats new to your property isolated from other goats for a period, treat for worms, lice, vaccinate and footbath before allowing them to join the rest of your herd.

#### FENCING:

##### 18. What sort of fencing do I need?

Animals raised behind wire will generally have respect for fencing. Secure boundary/buck fencing is one or two electric stand-offs on a hinged-joint (pre-fabricated wire netting) fence e.g. Stocktite 7– 90-30 with two strands of 2.5mm wire above.



Goats will tend to go under rather than over fencing so make sure any gaps under the fence are blocked.

You must have 30cm spacings (not 15cm) between the vertical wires in the prefabricated fencing or the goats will continuously get their heads stuck in the fence. Very young kids can usually get through any fencing option however they will not usually stray far from their mothers. An electric stand-off wire keeps kids on the right side of the fence. Kids taught to respect fences from an early age are usually well fenced-trained as older goats.

#### PREDATOR CONTROL:

##### 19. What about predators?

Breeders in Australia generally use either Maremmas (Italian guardian dogs) or Alpacas to keep foxes away. Foxes are a particular problem for young kids especially kids up to two to three weeks of age. Eagles may also take young kids. Dingoes and dogs can be a threat to goats of any size. Guardian animals can provide a deterrent to these.

#### PURCHASING GOATS:

##### 20. Where do I buy goats?

The BGBAA website frequently has goats for sale in its Classifieds section. You can also look up BGBAA members in your area and ask if they have stock for sale. The National website <http://www.australianboergoat.com.au> has a link (Main Menu) to a Herd book Search that you can use to locate members or animals.

It is important to only buy from reputable breeders and it is recommended that, prior to purchase, you gain as much information as you can of the requirements of goats. The first year owning goats is the most important year for learning about them. If you buy from a reputable breeder you have someone to talk to about any problems that arise and they will provide advice that will save you a lot of time and money.

Buying cheap goats from inexperienced breeders means you are more likely to have problems in the long term. You may import problems such as, goats in kid too early, does too close to kidding, lice infestations, worm infestations, foot problems, mineral deficiencies etc.

The links below are useful Web Sites and a good starting point or you can contact any Committee member of the Association at the following link: <http://www.australianboergoat.com.au>  
Go to Committees (Main Menu) and select the Committee for your State.

The BGBAA will, at times, have Breeders Workshops and Information Days in each State that will help you in the selection of animals. Visit the above site for more information.



## 21. Are there any legal requirements when purchasing goats?

It became compulsory in 2008 for goat breeders to identify all animals with approved NLIS tags if they are moved from the property of origin (this includes slaughter goats).

These breeder tags display the PIC (property identification code) number of the property where the goat was born, and some type of tags can be printed with the tag number of the goat.

NVD (National Vendor Declaration) forms are used in conjunction with NLIS tags to track stock movements and to prevent theft or dishonest activities within the livestock industry. An NVD and a National Goat Health Certificate must accompany all animals sold.

When purchasing goats, it is essential to ensure that NLIS tags are in place and that the seller provides an NVD and a Health certificate on collection/delivery of your new goats.

Regulations may vary between States so if transporting animals across borders make sure you check out the requirements for each State.

More information can be obtained from the following site:

<http://www.mla.com.au>

and type NLIS for Goats in the Search Engine.

If purchasing registered animals it is also important to sight the registration paper of the animal and take a photocopy. It is the responsibility of the vendor to transfer the paper to you at their cost. This should ideally be done in your presence.

### USEFUL WEB SITES

- ❖ <http://www.australianboergoats.com.au>
  - Go to Main Menu, Documents, Boer Goat General Info
- ❖ <http://www.bgbaavictoria.com.au>
  - Click on to Links
- ❖ <http://www.mla.com.au>
  - Click on to Goat producers and scroll down
- ❖ <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au>
  - Type in Boer Goats in the keyword search. Scroll down and click on the links.
- ❖ <http://www.acga.org.au/goatnotes/index.php>
  - Australian Goat Notes about 85% online. Very useful. Hard copy can be obtained from BGBAA c/- ABRI (02) 6773 5177

The Association puts out a regular publication called Boer Briefs, and a Journal once a year. Current and back issues can be obtained from David Munro (02) 4983 1500

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