

FACT SHEET

L-934

KEYS TO MEAT-TYPE GOAT PRODUCTION

Jack L. Groff*

Meat or Spanish goats have been popular with Texas ranchmen for years. Most ranches keep a small flock for a home meat supply and for practice roping.

Spanish goats are able to withstand the rigors of Texas rangeland. They also are quite prolific with twins and triplets quite common. Since they receive little care and attention and are roped occasionally, many of these animals become quite wild.

The Spanish goat has a much wider range of adaptability than the Angora goat. The Spanish goat may be successfully produced in all sections of Texas while the Angora goat is limited to areas of low rainfall, primarily to Central and Southwest Texas.

Goats are known as browsing animals; however, when conditions are good they may spend more time grazing than browsing. Goats are known to feed upon more than 25 species of browse plants. These animals may be used successfully to control oak sprouts on cut-over or bulldozed grazing land.

Spanish goats come in a variety of colors ranging from solid black, brown and white to fawn and brown with black points and a black stripe down the back. There are also many combinations of spotting, black and white, brown and white, black and brown and some blue gray. Most of these animals are horned, both male and female. The horns of the males grow much larger and heavier than the females. A few Spanish goats are polled.

A few ranchmen have tried to establish flocks of uniform color. Apparently black is fairly easy to establish. Several flocks of black goats have been noted. White is another color phase that seems popular and fairly easy to establish. Most flocks are

multicolored. When these goats are to be run with finewool sheep, white or light-colored animals are preferred. Black and dark-colored hair from the goats may shed and contaminate the fleeces of the sheep. Every precaution should be taken to avoid contamination of Angora Mohair fleeces with Spanish goat hair in pens, shearing areas and breeding programs.

Few attempts have been made to improve the animals through selective breeding. Several flocks have had infusions of dairy breed bucks to increase the size and milk production of the native does.

Requirements

Tight fencing is a "must" for meat-type goat production. Woven wire fence with two or three barbed wires above is preferred. A barbed wire fence can be made fairly goat proof by spacing the lower wires about six inches apart and gradually widening the space between them. It takes eight to nine strands of barbed wire with plenty of stays between the posts to make a barbed wire fence goat proof.

Regular sheep working pens are adequate for working goats. Cattle pens can be adapted by making them tighter near the ground.

Range Management

Spanish goats should be figured at the rate of five does to the animal unit. These animals can be used in the mixed grazing of livestock, provided they are stocked according to the recommendations for the area. They complement sheep and cattle and help provide the most efficient use of rangelands. Spanish goats are used to control sprouts of certain species of brush in cut-over and bulldozed areas. Spanish goats consume a higher percentage of brush in their diet than other goats.

*Extension sheep and goat specialist, The Texas A&M University System.

Rotation grazing should be practiced to improve the ranges and help control internal parasites.

Range improvement practices consistent with the area and the ranch economics should be practiced.

Supplemental grazing, such as stubble fields, small grain, sudan and irrigated pastures, should be used to supplement native pastures when available.

Breeding Practices

Spanish goats differ considerably from Angoras in their breeding habits. Spanish goats will breed at any season of the year. Many does breed back while they are nursing a kid. It is a common practice to leave the bucks with the does the year around. Some producers prefer to have the kids come at certain seasons of the year; this is especially true in areas where eagle predation is common. In such cases the bucks should be removed and run separately from the does until time to breed them.

The gestation period varies from 147 to 155 days. Five months is the average length of the gestation period.

Three to four bucks per 100 does are recommended, depending on the size, roughness and brushiness of the pastures. It is a good practice to condition the bucks with supplemental feed about 2 weeks before turning them with the does. One-half to 1 pound of grain or stock cubes will do a good job of conditioning.

Does may be flushed by feeding $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ pound of grain or range cubes per head daily or by moving them to a fresh, rested pasture about 2 weeks before turning the bucks out.

There are several systems of mating. Some producers prefer to leave the bucks with the does all the time. In such situations, doe kids may be bred before reaching a desirable size. A better method may be to put the bucks out during February and March, remove them and put them back during September and October. This system will allow for better management of the doe kids.

Follow a good selective breeding program. Mate the best does to the best bucks, second best does to the second best bucks and poorest does to the poorest bucks. Save replacements from the top two groups. Bucks should be changed often to prevent inbreeding in the flock. Changing bucks every 2 years should prevent loss of vigor in the flock.

Bucks should have a good conformation, large size and be muscular. The ability to grow rapidly from birth to weaning is essential.

Points to be considered in a selective breeding program:

1. Large size
2. Multiple birth
3. Twice a year kidding
4. Good conformation (good muscling)

5. Rapid growth

6. Straight legs with good bone

Points of lesser importance include: color, horned or polled, type of ears and type of coat (long or short hair).

Culling points such as weaknesses of conformation, bad mouths or weak feet and legs also should be considered.

Supplemental Feeding

Most ranchmen do not provide Spanish goats with supplemental feed. Those that do, report higher kid crops and flocks that are easier to handle.

Feed $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ pound of cottonseed cake or $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of yellow corn per head daily through the winter months or prolonged dry periods.

Self-feeding, using salt as an inhibitor, may be used in large, rough or brushy pastures. Keep the salt proportion as low as possible and locate feeders $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 mile from water. A popular mixture is 3 parts of ground milo, 1 part cottonseed meal and 1 part salt.

Kidding

No special attention is given to the does at kidding time. The best policy is to leave them alone and stay out of the pastures as much as possible during the kidding season. Pastures that have been deferred are good for kidding. Small grain pastures also are good for kidding since they provide excellent feed for milk production.

Marking

Most kids are marketed at weights under 50 pounds alive, or about 4 to 5 months of age. At this age and weight, it is not necessary to mark or castrate the kids.

If soremouth is on the premises it would be wise to vaccinate the kids for this disease at 2 to 4 weeks of age.

Management of Replacement Doe Kids

Since income is derived from the sale of kids, multiple birth should be given high priority in the selective breeding program. Early born kids should be given preference over late born ones for replacements. Select doe kids from does that kid twice each year when possible.

Wean doe kids when they weigh 40 to 50 pounds or are about 4 to 5 months old. Does should be weaned in the drylot and taught to eat supplemental feed. It may be difficult to teach range-raised goats to eat supplemental feed.

These doe kids can return to the breeding flock when they reach desirable size or are about 1 year of age.

Control of External Parasites

Several kinds of lice and ticks attack Spanish goats. Spray them at least twice each year or as needed. Follow recommendations in B-1306, *Texas Guide for Controlling External Parasites of Livestock and Poultry*. Spray the goats again 12 to 18 days following the first spraying.

Follow these precautions:

1. Use only recommended sprays or dips in strengths recommended by the Food and Drug Administration.
2. Follow guidelines for spraying or dipping animals to go to slaughter.
3. Do not spray under a shed or barn.
4. Spray with the wind — not against it.
5. Do not mix solutions with your hands.
6. Spray or dip animals at a time when you will be able to change clothes and bathe.
7. Follow recommendations on mixing or diluting solutions.
8. Do not mix chemicals.

Drenching

Watch animals closely for signs of internal parasites, such as scouring, rapid loss of weight, anemia or

depraved appetite. Drench the animals through the season as necessary. Change drenches occasionally so that parasites do not build up a resistance to any specific drench. Only use drenches that are recommended by the Food and Drug Administration.

In drier areas of the State, feeding phenothiazine salt may be beneficial. A mixture of 9 parts of salt to 1 part phenothiazine is recommended.

Marketing

Kids are usually marketed at 4 to 5 months of age or before weaning.

Some buyers will pick the kids up at the ranch. Markets handling quite a few Spanish goats are located in Junction, Uvalde, Lampasas, Golthwaite and San Angelo.

Records

Keep accurate records of percentage of kid crop and weight of kids at market time. These records will help develop a prolific flock of fast-growing animals.

Records of costs and returns will aid with income tax records and in planning a more efficient business program for the ranch.

(See page 4 for estimated costs)

The author wishes to acknowledge Robert H. Kensing, Extension District 7 area economist-management, for his contributions.

ESTIMATED COSTS OF RUNNING A MEAT-TYPE DOE FOR A YEAR*

	General estimate	Your ranch
Feed (¼ lb. per day × 90 days) (\$180 @ ton)	\$ 2.02	\$ _____
Interest on does (\$25.00 @ 13%)	3.25	_____
Death loss (3% @ \$25.00)	.75	_____
Veterinary and medicine	.30	_____
Salt and minerals	.30	_____
Equipment, fuel, miscellaneous	3.00	_____
Bulk cost	.40	_____
Marketing	2.00	_____
Taxes	.10	_____
Replacement (13% Ann. Rate) (7.7 yr.)	3.25	_____
	<u>\$15.37</u>	_____
Returns		
Kid: 150% kid crop × \$18.50 per head	\$27.75	_____
Aged goats: 10% @ \$16.00	1.60	_____
Total	<u>\$29.35</u>	_____
Estimated returns to land, labor and management	<u>\$13.98</u>	_____

ESTIMATED RETURNS TO LAND, LABOR AND MANAGEMENT AT VARIOUS
KIDDING RATES (PER SPANISH DOE)*

	Percent kids marketed					
	75	100	125	150	175	200
Value of kids	\$13.87	\$18.50	\$23.13	\$27.75	\$32.27	\$37.00
Value of aged goats	<u>1.60</u>	<u>1.60</u>	<u>1.60</u>	<u>1.60</u>	<u>1.60</u>	<u>1.60</u>
	\$15.47	\$20.10	\$24.73	\$29.35	\$33.87	\$38.60
Minus est. costs	<u>15.37</u>	<u>15.37</u>	<u>15.37</u>	<u>15.37</u>	<u>15.37</u>	<u>15.37</u>
Returns to land labor, mgmt.	\$ 0.10	\$ 4.73	\$ 9.36	\$13.98	\$18.50	\$23.23

*All cost and income estimates are based on price data available in April, 1980.

Educational programs conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socio-economic level, race, color, sex, religion or national origin.

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, The Texas A&M University System and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914.