

Judging Meat Goats

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Selection, Management and Judging of Meat-Type Spanish Goats

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Several criteria should be considered when selecting and judging meat goats. These include conformation (structural correctness), general appearance (size and scale, capacity, and depth and width of body), muscling (growth and weight per day of age) and condition or finish (fatness).

CONFORMATION

Meat goats should be evaluated on “type” and “market desirability.” These terms refer to frame size, skeletal correctness and how these blend in the market animal. “Market desirability” relates how much finish the goat has in relation to its weight, size and age and is sometimes referred to in terms of USDA quality and yield grades used for lambs.

A good market goat should be rectangular in appearance from the side with straight, level top and bottom lines. Length of rump, length of body and length of leg are important to market desirability. The rump should be level and the overall body should be trim. The legs should be straight and placed square under the body, not post-legged or cow-hocked. The fore and hind legs should show evidence of muscling.

From the front, a market goat should show width between the forelegs, muscling in the forearm and shoulders, trimness in the brisket or breast area and soundness and correctness in the front feet and legs. The head should be in proportion to the neck and body.

From the rear, the hindquarter should be muscular and long and the back, loin and rump should be uniform in width. The feet and legs should be straight and spaced square and wide under the goat.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

STATURE. The term stature refers to the overall skeletal size and length of the goat. Goats must have an adequate length of cannon bone from knee to pastern and should be above average in overall length of body and general size. Cannon bone length is a good indication of skeletal size. The goat's height measured at the withers should be slightly more than at the hips, and bones must be of good size.

HEAD. The head should combine the beauty of eyes, nose, ears, and overall form with strength and refinement. It should have a balance of length, width and substance that insures an ability to consume large amounts of forage with ease.

FRONT END. The front end is a combination of chest and shoulder features. The goat

should have a wide chest floor and prominent brisket with a smooth blending of shoulder blades and sharp withers. This insures room for the heart and lungs to do their work with ease and also is evidence of proper muscle and ligament strength.

FRONT LEGS. The goat's front legs should be straight, perpendicular to the ground, sound in the knees and full at the point of the elbow. The legs should move with the front feet pointing straight ahead.

BACK. A back that is straight, strong, wide, long and level is desired in goats. This denotes a strong body build with good muscling and is indicative of strength to carry large quantities of feed.

RUMP. The goat's rump should be long, wide and level from thurl to thurl, cleanly fleshed and have a slight slope from hips to pins. The shape of the rump is important as it affects leg set.

HIND LEGS. The goat's rear legs should be wide apart and straight when viewed from the rear, with clean hocks and a good combination of bone refinement and strength. Observed from the side, a plumb line originating at the pin bone would fall parallel to the leg bone from hock to pastern and touch the ground behind the heel of the foot. The resulting angles produced at the hock and stifle joint will be most ideal for easy walking and a minimum of joint problems.

FEET. Meat goats need strong pasterns and strong, well-formed feet with tight toes, deep heel and level sole. Such feet are highly resistant to injury or infection and easy to keep trimmed. Goats with uneven toes and extremely weak pasterns should be culled.

MUSCLE

Meat characteristics can be visually determined by examining the animal hindquarters loin, shoulders and neck.

HINDQUARTERS. A long, deeply attached muscle, relatively thick at the thigh and stifle is desirable in meat goats. Heavier muscling on the outside of the leg is acceptable. Muscle over the thurl and rump should be obvious.

LOIN. The loin eye or ribeye is typically the best indicator of meatiness in market goats. It should be wide with a symmetrically oval shape on each side of the backbone. This muscle should carry forward over the ribs or rack.

SHOULDERS. The goat's muscling should increase from the withers to the point of the shoulder with the thickest muscle occurring immediately above the chest floor. The circumference of the forearm is the second most important indicator of meatiness, so the forearm muscle should exhibit a prominent bulge and should tie in deep into the knee.

NECK. The juncture of the neck and shoulder should be free of excess tissue. It should gently slope to indicate muscling. Smoothness and quality are important in this area. A long clean neck with muscling in balance to the remainder of the animal is desired.

CONDITION

The term condition refers to the amount of finish or fat the animal is carrying. Goats deposit fat internally before they do externally. The ideal condition is a thin, but uniform, covering over the loin, rib and shoulder. The external fat thickness over the loin at the 13th rib should be between .08 to .12 inches or an average .1 inch.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Information used for this criteria was taken from Texas Agricultural Extension Service Publication B-5018. Other Extension Service Meat Goat Publications Include:

B-5021

Spanish Goat Management

By: Joe C. Pasehal, B. Frank Craddock, C. Wayne Hanselka, and Dale Rollins

L-5028

Feeding, Fitting and Showing Suggestions For Spanish Goat Projects

By: Edmundo E. Martinez, Joe C. Paschal, Frank Craddock and C. Wayne Hanselka

B-5034

South Texas Cabrito Recipes