

5-20-82
1.2M
REV

KEYS

TO PROFITABLE PRODUCTION

KEYS TO MEAT-TYPE GOAT PRODUCTION

Jack Groff*

Most Texas ranchers keep a small flock of meat, or Spanish, goats for a home meat supply and for practice roping. Spanish goats can withstand the rigors of rough Texas rangeland. They are also quite prolific, often giving birth to twins or triplets. Reproduction rates have reached 200 percent in some flocks receiving adequate care and nutrition.

The Spanish goat, with a wide range of adaptability, may be produced successfully in all sections of Texas, while the Angora goat is limited to areas of low rainfall, primarily central and southwest Texas.

Although goats are known as browsing animals, when conditions are good they may spend more time grazing than browsing. They feed on more than 25 species of browse plants, and can control oak sprouts on cut-over or bulldozed grazing land.

Spanish goats come in a variety of colors ranging from solid black, brown or white to fawn and brown with black points and a black stripe down the back. Combinations of spotting include black and white, brown and white, black and brown with some blue-gray. Most of the males and females are horned, but the males grow larger and heavier horns. A few Spanish goats are polled (have no horns).

A few ranchers have tried to establish flocks of uniform color. Several flocks of black goats have been started. White is also popular and fairly easy to establish. However, most flocks are multicolored.

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

If these goats are to be run with finewool sheep, they should be white or light-colored. Black or dark-colored hair may shed and contaminate the fleeces of the sheep. Avoid contamination of Angora Mohair fleeces with Spanish goat hair in pens, shearing areas and breeding programs.

One of the few attempts to improve Spanish goats through selective breeding has been the infusion of dairy breed bucks to increase the size and milk production of the native does.

Requirements

Meat-type goat production requires tight fencing, preferably with woven wire fence with two or three barbed wires above it. Barbed wire fence can be goat-proofed by spacing the lower wires about 6 inches apart and gradually widening the space between them. Eight to nine strands of barbed wire with plenty of stays between them make a barbed wire fence goat-proof.

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

Range Management

Spanish goats should be figured at the rate of five does to the animal unit. If stocked according to the area recommendations, they can be used in mixed livestock grazing. They complement sheep and cattle.

Since Spanish goats consume a higher percentage of brush in their diet than any other goat, they help make efficient use of rangeland.

Rotate grazing to improve the ranges and help control internal parasites. Improve ranges in a manner consistent with area recommendations and ranch economics. Use supplemental grazing, such as stubble fields, small grain, sudan, if available, and irrigated pastures in addition to native pastures.

Breeding Practices

Spanish goats differ considerably from Angoras in their breeding habits. They will breed during any season. Many does breed back while they are nursing a kid. The bucks are commonly left with the does throughout the year.

Some producers may prefer to have the kids come at certain seasons of the year, especially in areas where eagle predation is common. These producers should remove the bucks and have them run separately from the does until it is time to breed them.

The gestation period varies from 147 to 155 days, but 5 months is the average time.

Provide three to four bucks per 100 does, depending on the size, roughness and brushiness of the pastures. Condition the bucks with a supplemental feed of one-half to 1 pound of grain or stock cubes about 2 weeks before turning them out with the does.

Flush does by a daily feeding of one-quarter to one-third pound of grain or range cubes per head, or by moving them to a fresh, rested pasture about 2 weeks before turning out the bucks.

The best system for mating is to put out the bucks during February and March, remove them and put them back during September and October. This allows for good management of doe kids. Some producers prefer to leave the bucks with does all the time, but using this system, kids may be bred before they have developed.

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. Change bucks often to prevent inbreeding in the flock. Changing bucks every 2 years should prevent loss of vigor in the flock.

In addition to having a good conformation, bucks should be large and muscular. They must grow rapidly from birth to weaning.

Important considerations in a selective breeding program are:

- large size
- multiple births
- twice a year kidding
- good conformation (muscling)
- rapid growth
- straight legs with good bones

Points of lesser importance include:

- color
- horned or polled
- type of ears
- type of coat (long or short hair)

Also consider culling points such as:

- weakness of conformation
- bad mouths
- weak feet and legs

Supplemental Feeding

Ranchers who provide Spanish goats with supplemental feed report higher kid crops and easier-to-handle flocks. Feed one-quarter to one-half pound of cottonseed cake or one-third to three-quarters pound of yellow corn per head daily through the winter 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 one-half to 1 mile from water. A popular mixture is three parts of ground milo, one part cottonseed meal and one part salt.

Kidding

Does do not require special attention at kidding time. Leave them alone and stay out of pastures as much as possible. Deferred pastures are good for kidding and so are small grain pastures since they provide excellent feed for milk production.

Marking

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

If soremouth is on the premises, vaccinate the kids at 2 to 4 weeks of age.

Management of Replacement Doe Kids

Since income is derived from the sale of kids, give multiple birth high priority in the selective breeding program. Give preference to early-born kids for replacements. Select doe kids from does that kid twice each year.

Wean doe kids when they weigh 40 to 50 pounds and are 4 to 5 months old. Wean does in the drylot and teach them to eat supplemental feed. Teaching range-raised goats to eat supplemental feed may be difficult.

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

Control of External Parasites

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

Follow these precautions:

- Use only recommended sprays or dips in strengths recommended by the Food and Drug Administration.
- Follow guidelines for spraying or dipping animal to go to slaughter.
- Do not spray under a shed or barn.
- Spray with the wind — not against it.
- Do not mix solutions with your hands.
- Spray or dip animals at a time when you will be able to change clothes and bathe.
- Follow recommendations on mixing or diluting solutions.
- 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 as necessary through the season. Occasionally change drenches so parasites do not build up a resistance to any specific

drench. Use only drenches recommended by the Food and Drug Administration.

In drier areas of the state, a feeding mixture of nine parts of salt to one part phenothiazine may be beneficial.

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, Goldthwaite and San Angelo.

Records

Keep accurate records of percentage of kid crop and weight of kids at market time. These records will help you 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 your ranch.

The author wishes to acknowledge Robert H. Kensing, Extension economist-management, The Texas A&M University System, for his contributions.

(See page 4 for estimated costs.)

ESTIMATED COSTS OF RUNNING A MEAT DOE FOR A YEAR*

	General estimate	Your ranch
Feed (¼ lb. per day × 90 days) (\$200 @ ton)	\$ 2.25	\$ _____
Interest on does (\$35.00 @ 13%)	4.55	_____
Death loss (3% @ \$35.00)	1.05	_____
Veterinary and medicine	.60	_____
Salt and minerals	.60	_____
Equipment, fuel, miscellaneous	3.00	_____
Bulk cost	.40	_____
Marketing	1.50	_____
Taxes	.10	_____
Replacement (13% Ann. Rate) (7.7 yr.)	4.55	_____
	\$18.20	_____
Returns		
Kid: 150% kid crop × \$22.00 per head	\$33.00	_____
Aged goats: 10% @ \$25.00	2.50	_____
Total	\$35.50	_____
Estimated returns to land, labor and management	\$17.30	_____

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	\$16.50	\$22.00	\$27.50	\$33.00	\$38.50	\$44.00
Value of aged goats	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50
	\$19.00	\$24.50	\$30.00	\$35.50	\$41.00	\$46.50
Minus est. costs	18.20	18.20	18.20	18.20	18.20	18.20
Returns to land, labor, mgmt.	\$ 0.80	\$ 6.30	\$11.80	\$17.30	\$22.80	\$28.30

*All cost and income estimates are based on price data available in November 1981.

Educational programs conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic 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.