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TRI-STATE MEAT GOAT SURVEY SUMMARY

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The demand for and people involved with meat goats has risen substantially over the last several years. Data from the 2002 and 2007 Census of Agriculture for the South Dakota, North Dakota & Minnesota region indicate that meat goat inventories increased by 18,680 head with 784 more farms having meat goats. Census numbers for farms that reported sales of meat goats indicate the number of meat goats sold increased 9,598 head with an additional 378 farms involved. Table 1 lists meat goat census numbers from 2007 and 2002 for each state.

Table 1. Change in Meat Goat Census Numbers in SD, ND & Minnesota, 2002 to 2007

	Inventory Numbers			Meat Animals Sold		
	2002	2007	Change	2002	2007	Change
South Dakota						
# of Farm	287	452	165	118	183	65
# of Head	4,677	8,597	3,920	3,771	6,180	2,409
North Dakota						
# of Farm	132	211	79	30	77	47
# of Head	1,786	3,240	1,454	1,371	1,892	521
Minnesota						
# of Farm	1,011	1,551	540	59	625	266
# of Head	11,084	24,390	13,306	5,834	12,502	6,668
Total						
# of Farm	1,430	2,214	784	507	855	378
# of Head	17,547	36,227	18,680	10,976	20,574	9,598

Given the increased attention towards the production of meat goats, a survey was conducted of meat goat producers to obtain information on the background of meat goat producers in addition to the production & marketing of meat goats in the region. The survey also was conducted to discover the interest meat goat producers have in establishing a tri-state meat goat association and/or marketing cooperative. Respondents provided information on production, processing and marketing of meat goats. The survey participants were solicited from subscribers of the University of Minnesota Meat Goat Listserv and well as attendance records of two Tri-State Meat Goat Producer Workshops. The information in this Economics Commentator provides a review of the results of the survey.

Survey Demographics

Most respondents to this survey were from Minnesota (82%). Other respondents live in South Dakota (15%), North Dakota (2%) and other states (Iowa and Wisconsin, 1%). Most meat goat producers are relatively new to the business; 33% have been producing meat goats for less than 2 years, 45% between 3 to 5 years, and 22% of respondents had been raising goats for six years or more.

Survey respondents are divided into two categories; those respondents that raise meat goats and those who do not, but are interested in meat goat production. The survey was conducted using an internet survey mechanism. A total of 66 survey responses were collected. Those who raised meat goats comprised 86% of the survey sample.

Respondents Who Do Not Raise Meat Goats

Survey respondents who do not currently raise meat goats indicated that the existence of a meat goat association would be a significant contributor to their decision to raise meat goats. Forty four percent responded that it would impact their decision “very much” and 11% indicated “a lot”. The existence of a meat goat cooperative was even more significant as 44% indicated that it would impact their decision “very much” and 33% “a lot”. All though these respondents do not raise meat goats they would still like to be informed of goat production issues (89%) and marketing issues (88%) in the region.

Attributes of Respondents Who Raise Meat Goats

The incentive for raising meat goats is primarily for profit (65%). Other reasons for raising meat goats included 4-H or FFA projects (33%), as a hobby (18%), for competition at shows (17%), for consumption (71%), and for weed control (17%). Most meat goat producers own dairy goats as well as meat goats (55%); of these respondents 62% have less than 5 head of dairy goats in their operation. Fifty four percent of meat goat producers do not raise other meat animals.

The survey suggests that primary incentives for meat goat producers are profit and consumption. As a result, it is not surprising that a large number of respondents (33%) were primarily concerned with the quality of the meat they produce, and 30% were concerned with the number of pounds of meat produced. As indicated above, seventy one percent of respondents consume goat meat. Of those respondents, 28% eat 5 pounds per month, 22% eat 2 pounds per month, and 17% eat 1 pound per month. Sixteen percent eat between 3 and 4 pounds per month, 6% eat 7 pounds and, 3% eat 8 pounds. Those who reported eating more than 10 pounds of goat meat per month made up 8% of respondents.

Thirty-nine of the fifty-seven producers who raise meat goats show goats at fairs and other agricultural events. Producers’ prefer local events (71%) to regional events (27%). Survey respondents did not show goats at national events. Interestingly, survey respondents indicate that they do communicate and share information with other producers but at a lower rate than the level for producer show participation (68%). Fourteen percent of producers only talk to

other producers annually. Other producers talk at least bi-annually (13%), monthly (17%) or daily (7%).

Meat Goat Management

Meat goat offspring (kids) are primarily born early in the year from January through March (65%). Thirty percent responded that they kid between April and May with only 6% of respondents kidding between June and December. Most producers rely on home grown feed and purchased grains for goat production as 89% of respondents do not rent pasture from others to feed their goats.

Twenty six percent of producers raising kids for meat raise less than 10 kids per year, 16% raise 11 to 20 head, 11% raise 21 to 30 kids, 19% raise 31 to 50 head, and 13% raise 50 to 100 kids. Eleven percent of producers provide more than 100 kids per year for meat. Most meat goat producers raise purebred goats (70%).

Almost half of meat goat producers surveyed keep financial records solely on paper (47%). Computerized financial records are kept by 42% and 11% responded that they do not keep records. Sixty five percent would like additional training on record keeping.

Meat Goat Marketing

Kids are marketed in every month of the year with the months of September and October more often (15% each). The percent of producers marketing in other months include: July and November (11% each), May, June, August and December (9% each), January and March (4% each), and February and April (2% each). The primary marketing outlet for meat goats is a livestock auction (52%). Other producers sell directly to consumers (38%), sell to a livestock dealer (21%) or sell directly to restaurants or other retailers (6%).

When marketing meat goats, 31% of producers have 6 or more buyers available at the time of sale, 21% 1 buyer, 19% 2 buyers, and 13% 3 buyers, 8% 4 buyers and 4% have 8 buyers or more. With respect to the price they receive for meat goats, 48% of producers feel they receive a fair price for their goats, 42% did not. There were 10% of respondents that said they do not sell their goats.

Meat Goat Production Education

Education is very important to meat goat producers. Almost all would attend educational meetings on meat goat production (96%). Bi-annually is the most preferred (35%) schedule to hold these workshops, field days, etc. Quarterly and annual meetings both have a 20% preference. Producers also feel that these events should be face to face (87%) verses some other means such as teleconferences.

The registration fee to attend face-to-face meat goat production training should be below \$10 (37%) or \$20 (37%) per person. Thirty dollars per person is acceptable to 14% of producers and 12% would only attend if they were free.

Fifty seven percent of meat goat producers would travel to a training meeting on meat goat production if the event was located 50 miles from home. Forty six percent of producers would travel 100 miles, 42% would travel 150 miles, 10% would travel 250 miles, and 4% would travel 500 miles. Factors influencing their willingness to travel are: a) how much information is included in the training, and b) time, date, and location.

Meat Goat Marketing Education

Almost all meat goat producers would attend training meetings on meat goat marketing (87%). This is just slightly less than the number that would be interested in attending an educational meeting on meat goat production (96%). This again shows the interest of meat goat producers in gaining more knowledge about their industry.

Producers feel that training on meat goat marketing should be held: bi-annually (36%), quarterly (25%) and annually (15%). Producers also feel that these events should be face to face (81%) verses some other means such as teleconferences.

Registration fees to attend these face-to-face educational events should either be \$10 (32%) or \$20 (42%) per person. Thirty dollars per person is acceptable to 14% of producers and 12% would attend if they were free.

Producers feel almost the same on how far they would travel for a meat goat production training

meeting. Forty four percent would travel 100 miles for a fact-to-face marketing meeting, 19% would travel up to 150 miles, and 2% would be willing to travel 500 miles.

Producer Association Organization

Efforts to organize a meat goat production association in the South Dakota, North Dakota, and Minnesota region would be of interest to 58% of producers surveyed. Of those who would attend producer association meetings, 79% do not want to serve as an officer however 61% would serve on committees such as membership, shows, field days, etc.

The best time to hold organizational meetings would be late in the year (September, October, November, & December) with October being the most preferred. Results for each month include: October (25%); November (15%); March (15%); 11% each for the months of April, September, and December; July (7%); May (4%); and August (2%).

Market Cooperative Organization

Establishing a meat goat marketing cooperative is not as popular as organizing a meat goat producer association. Efforts to organize a meet goat marketing cooperative in the South Dakota, North Dakota, and Minnesota region would be of interest to just over a third (37%) of producers surveyed. Of those who would attend meat goat marketing cooperative meetings 63% would be willing to serve as an officer and/or on committees.

The best time to hold an organizational meeting would be in October or early in the year (January through March). Thirty one percent of respondents recommended October; 16% each for January and March; and 15% for the month of February. September and November each received 13%. Other months included April (11%); June and July (9%), 2% for August.

Other Responses

Ninety two percent of all survey respondents agreed that a website for goat production should be dedicated to the SD, ND, & MN region. The majority (52%) did not feel that there should be a separate webpage for a meat goat producer

organization as opposed to a meat goat marketing cooperative.

More education and training on meat goat production is of great interest to the majority of producers in the survey (67%). Training is of such importance to those who want the training that 57% would be willing to share their production records, etc.

A significant number of producers have experienced some resistance from others about raising meat goats (84%). Quotes from some of producers who have experienced resistance include:

- “People think they are crazy and wondered how producers keep them inside the fences.”
- “1. Not accepting of goat meat as an alternative, 2. Cattle producers are skeptical, and 3. Need more education for public.”

- “My husband, he says they cost too much to raise and sell for nothing.”

Future Outlook

Meat goat producers have a very positive outlook for the future. Sixty five percent believe that the outlook for meat goat production in the future is good to excellent (10%). Twenty two percent have a fair outlook and only 4% have the opinion that the future of the meat goat industry is poor.

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