

## Improved Goat Breeds: Kalahari Goat

By Dr.L. Hungwe



Kalahari Red Buck. Pic by L. Hungwe

In the 1970s, Boer goat farmers in South Africa and Namibia noticed special qualities of brown goats produced once in a while by their Boer goats. Together with other farmers, they started selecting these brown coloured goats. Indigenous goats bloodlines collected from the former Bophuthatswana, the Eastern Cape, the Karoo and Namibia were also infused into these goats along the way giving birth to the Kalahari Red (KR) goat.

Americans who visited pioneer breeder Mr Jordaan in 1994 and others who met Louis van Rensburg on his visit to America liked the goats and encouraged them to produce brown goats. These efforts culminated with the formation of the Kalahari Red Breeder's Association in 1999. Starting with only a few brown goats, farmers like Tollie Jardeen rose to dominate world goat shows for several years and won several prizes in the process. The Kalahari Reds were selected for fecundity, mothering ability, hardiness, adaptability and uniform colouring.

The Kalahari reds have a brown coat, with colour shading ranging from dark to light brown. They have a fine vigorous appearance. The head is strong with round, dark coloured and backward curved horns. The ears are broad and pendulous ears just like in the Boer goat. They have a deep, broad brisket and a fleshy shoulder. The barrel is long deep and straight.

The rump is broad, long with well fleshed buttocks and fleshy thighs. The legs are well placed and strong. Kalahari reds have short glossy hair with loose, thick, supple skin folds of the neck and chest. The skin folds are broad and prominent in bucks. Does have a well formed udder and bucks have well-formed testicles.

There are several lessons I would like us to learn from the development Kalahari Red goats.

- **An eye for detail and observation.** Pioneer farmers noticed Boer goat kids with special unique characteristics such as brown coat which were exploited. It is important for a farmer to be very observant and to quickly pick characteristics of economic importance. This is enhanced by accurate record keeping and developing a close relationship with your flock.
- **Power of collaboration.** Goat farmers must work together for the good of the breed. From the above story you will notice that several farmers -both prominent and not so prominent- worked together to come up with the breed. Mr Jordaan had to travel to Namibia to acquire brown bucks in the early years since locally they were in short supply.
- **Use of local resources.** The Boer goat and the Kalahari Red goat have local blood in their genes. It is important that we use and do not lose our Matabele and Mashona blood as we build our flocks and get into commercial production. These goats offer a rich genetic pool that has not been manipulated by active selection and culling. These goats are well suited to the local environment in terms of disease tolerance, nutrition etc.
- **The power of organization.** Kalahari Red breeders organized themselves. They formed an association not for collecting membership subscriptions from unsuspecting farmers, but to get the breed recognized, registered, promoted and marketed. In no time the KR is found as far afield as Australia. Remember in our previous articles one of the challenges of the goat value chain in Zimbabwe, unlike the Beef value chain is poor organization in terms of marketing channels. It is pleasing to note that several goat clubs are being formed and are very active at local levels. Nationally the Breeders Association is taking shape in earnest, though we are still lagging behind

South Africa and Namibia. It is imperative that every serious goat farmer is actively involved at least locally in some goat club or association.

It is sad that as a nation we failed to protect and promote our Tuli cattle breed to such an extent that Australians have now done very well with the genetics and they are claiming ownership of our national treasure simply because we did not realise what we have and we did not act.

- **Continuous learning.** Goat farmers are students for life. Mr Jordaan was encouraged by Americans to farm with brown goats despite being a successful Boer goat farmer. Had he not listened to their advice he could have missed on several world championships as a KR farmer. Mr Louis van Rensburg travelled to America to learn and share experiences and was also encouraged by the Americans to produce KR goats. It is pleasing to note that goat farmers are taking the acquisition of knowledge and skills in goat production seriously, more and more farmers I meet are investing in skills development for themselves and their employees. Goat farmers are also travelling long distances within and across our borders in search of superior genetics.

In our next instalment we will look at the Savannah goat.

Meanwhile, don't forget to give us your feedback. Comment, like, or follow the blog for automatic updates.