

Fullblood vs. purebred Kikos

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The issue of "Fullblood" and "Purebred" terminology with the Kiko breed has come to be a hot topic. The issue was one of the catalysts behind the breakaway of some American Kiko Goat Association members and the formation of the International Kiko Goat Assn.

I was asked to give my view on the issue, but first, a little history. In 1987 a paper was presented to the IV International Goat Conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil, by one of the originators of the Kiko breed. In this paper it was stated that New Zealand feral goats were crossed with bucks from Anglo Nubian, British Toggenburg and Saanen breeds. The stock was selected solely for survivability and growth rates in pastoral environments. In 1978, 20 does were selected from New Zealand feral herds numbering over 1,000 animals. The feral goats were small, but as they say in the South, "tough as pine knots." The dairy bucks added size and milk production. The general policy was to mate the best bucks to the best does.

Eventually, through flock management, an Elite Flock of 50 does was developed from a 1987 flock of 150 does. There were three other satellite flocks that provided the opportunity to introduce new genetics. During that time, the paper continued, improvements in production were still being sought, under the same management regime. After four generations of controlled breeding and crossbreeding, the originators improved productivity of selected groups until the Kiko goats were twice the size of the average New Zealand feral goats - without reducing hardiness.

In 1994, another piece of information was sent out by the developers and breeders of Kiko goats in New Zealand. It gave selection parameters and production traits for the new breed. The bases would be:

1. Rapid rate of growth.
2. Improved fertility.
3. Early maturity.
4. Enhanced nutritional availability for offspring.
5. Extended breeding season.
6. Ease of maintenance.
7. Foot problems were culled.

The consortium that maintained a base flock of 500 does annually culled more than 75 percent of each year's production of females and 90 percent of males. The buck kids were culled again and only the top 5 percent were retained as a pool from which herd sires were selected. As you can see, these gentlemen absolutely had meat goats on their minds, not show goats. This Kiko information resource paper also stated that the first of the animals exported to the United States were released from quarantine in October 1994. At that time, according to the paper, there were 69 registered Purebred Kikos in the U.S. - 10 males and 59 females.

In 1995 in the San Angelo, Texas, newspaper, there was an article written about the Kikos. Now we turn from the developers and originators to the - at that time - exclusive breeders and suppliers of Kiko goats. At that time, the article stated, there were only 600 Kikos in the world - all owned by Goatex Group Ltd. in New Zealand, except for the small American herd. The prices in 1995 were \$15,000 for a 3-month-old buck to \$55,000 for a mature buck. The article stated that the Kiko had 12 years of careful culling to ensure rapid weight gain and growth. The article also stated that the Kikos imported into the U.S. were from the top end of the scale.

The New Zealand developers and originators who bred up the Kiko through the years of vigorous and systematic culling and managed matings called the end result a "Purebred Kiko." Those who later used Kiko bucks in crossbreeding programs also called their end results (15/16 Kiko and higher) Purebred Kikos. My question is this: Is the American Kiko breeder using the same breed-up criteria to produce the same kind of purebred that the originators developed? You'll have to answer that for yourself.

I know that after viewing many Kiko goats and comparing what we saw to the descendents of those original imports, we chose to purchase direct descendents. At our farm, we decided to make a distinction between the descendents of New Zealand import parents and the animals we produce through our breed-up program. We call our accomplishment "Purebreds" and the New Zealanders' accomplishment "Fullbloods." We have been quietly practicing this distinction between fullblood and purebred Kikos, although other Kiko breeders do not. (The AKGA does not have a "Fullblood" classification and discourages use of the term.) We've used the terminology in our advertisements, and with just a simple explanation, other producers and our customers understand the difference.

We have produced some outstanding purebreds - bucks and does. But our "Fullblood" herd still commands premium prices. Both programs are enjoyable and profitable. We get more color with our purebreds, but we get more size with our fullbloods. Both are tough. The demand for big, strong commercial bucks is very high. The demand for percentage and purebred does is even higher. And the fullblood does and bucks not only bring premium prices, but are - for us - the mainstay of our operation.

I've talked to some producers who had negative opinions about the Kiko breed because they had bought some non-culling breeder's animal, and it did not help them. People shop around before buying a truck or couch or refrigerator, but for some reason think just because it says "Kiko" on the registration paper it is a good goat. Remember, the originators only kept 5 percent of the bucks and 25 percent of the does from each year's production.

A lot of Kiko breeders will come and go because when the American goat buyer gets wise, he will shop around. And after the Kiko breeder - or any other goat breeder - continues to keep cull goats and incorporate them into his breeding program, he will not be able to sell his goats to smart shoppers. And in the end, as they say, another one bites

the dust. But those who raise top quality fullblood and/or purebred breeder stock will always sell for a premium - regardless of the terminology.