

How the Kiko Breed Helped My Goat Operation

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Reprinted from Goat Rancher, May 2006

I am writing this article in hopes to help other people raising goats in medium to heavy rainfall areas. Three years ago, I had an idea that goats would be a good business for one particular farm I own. The farm has 80 acres of cutover timber and 40 acres of improved pasture that is gently rolling. After researching the goat industry and learning of the exploding demand for goat meat, I went out in the spring and purchased 200 high-percentage Boer goats that were shipped to me from a dry climate. During the summer, I started noticing goats that were in poor condition. When I started studying them closer it was determined that parasites could be the problem. So I immediately did fecal samples. Once I found out that parasites were the reason for the poor condition, I immediately dewormed the entire herd and moved them to a clean pasture. After this episode, I kept a closer eye on the goats for parasite problems. About 40 days later, I was taking fecal samples again. After the results, I had to get the dewormer out once again. From that summer to the end of fall, I had dewormed the entire herd about four times and some of the herd was dewormed five times. I was beginning to think that this “goat ranching” was going to take a lot more of my time than my research called for and was starting to get very expensive.

As if it wasn't enough to learn about goats in general the first year, I had to do a lot of research on the treatment of foot rot, foot scald and all of the dewormers available for goats. I was concerned because it was a normal rainfall for summer and fall in our area. I spent a lot of time on the phone with other goat ranchers, and the main thing I was told was to trim the excess hoof and this would prevent excess mud getting caked in the hooves. I took their advice and soon the herd cleared up. I thought; “this isn't so bad, besides everyone knows these little market animals do bring a good price.”

We started the winter of this same year on the wet side, and guess what happened? You're right! Some of the goats were limping. I made the decision as I was once again sending my 200 goats through the chute, that I would go ahead and schedule a hoof trimming routine for every 60 days. In the back of my mind, I kept thinking of how much of my time this was going to take. Even though I had these issues to deal with, I decided that this is something I really enjoy and I could see a handsome profit off of this farm.

Spring of my second year was right around the corner and the goats started showing the signs of what I had been waiting for. Baby goats!!! I was very excited and at the end of March the kids started arriving. I planned the end of March as my kidding season, because it was typically warm enough to kid outside in the woods or pasture where Mother Nature had intended. I quickly learned after the first few kids that a lot of the nannies were not going to be able to kid without my help. I quickly brought the nannies that were close to kidding to a small pen so I could watch them closer. Once they kidded and spent some quality time together, I would return them to the herd.

After a few weeks I noticed some nannies with tight udders, so my wife and I spent most of the month of April looking for missing kids in the cutover timber that the mothers could not find themselves. It was decided that I would have to make several small kidding lots to keep the nannies in for several weeks

until the kids were old enough to keep up with the herd. Once again there was another labor-intensive issue and the cost involved of building smaller lots. "There has to be an easier way," I thought. I really started digging into research and found out that the Boer goat breed comes from a dry climate, unlike mine. All of the problems I had were related to the goats' inability to handle the rainfall and adapting to my style of goat ranching. There has to be a goat breed that was already used to a climate like mine and able to kid out in the woods without my help. After much research and debate I decided to purchase a Kiko buck. My research indicated that the Kiko goat was a breed already adapted to wetter climates and had excellent mothering abilities. Since I didn't want to make any poor decisions, I was determined to search for a Kiko buck of the highest quality I could find.

During the next breeding season, I put my Kiko buck with half of the herd. In March, the little Kiko kids started being born and this was a much more joyful experience. I really tested the breed and had the nannies kid out in the cutover timber and pasture as I had planned with my first kid crop. What made the kidding season such a joy was every time I found a new set of kids, I just tagged the kids, wrote the numbers in my little kid book, and moved on. This went on for several days. Then I had quite a scare. The weather called for unseasonable low temperatures for March for a couple of days. The forecast showed the low in the 20s overnight. Not only had I never experienced kidding out in such low temperatures, but there was no time to gather the herd. The next frigid morning, I started my search for new kids. To my surprise, the little white kids were up and moving with plenty of colostrum in their bellies. A few that were born very early in the morning had frostbit ears, but other than that it was a beautiful experience. I decided that this was a good selling point for the Kiko breed, because it takes a tough little goat to have its ears frost bit, but otherwise alive, happy and healthy.

Each day throughout the whole season, it was the same story, finding kids that required no intervention from me. I ended up with 181% kid crop for the entire herd. As every month went by, there were no signs of any foot problems or parasites. By the third month, I decided that I needed to look at these kids and check for parasites, even if they did look healthy. In order to be safe, I decided to deworm them, but as I look back on it, they had wonderfully pink eyelids. The kids grew very well and at exceptional rates, considering the only thing they had was their mothers' milk and pasture.

During the month of September, I decided it was time to get out the scales. I weighed 30 to 40 wethers and got an average weight of 74 lbs. "Now that's how to make a profit!" These kids were dewormed twice and probably could have been dewormed once. Their feet didn't need trimming, and the only medicine that they needed was their CD&T vaccination. I could definitely make a good profit on a commercial goat herd with input cost and labor like this.

Needless to say, I decided to keep a large portion of my doelings to start a breed-up program. The doelings of this crop are now 11 to 12 months old. They don't have any issues with foot rot or foot scald. They have only had their feet trimmed once, and they don't have any parasite problems. What a blessing for my back!!! I decided to start a deworming program for them scheduled twice a year with rotational grazing. I am confident the next kid crop will be even better with three-quarter Kiko kids hitting the ground. I really believe in the Kiko breed for the commercial goat producer. We all know that in order to be profitable, we must keep input costs down and kidding percentages up. The Kiko breed definitely did both for me. If you are tired of all the problems I have mentioned throughout this article, do yourself and your pocketbook a favor and try a high quality Kiko buck. You won't be sorry! I am in no way discounting the Boer breed. I just think that if you take an animal out of its original environment

and move it to a climate completely different from what they are adapted to, you are asking for troubles that will weigh heavily on your resources of time and money. I hope this information is of benefit to you and will help someone, somewhere stay in the goat business.