

## Raising Kikos in North Georgia

By Bill Moore

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I got my first goat over 50 years ago - a white dairy goat that my dad bought for me because he had a Nubian that he milked. Since that time, I've had goats most of the time. ? Fifteen years ago, we had a herd of about 70 mixed does, mostly Dairy-Spanish crosses, that we bred to the largest bucks we could buy. With limited feed and good grazing, we were getting 100-pound wethers at one-year-old.

In the early 1990s, we bought our first fullblood Boer buck to use on those old crossbred does. With the Boer influence, our wethers reached 100 pounds in less than nine months. We kept back our half-Boer does, and over the next six years, bought two other fullblood Boer bucks and bred up to 3/4 and 7/8 Boer does. We also added a few fullblood and purebred Boer does to our herd. We got fast growing kids but lost a lot due to our limited management.

In 1998, we read about the New Zealand Kiko in *Goat Rancher* and thought this was just a lot of breed hype, but decided we would see for ourselves just how tough, hardy and fast-growing this new meat goat was. The results were outstanding. In our first kidding season, more than 50 does weaned the heaviest 3-month-old kids we had ever seen, with zero deaths. It was customary for us to see newborn kids in the pasture and go check the sex and make sure everything was alright. Our first Kiko-cross kids were so much more vigorous than any we ever had. You actually had to chase them down only a few hours after their birth.

Having had Boers for several years, we got tired of seeing all those white bodied, red-headed kids. We bought two fullblood Kiko bucks from Lamar Brown - a solid red Terminator son and a dark tan/brown trim son of Loverboy. We added dark colored does from Goats Unlimited, JT Farms, Egypt Creek Ranch and several other full Kiko does from other farms along with a few solid whites. Not all Kikos are white. Seventy percent of our spring kid crop has lots of color - from solid black to tri-colored, with many red and black kids. Color doesn't change the amount of meat on a goat, but when the kids begin arriving, it is like an Easter egg hunt around here - what color will appear next! ?

We're very pleased with our Kikos and operate a limited-management herd. We worm three times each year - spring, fall and winter. This seems to be enough since our goats have to travel to graze improved pasture and woodland. The Kiko doe is the only breed we have ever owned that requires very little care during kidding and while raising kids, even triplets. They are all very devoted to their offspring and always wean off heavy, vigorous kids.

We feed our herd very little pelleted feed - just enough to call them in to verify all are well. On average, we feed 1/4 lb./day/head in summer and 1/2 to 3/4 lb./head in winter depending on weather conditions. Pastures are fescue, orchardgrass, bermuda and wild grasses. Winter hay is bermuda square bales.

We have two controlled breeding seasons, so kids are born late March-May and again September to early November. We currently run three different herdsires, all outcross to does they are breeding. Each gets his "42 days of glory" spring and fall. We choose bucks with as much outcross/diverse bloodlines as we can find. Having been in the registered cattle business (Simmental) for many years, we learned that

stacking superior genetics over three or four generations really pays off, giving you animals that just don't miss. (By the way....goats are more profitable than cows.)

We believe you can starve a profit out of good goats, just as fast as you can feed a profit out. It's a delicate balance, but we expect our goats to kid three times in two years. A little feed one month after kidding gets our does cycling, even with kids on them.

*(Bill and Brenda Moore of Jasper, Ga., have retired from the goat business but their herd and genetics live on at Egypt Creek Ranch.)*