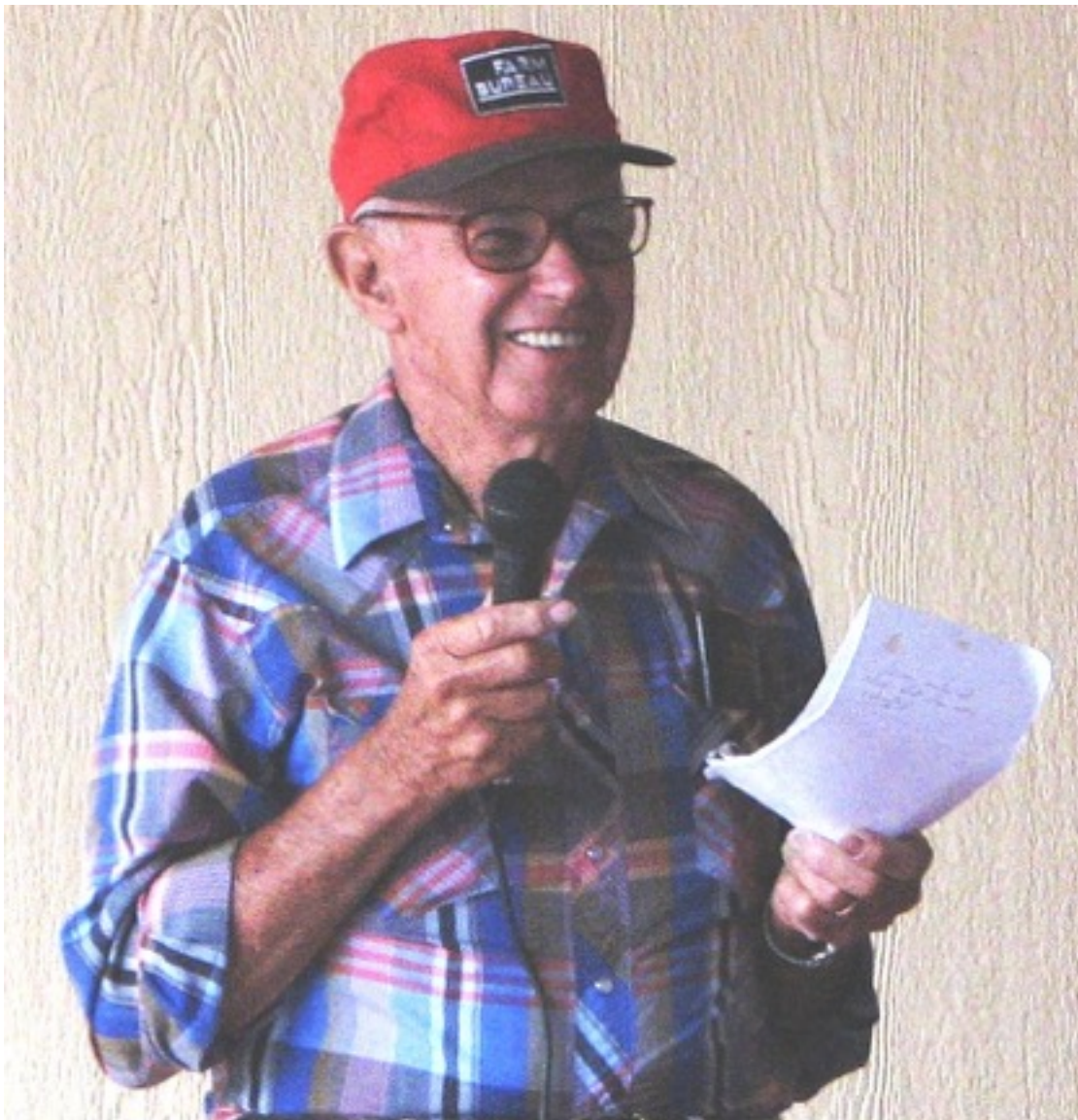


CROSSBREEDING USING SAVANNAH GOATS: WHY AND HOW?

By Elgin Pape, owner/operator of 3-D Ranches, 2180 Fiedler Road, Harper, TX 78631; 830.997.5913.

Background

I started my commercial meat goat operation in 1962 by buying Spanish goats from a number of old-line volume breeders in the Texas Hill Country. I expanded the size of the herd as I was able to add ranch land and leased country. My herd size peaked in 2000 with about 1700 does. My family and I currently run about 750



does on 5 places and we also run Braford cows on 9 leased places where we use F-1 males on F-1 females; it works for us. We do multi-species grazing on some of the places, but we don't usually run goats and cattle in the same pastures simultaneously.

We bought replacement stock from time to time from reputable ranchers in our area. We found it useful to run the bucks with the does continuously and, in the early going, we mostly kidded Thanksgiving to early February. In recent years, the recurring droughts have caused later breeding/kidding... some kids are born as late as April. We graze and browse goats year round, but offer hay, cubes, corn, and cottonseed during the winter because it pays us to do so (more and heavier kids sold).

We market slaughter kids in late summer and fall through the Fredericksburg auction with weights ranging 45-70 lbs depending on rainfall and vegetation. We sell some portion of our stock as replacements for which we commonly get a considerable premium over slaughter animals.

In the early nineties we tried for a few years to use some of the newly introduced Boer bucks, purebred and high percentages, but they did not work out under our conditions.



The crossbred kids sold well enough, but the doe's mothering ability was not equal to our Spanish animals and thus annual off-take from the herds was reduced.

We also tried some Alpine bucks to get size and scale and more milk production, but they could not tolerate the harsh range conditions and no crossbred kids were born. As a result, we looked further afield for bucks that could tolerate our conditions and throw good kids and make good crossbred mommas.

Savannah x Spanish Crossbreds

I first met Dr. Frank Pinkerton, aka The Goat Man, in OK at a F/D Seminar in 1990, and I later sold him Spanish goats for his research and extension programs at Langston University

In May 2002, I attended a Goat Field Day at his east Texas retirement farm, and spoke on goat management in the Hill Country. Canadian Brian Payne was also there to speak on crossbreeding of goats, and he presented information comparing Boer/Spanish and Savannah/Spanish and other crosses.



Brian also had two mid yearling Savannah bucks there as a demonstration (199 and 201 lb off pasture). His on-farm performance test results (while managing the Turkey Tracks herd in North Carolina) favoured Savannah crosses over Boer crosses, and he and Frank urged me to take the Savannah bucks for a trial year. I did so, and they worked out so very well for us that I bought them, and I also bought 3 more such bucks in 2003 (descendants of the original Payne imported embryos from South Africa).



I subsequently bought more Savannah bucks from U.S. breeders as needed. This summer I bought four full blood bucks from Indian Territory Farms. They are now with separated herds of Spanish does. Obviously, I expect to get my money back from the sale of better kids, and so, I think, could you.

When I first got Savannah F-1 kids on the ground in 2003, I thought of backcrossing the females to full blood Savannah bucks to get F-2, F-3, etc. and upgrading the offspring to ‘American Purebred Savannah’ status. However, buyers offered such a premium for the doelings as replacement stock that I felt, at 77, that I should sell them and create more. It was only later that we backcrossed to get $\frac{3}{4}$ Savannah females. When they kidded, they proved to be such good mamas that we kept them but sold all their F-3 doelings as commercial breeding stock at premium prices. Some of the F-3 males went to the 4-H Project trade, some as herd-sires in Spanish herds.

This summer we sold thirty F-2 and F-3 doelings to Dr. McMillin to start a herd at LSU; Mr. Glen Edwards, our host today, donated some high percentage Savannah bucks to LSU for research and extension activities. With assistance from The Goat Man, we also sold batches of F-1 doelings this summer to South Dakota, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, and Mr. Edwards sold them full blood bucks. Some of the buyers are here today, should you have questions.

Conclusion

Frank and Brian spoke earlier about the benefits of crossbreeding and Pat Fields spoke of the economics of slaughter goat production. I can tell you that we have been doing crossbreeding since 2002 and it has paid us to do so. Our Savannah/Spanish are superior to our Spanish in two ways, as shown below:

21 Spanish kids:	ave. wt. 42.6 lb	@ \$2.02/lb	= \$86.02/head
36 Sav/Span kids	ave. wt. 49.4 lb	@ \$2.32/lb	= \$115.10/head
Crossbred advantage:	6.8 lb	.30/lb	= \$29.08/head
	(+ 16 %)	(+14.9%)	(+33.8%)

These figures were generated at the Fredericksburg Texas auction barn this summer. Although the weights are 10-15 lb/head lower

than in non-drought years, they reflected the real world this summer. I am reasonably certain that not all combinations of cross-breed goats would do this well and I concede some crosses might do better. If I see proof of such superiority, I would consider changing. In the meantime, I am happy with my Savannah crosses. I think you would be, too.

Thank you for your attention. You have my contact information; call at will for further discussion.



We can arrange a purchase of Spanish or Savannah/Spanish cross-breds for your herd start up or expansion.