

## Today we're breeding for the wrong traits in our Boer goats

Greetings,

I am an avid goatherder who has raised Boer/Spanish crosses for some years now. I am currently working on a goat medical book for non-veterinarians and those interested in home care. I wanted to comment on your article "Wether-style Bucks have Traits that make them Unique" in your June 2015 magazine.

I believe this article portrays everything that is wrong with the American Boer goat industry. This article encourages selecting bucks for style, for the decided appearance of the ideal show ring wether. Not even cattle have gotten to this extreme in pure show requirements. With bulls, they still look for weaning weight, semen count, birth weight and a whole selection of qualities geared towards *production*.

It is irresponsible to take a breed and determine its progress based on style. What would a Saanen be without its criteria on milk production, mammary shape and a skeletal structure best suited to carrying a capacious udder? What is a Boer bereft of mothering ability, parasite resistance and kidding rates? What is a meat goat without the ability to produce meat, and I'm not just talking about a big goat?

When an industry takes a breed and it removes the qualifications of that breed to innately support itself, whether feed efficiency, disease resistance or birthing rates, what is there left but an arbitrary appearance that has nothing to do with the health and purpose of the animal? The industry has gone so far as to even remove the Boer's very *purpose*.

Even breeding for one quality is too extreme. They did it with Thoroughbred horses. Now that breed can hardly run without breaking.

A production animal must be able to live off browse and pasture, not 24% protein feed, and be expected to raise twins, triplets or quads to slaughter weight throughout risk of abandonment, poor milk production or ill health. Where have those qualities gone in the American Boer? They died at the mercy of the show ring.

If the Boer wants to be taken seriously alongside its hardier and more productive breed brothers in the goat meat industry, this sickly show mentality must stop. Don't breed for spots and the ability to grow off industrialized feed. Don't make them so obese they can barely live six to eight years. Breed for disease resistance. Breed for their ability to mother. Breed for feet that don't become malformed or need trimming every couple of months. Breed for the qualities that the more "wild" breeds still have. Don't ruin a perfectly good breed.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca B., Texas