

Quentin's Quest and Lubbe's Legacy: Where is the Savannah Breed in North America Today?

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Breed founder, Lubbe Cilliers
with close friend and neighbor, Johann Hills
N.A.S.A. is the only registry that requires
its full blood animals to have proof
of South African origin.
N.A.S.A. is dedicated to the conservation
of authentic S.A. genetics.



Where is the Savannah breed in North America today? The “short answer” distresses many dedicated breeders: *there are a lot of white goats out there that have been registered as full-blood Savannahs; when in fact, they are just white goats*...with a “dash” of Savannah. Not only is this un-popular: especially if you have invested substantial funds on your new white goats; it also deflates your enthusiasm and is completely counter-productive to breed improvement and development. However: when you pick yourself up from the floor, dust yourself off, and **look at the academic interest, testimonial “evidence” and continuing investment in the breed;** you KNOW that you are on the right track! **This is definitely a breed with a future!** Especially, when one considers, what a little “dash will do you”! **The proof is in the performance!**

The North American Savannah Association supported two field days in 2012. The first was at the Elgin Pape ranch near Harper, Texas on September 29 while the second was at the farm of Kenneth Mincey in Cumming, Georgia on October 20. At both events, the program emphasized several very important facts:

- 1) North America is under-supplied with slaughter goats; replacement females are therefore in high demand and can command high dollars (confounding the need for more slaughter stock)...**in short, we are blessed to be in an industry where demand outstrips supply!** Dr. Frank Pinkerton, aka “the Goat Man”, challenges us all to “somehow produce more” or “our industry will stagnate and gradually lose market share”. **For Savannah enthusiasts, the message is clear; our industry needs maternal genetics that also produce quality carcasses. To increase the quantity of domestic goat meat, we need a goat breed that can increase the off-take per doe and at the same time increase the boneless yield/carcass.**
- 2) Dr. Ken McMillin, Louisiana State University; in his usual quiet, concise and effective way; created a visual demonstration of the carcass improvement that is possible with the Savannah breed. **The F1 (first cross/Savannah sire) improvement on a Spanish goat from the Elgin Pape heritage Spanish ranch was dramatic!** A rain dampened event could not dampen the enthusiasm of the attendees when the carcasses were revealed. Seeing is believing! At the Mincey Goat Farm venue, **Dr. McMillin**, worked with full-blood carcasses and again **aptly demonstrated** the carcass merit but more importantly **the within breed variation and therefore the opportunity to select within the breed for even greater carcass merit!**
- 3) Dr. Will Getz, Fort Valley State University, speaking at Mincey Goat Farm, put forth the challenge of our future to all Savannah breeders: **“It takes good purebreds to create good crossbreds”**....and....a challenge to all agricultural institutions that profess to support the meat goat industry...**“Hybrid vigor is maximized in the offspring of a buck and does of two different breeds”**...**“Ideally, breed choice should be based on the results of research trials that have fairly compared several breeds and their crossbred offspring”**...and ...**“Many of the meat goat breeds have not yet been adequately evaluated over several geographic and production systems.”**
- 4) **Dr. Richard Browning, Tennessee State University, is THE FIRST RESEARCHER AND ONLY INSTITUTION, to take up the challenge of breed comparison! In the “Goat Man’s” lingo...“truly a brave man”...The Savannah breed is blessed to be included in his research program! Generous support through breeding stock by Kenneth Mincey and Dale Coody will allow our breed to have un-biased comparative genetic evaluation!** At the Mincey Goat Farm field day, Dr. Browning

answered the critical question: Why Add Savannah Goats to the Mix? and perhaps more importantly emphasized the following points:

- a) **Crossbreeding is a proving ground for the overall merit of a breed.**
 - b) **The focal point of all of our efforts in the meat goat business is a high quality slaughter animal that has been produced efficiently...if we are to compete with other meat products and raise the profile of the caprine species in the agricultural industry.**
- 5) Humbled in the presence of these well known meat goat researchers, I was pleased to present my own observations and history as a twenty year "survivor" in the dynamic and ever-evolving meat goat industry.
- a) **Your Ranch is the Research Station – Performance Test!...** Evaluate your goats under your regional geographic and management environment and you will contribute to the development of the breed...your input is valuable and crucial! **Contact Dr. Ken Andries**, Kentucky State University, kenneth.andries@kysu.edu, **and get started today!**
 - b) **Maintain the Legacy of Lubbe Cilliers!... Know the breed! Know the History! Understand the Breed Standard! Visit our website, www.savannahassociation.com.** "Breed stewards should know the 'type' that makes their breed unique. Knowing this, they will be able to recognize when animals are 'off-type' and how the breed as a whole is being conserved or gradually being lost." (Dr. Phillip Sponenberg, technical coordinator, American Livestock Breeds Conservancy.)
 - c) **Respect the vision of Dr. Quentin Campbell.... Survival of the Fittest!...** In North American terms and in today's language this means...**Savannah goats...Outstanding Producers of Red Meat from Low Quality Browse! Maintain the breed as the ultimate "easy keeper"...minimal grain supplementation, modest shelters, kidding without bonding pens, maximize the use of browse and pasture.**



South African Savanna Association Founding Membership Group, 1993

As a Savannah breeder, N.A.S.A. encourages you to re-new your commitment to this incredible breed by renewing your membership. N.A.S.A. is the only registry that has specified that a full blood must be directly traceable to South Africa in order to be papered as such. **Carefully consider the following facts and breed importation timelines and you will better understand the very small numbers that this breed has started with and why N.A.S.A. maintains a full blood herd book separate from its purebred herd book** (purebreds are upgraded animals using full blood N.A.S.A. sires OR legitimate Savannah females that do not have complete paperwork traceable to original South African imports - papered females are accepted from all N.A. registries).



Front, from left to right:

Neville DuToit, Lubbe Cilliers, Elmarie Human (Secretary), Dr. Quintin Campbell

Back, from left to right:

'Unknown', Merwin Swart, Gert du Toit, Koenie Kotze, Frikkie Vermeulen

1994 – Jurgen Schulz imports 10 does and 2-3 bucks from South Africa

1998 – Jurgen Schulz disperses 32 head at the Kifaru Sale in Lampasas, TX. (26 does and 6 bucks)

2000 – Keri-Rose (Brian and Katie Payne) imports 12 does and 17 bucks into the U.S. These live animals were produced in Canada from DSU Cilliers South African embryos.

2001 – Pat and Olga O'Brien (Cabra Blanca) produce 2 does and 1 buck from Keri-Rose imported embryos.

2001 – Dennise Peterson purchases 22 embryos from DNAfrica for implantation into recipients in Canada and then exports to the U.S. Only 2 donors and 1 sire were represented in this program. ET success rates on frozen embryos at the time were often less than 25% with some programs managing to achieve 50%. Maximum live animals 6 does 5 bucks?

2010 – Kenneth Mincey imports 17 does and 4 bucks from Australian born South African embryos.

N.A.S.A. would appreciate your suggestions for future breed education and development events.

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Before the Mincey importation, the total number of documented fullblood South African imported females was a mere thirty animals! Rare, widely dispersed geographically and without a registry until several years after the Schulz Kifaru dispersal sale, “white goat dealers” took advantage of many un-suspecting Savannah enthusiasts. ***ET programs multiplied this narrow genetic base but often without any verification of true South African ancestry. Later attempts to provide DNA “proof” was simply North American parentage verification rather than verification of authentic South African origins.***

The N.A.S.A. 2012 field day program was an honest attempt to question the real value or current relevance of “verifying origins”. This exercise would be like the classic metaphor: “closing the gate when the horse has already escaped”! In all of livestock history, a breed is established when a group of people with common goals get together, establish a breed standard and select a name. We have a breed that is in demand!...So let us get on with it! ***Pedigree without performance is meaningless! A high performing “purebred” should always be valued over a poor performing “full blood” or your tenure will be short as a Savannah breeder.***

N.A.S.A.’s Mission

The growth of a rare breed and its future development is totally dependent on an informed, honest and motivated breeder network.

N.A.S.A. is as concerned about the relationships between breeders as it is about the goats they breed.

Since it is impossible to regulate integrity, it is imperative that all Savannah enthusiasts know the breed and know the breeders.

Sincere Thanks to Elgin Pape, Kenneth Mincey and their supportive and hardworking families for hosting our 2012 Savannah field day programs. N.A.S.A also wishes to thank our speakers, Dr. Richard Browning, Dr. Will Getz, Dr. Ken McMillin, Dr.Greg Engdahl, Dr.Kurt Braden and Dr. Frank Pinkerton.

