



Snowden Family Farm



BASIC JUDGING

for Boer goats

Visual selection of Boer goats takes much research, experience, and practice, and we do not pretend to cover it all in one article. We do, however, hope to give you a few basics – a sort of skeleton – that you can learn and build on.

Although you may judge differently depending on your goals and whether you are judging breeding or market animals, since all Boer goats are meant to produce the maximum amount of meat with the least amount of input, there are 5 main qualities that you look for in every goat: 1) Structural Correctness, 2) Size/Stature & Body Capacity, 3) Muscling, 4) Style & Balance, and 5) Sexual Characteristics.

In order to judge consistently, you should always use the same set of criteria, apply it in the same order, and begin at the head and work back. As an example, for a breeding doe, you would first look at Structural Correctness, beginning with stature, then looking at the head, moving to the front-end assembly, the back and rump, then the feet, legs, and pasterns, and finally the udder and teats, before moving to Size/Stature & Body Capacity (beginning at the head and working back), then Muscling, Style & Balance, and finally Sexual Characteristics.

STRUCTURAL CORRECTNESS:

Proper conformation is essential to a goat's ability to produce – to obtain food and hold up to conceiving, carrying, birthing, and rearing kids (does) or breeding (bucks). A goat with proper conformation will normally stay in production longer, and thus be more profitable.

• **Head & Breed Characteristics**

- **Head** – look for width – in the muzzle, between the eyes and between the horns (a wide, strong head, indicates a wide, strong goat). A Boer goat should have a Roman nose and pendulous ears.
- **Color** – a Boer goat should have a white body and dark red head and neck, yet all colors are acceptable. The Boer goat's distinctive color helps it to be recognized.
- **Pigmentation** – The bare skin on the nose, around the eyes, inside the ears, and under the tail should be pigmented. For Americans the minimum is 50%, for Purebreds and Fullbloods the minimum is 75%. Pigmentation of the skin prevents skin cancer, especially in the Texas sun.

• **Front End Assembly**

– the neck and shoulder should blend smoothly and tightly into the body.

- **Neck** – should be strong, long, and blend high and tightly into the withers.
- **Point of Shoulder** – should blend smoothly into the chest, not sticking out past it.
- **Elbow** – should blend tightly into the barrel, not 'winging out' when the goat walks.
- **Withers** – Shoulder should blend tightly into the withers. Although the withers should be wide, and shaped like an inverted 'U', the shoulder blade should not 'pop up' above the withers when the goat walks, and you should not be able to insert your fingers under the shoulder blade.

- **Back** (Includes withers-see *Front-End Assembly*, crops, chine and loin) **& Rump**
 - should be broad, strong, and nearly level.
 - **Crops** – should be full, causing the chine to blend smoothly into the withers
 - **Chine** (or rack) – should blend into the withers, and be level with the loin
 - **Loin** — the loin contains one of the prime cuts of meat, and so should be long and wide, in addition to being straight.
 - **Rump** – should be slightly angled, not straight (rare), but definitely not steep. Should be wide, being wide between the hips all the way down to the pins, and wide between the thurls. Width in the rump is an extension of width down the rest of the back. Width between the hips and between the pins and a properly angulated rump is important for ease of kidding.

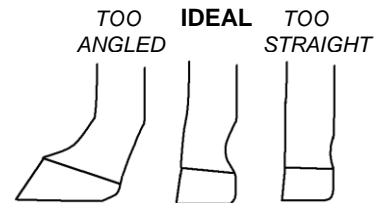
- **Top line** (Includes neck, withers, crops, chine, loin, & rump)

Although each of the individual components of the top line have already been examined individually, the top line should be evaluated as a whole. The top line, when viewed from the side, should be one smooth line. The neck should blend smoothly into the withers. The back should be a nearly level line, and the rump should be slightly angulated.

- **Legs, Pasterns, and Feet**

- bones should be strong and thick, as large, strong bones are sturdier, and hold more muscle
 - **Legs** – *front legs* should be straight when viewed from the side, with the knees set straight, not enlarged or bowed over (buck knees), or bent backwards ('hollow' legs). They should also be straight and square when viewed from the front; neither bowed out (bandy legs) or bowed in (knock knees).
 - *rear legs* should be angled at the hocks, with the cannon bone forming part of a line that extends through the pin, hock, cannon bone, and heel. If the hock is not angulated enough, the goat is 'posty', and the joint is not flexible enough. If the hock is too angulated, the goat is 'sickle-hocked' and the goat will walk with its rear legs tucked up underneath the body. When viewed from the rear, the legs should be exactly straight, not turning out or in (cow-hocked).

- **Pasterns** – should be strong, with a good set to the pastern (ideal is shown to the right). Too much angulation puts excessive strain on the pastern and leads to break down and lameness, while pasterns that are too straight do not absorb enough of the impact when walking and so lead to swelling and lameness.



- **Feet** – should be fairly square (as shown in the picture above), and should point directly forward. When the goat walks, its back feet should step in the footprint of the front foot. Hooves should be black, as black hooves are stronger.

- **Reproductive Organs:**

- **Mammary System**

- **Udder** – should be adequately capacious and shaped like a basketball, with 1/3 in front of the leg, 1/3 under the leg, and 1/3 behind the leg. The udder should be attached up high, with a strong medial suspensory ligament (imperative), a high rear udder attachment (2nd most important), and a smoothly blending fore udder attachment (least importance). Since the twist should be long in a Boer goat, a long twist should be balanced

with a high rear udder attachment. The udder should be of a pliable texture, not thick and beefy, and should be pigmented.

- **Teats** – a Boer goat should have no more than 2 distinct teats on each side. Blind teats, split teats, fish teats, and teats with double orifices are undesirable, as they may cause problems with kids nursing, especially newborns. Many American breeders prefer 1 teat per side, but 2 teats per side often allows more kids access to the udder when a doe has more than 2 kids. This can be beneficial to the weaker kids since does often allow kids to nurse for only a few minutes at a time.
Teats should be small, uniform, cylindrical in shape, clearly delineated from the udder, situated on the floor of each half of the udder 2/3 of the distance from the medial suspensory ligament to the side, and should be pigmented.
Bucks should be evaluated for proper teat structure, contrary to popular belief, as they *will* pass on their traits to their offspring.
- **Testicles** – Bucks should have 2 large testicles, with a minimal split at the bottom. The testicles should be firm, fully descended, and should be suspended firmly, not hanging low and pendulous where they are prone to damage.

SIZE & BODY CAPACITY:

Size refers to the frame size of the goat – whether it is a large, tall goat, or a short, compact goat. Body capacity obviously refers to the capacity of the goat's body and is important in order for the goat to have plenty of room for a large rumen (the capacious 'fermentation vat' that is essential in the process of converting roughage to usable nutrients) and multiple kids. When viewed from the side, a Boer goat should look rather like a rectangle, with does having a slightly more wedge-like shape, with the wedge pointed towards the head.

- **Size & Stature** – the overall frame size of the goat
- **Chest** – should be wide, deep and strong.
- **Heart Girth** – should be deep, and full at the point of the elbow
- **Barrel** – should be long from shoulder to hips, deep in the chest and flank, with long, well-sprung ribs – a goat with a round, well-sprung barrel is typically more productive than its slab-sided counterpart.

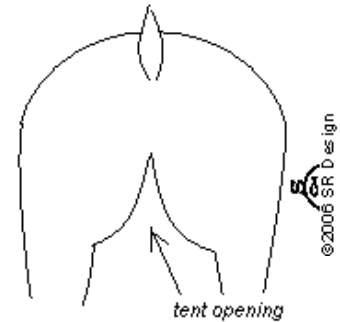
MUSCLING:

The Boer goat should be very muscular throughout, but there are 4 main areas to look for evidence of muscling.

- **Neck** – the neck should be thick and strong, especially near the junction with the shoulder. The length should be proportional to the body, feminine in a doe, and masculine in a buck.
- **Shoulders & Forearm** – the shoulder should be thick, becoming increasingly muscular from the withers to the forearm, with the thickest muscling directly above the chest floor. A large forearm is the 2nd best indication of overall muscling, and so should be meaty, with the muscling carrying down to the knee.

- **Loin** – The loin is the best indicator of muscling in a goat, and should be wide and long, with a slight ‘butterfly shape’ over the top when you view the goat down the top line. You can feel this butterfly shape on each side as a bulge when you place your fingers at the vertebrae and move away. The thicker and wider this bulge on each side, the better the loin.

- **Hindquarters** – the hindquarters are probably the first thing about muscularity that many people notice, and should be thick and voluminous. The rump should be heavily muscled, the twist should be deep, the stifle should be bulging, and the thigh muscling should be thick and attach down low to the hock. When you look at the rear of the goat, it should look like the opening to a tent – sort of like an inverted ‘V’ with the sides of the V being pushed in from the outside.



STYLE & BALANCE:

Style and balance refers to the overall appearance of a goat. A well balanced goat is one that has all of the different ‘parts’ we have talked about put together smoothly and well-proportioned to each other. Typically, a goat whose frame is more structurally correct is more balanced. A stylish goat is ‘flashy’. She/he walks with an alert appearance and a long, firm stride, head carried high in the air, and a fluidness and elegance that is both pleasing, and tends to be indicative of a more productive animal, all other things equal.

SEXUAL CHARACTERISTICS:

This is the femininity (for does) and masculinity (for bucks) that is often referred to in the show ring. A doe should have a long, smoothly blended neck and front end, with an angular appearance to her chest and forequarters, and a wedge shape (mentioned in body capacity) to her barrel when viewed on profile. Overall, she should look strong, but refined and feminine. A buck, on the other hand, should exude strength and ‘ruggedness’. His neck and head will be thicker and heavier, his bones larger, and his barrel will profile squarer. He should look strong and masculine. These characteristics are placed last for good reason – they can be overemphasized. A doe can be so feminine that she is frail, and a buck so masculine that he is coarse, and care should be taken when looking at these traits to balance them with a strong, correct, and muscular goat.

ORDER OF IMPORTANCE:

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| Breeding Animals | 1) Structural Correctness
2) Size/Stature & Body Capacity
3) Muscling
4) Style & Balance
5) Sexual Characteristics | } <i>nearly equal in importance,
and closely related</i> |
| Market Animals | 1) Muscling
2) Size/Stature & Body Capacity
3) Structural Correctness
4) Style & Balance | |

A good breeding animal should produce good market animals. Although certain traits, such as muscling, may be of lesser importance in a breeding animal, that doesn’t mean they should be ignored, only that general appearance is more important for productivity. As your entire herd,

for instance, is structurally correct and has large body capacities, you can then concentrate more on muscling, and improve profits because of more muscular animals. An ideal breeding animal will produce an ideal market animal.

Remember that an exaggerated fault may change the order of these traits, since, for instance, a goat with excellent general appearance, but very little muscling will place under a very muscular goat with adequate general appearance.

The information in this publication reflects a compilation of information from publications and workshops/training events by Dr. Frank Craddock and Scott Horner, as well as from the ABGA and ADGA breed standards.

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