

PROMOTE, PRESERVE & PROSPER

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MYOTONIC GOAT REGISTRY



IN THIS ISSUE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

PAGE 2

FALL FUNDRAISER

PAGE 2

LIKE IT OR NOT, THEY ARE MEAT GOATS!

PAGE 3-10

SPOTLIGHT ON YOUTH

PAGE 11

2025 NATIONAL SHOW SPONSORS

PAGE 12

ADS

PAGE 13-14

CONTACT INFO/ MISSION

PAGE 15

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Breeding season is all but over here at the Villa. I have mowed the fields for the last time this season and now is the time I get to sit back and watch the baby bumps grow. Fall is always my favorite season for photographing my Doe herd as they wonder about from weed to leaf as they forage. Don't get me started on pumpkins! The locals know I love decorating my yard for Fall, but what they don't know is that my goats can't wait to devour my pumpkins.

On a side note, the newsletter is always a welcome diversion to compile, and although it is a joy, I was hoping for more breeders to step up with the occasional article. I only need four to eight per year, depending upon length. I know we have some knowledgeable breeders that have some great advice, ideas and life stories to share. Help a goat girl out and contact me to get published in the next issue.

Y'all get out there and live the Goat Life!

Anna Garrett, editor    

FALL FUNDRAISER

Don't miss out!

The annual online Fall fundraiser for the MGR will take place September 11th through the 14th, 2025. The event is open to MGR MEMBERS ONLY.

You must be a member in good standing, with paid annual dues, have an MGR breeder number and join the private Myotonic Goat Registry Group on facebook at <HTTPS://FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/MYOTONICGOATREGISTRY/>.

We are currently accepting donations for the event. Items do not have to be goat related. I know we have many talented members/breeders and as always your unique donations tend to make the event extra special. Donors will ship items direct to winners, but photos and descriptions are due to me by the end of the day 9-10-25. Message me on facebook or email me at MGRpromote@gmail.com if you have something to offer.

I hope to see y'all there!

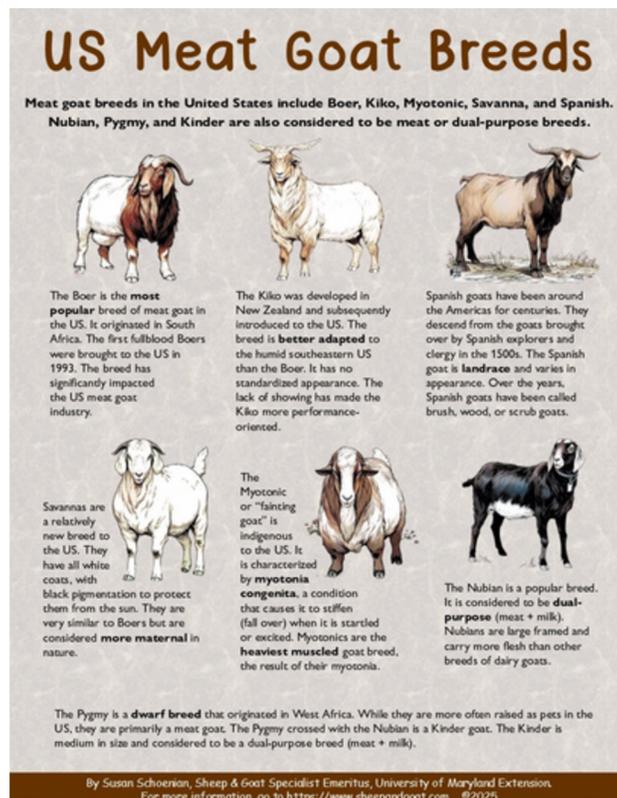
LIKE IT OR NOT, THEY ARE MEAT GOATS!

BY ANNA GARRETT, INFOGRAPHICS CREDITED TO SUSAN SCHOENIAN

(SEPTEMBER 2025)

Like it or not, they are meat goats!

Our breeder base is wide ranging from pet, to show and on to production. All types of breeders have culls that need to go to freezer camp or the sale barn and many breeders breed specifically for production. Not every goat produced should be bred, so why not find value in the meat aspect of the breed regardless of your main breeding goals? Keeping that thought in mind, I stumbled across some infographics concerning goats & sheep that I felt might be helpful for many breeders that don't have a clue where to begin on this subject matter. Although, they are not all goat specific, there is much knowledge to be gained from them. I messaged Susan Schoenian for permission to use her infographics in our newsletter and she granted it. Susan is a sheep & goat specialist, emeritus, of the University of Maryland Extension. All the credit goes to her and my sole hope is you find some of it to be of interest. Happy reading!



USDA grades of goats

There are no quality grades for goats. USDA grades for goats are based on conformation (muscling) only. They are Selection 1, Selection 2, and Selection 3. Selection 1 goats have a high proportion (by weight) of meat to bone. Selection 3 goats have a low ratio of meat to bone. The grades apply to both live goats and goat carcasses.

Selection Classification Comparisons



Selection 1 1⁵⁰



Selection 2 2⁵⁰



Selection 3 3⁷⁰

Image credit: Louisiana State University

1

Selection 1 live goats and/or carcasses have a superior meat type conformation without regard to the presence of fat cover. They shall be thickly muscled throughout the body.

2

Selection No. 2 live goats and/or carcasses have an average meat type conformation without regard to the presence of fat cover. They shall be moderately muscled throughout the body.

3

Selection No. 3 live goats and/or carcasses have an inferior meat type conformation without regard to the presence of fat cover. The legs, back and shoulders are narrow.

Some buyers will also put in a 4th grade for unthrifty goats: utility or cull.

- Each selection grade can be divided into 100 parts. Grades are usually assigned to the nearest 10 parts, e.g., 2⁵⁰.
- Grades are applied across weights, sexes, ages, and breed types.
- Even though fat covering is not supposed to be a consideration, muscles with some fat covering tend to look thicker.



By Susan Schoenian, Sheep & Goat Specialist Emeritus, University of Maryland Extension, 2023.
To learn more, go to <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/IMPS11SeriesDraft2020.pdf>

OPTIONS FOR MARKETING

sheep and goats (for meat)

Marketing is an important aspect of raising sheep and goats. Market prices are one of the main factors affecting profitability. There are many options for marketing sheep and goats (and their products), and each option has pros and cons. Most sheep/goats are marketed through auctions/sale barns. Marketing direct to consumers is becoming increasingly common, especially for smaller producers who have difficulty competing at the commodity level.



Marketing option		Pros	Cons	
Sale barn Auction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local auction barn Graded sales Special sales (e.g. holiday) Terminal markets Teleauctions Online platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost always an option Quick, easy, and convenient Price discovery Certified weights Access to buyers/competition Prompt guaranteed payment Social hub Support for rural community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unpredictable prices Sometimes lack of competition Weekly price volatility Shrink loss Selling fees deducted Transportation costs Animal welfare issues 	
Middlemen Intermediaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brokers, order buyers, dealers Live markets Feedlots Direct marketers Packers/Abattoir 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to negotiate price, shrink, and delivery conditions Opportunity for processor agreements, forward contracts, and retained ownership No selling fees involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Payment risk (sometimes) Middlemen need their cut Not always highest price 	
Direct to consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live animals Whole carcasses Meat cuts Value-added 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-farm sales On-farm slaughter Custom slaughter Farm Store Farmers' Market CSA Online platforms Retail, food service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher profit potential Ability to set own prices Greater share of food dollar Relationship with customers Product (brand) identity Market whole animal Value added opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High labor and marketing costs Competition Regulatory environment May be left with product Not for everyone: different skill set required

Market prices are often tied to ethnic holidays or seasonal demand.

By Susan Schoenian, Sheep & Goat Specialist Emeritus, University of Maryland Extension.
 © 2025. For more information, go to www.sheepandgoat.com and www.sheep101.info.

Slaughter options

for sheep and goats

Meat products are heavily regulated by federal, state, and local authorities. In the US, there are four levels of meat inspection: federal (USDA), state, custom-exempt, and personal exemption.



Federal or USDA is the highest level of inspection. The meat from livestock processed in a federally-inspected facility can be sold without restriction, so long as the meat is properly labeled. Federal inspection includes both a pre- and post-mortem inspection of the animal. There are daily inspections of the facility. HACCP and recall plans are required.

State meat inspection is usually a partnership between the individual state and USDA. State inspection must be "at least equal to" federal inspection. About half of US states have state meat inspection. The rest of the states have turned meat inspection over to the federal government. State inspected meat cannot usually be sold across state lines, although there are efforts to amend this.



Custom-exempt slaughter is exempt from continuous inspection. There is no pre- or post-mortem inspection of the animal. Only the facilities are periodically inspected. The carcasses and meat from custom-exempt slaughter cannot be sold commercially. The meat must be stamped "not for resale" and returned to the owner. Custom-exempt slaughter is sufficient for the "freezer" trade as a live animal (or share of) is being sold. Selling meat by the cut requires state or federal inspection.

The personal exemption allows a farmer to process an animal of their own raising. Like custom-exempt, this meat cannot be sold commercially. Some states restrict on-farm slaughter to the person who raised the animal, or they have ownership requirements. Other states allow the buyer of a live animal to slaughter the animal on the farm where it was purchased. In the federal regulations, there is no language which permits or forbids on-farm slaughter by the customer. On-farm slaughter is considered essential to meeting the demand of some of the ethnic markets, as many ethnic buyers prefer to do their own slaughter or sacrifice.



By Susan Schoenian, Sheep & Goat Specialist Emeritus, University of Maryland Extension. 2023.
For more information, go to <http://www.sheep101.info/QandA/slaughteroptions.html>.

Carcass evaluation

Carcass evaluation is evaluating carcasses to estimate quality and yield and ultimately value. Sheep and goat carcasses are evaluated similarly, but goats fatten differently and have less overall fat and muscle than sheep. There are quality and yield grades for sheep, but only single grades for goats.



A fat depth gauge (probe) is used to measure **backfat thickness** at the 12th rib of the carcass. It can also be measured using ultrasound technology. The average backfat for lamb carcasses is about 0.25 in., with a range of 0.05 to 0.5 in. Young goats have very little backfat. As they mature, they begin to accumulate backfat, but usually less than lambs. **Body wall thickness** is another measurement, taken 1 inch beyond the loin eye. It usually ranges from 0.5 to 1.2 in.



The **loin eye (or rib) area**, is the cross-section of the longissimus dorsi muscle between the 12th and 13th ribs. It is usually measured using a plastic grid (with dots). It can also be measured digitally or determined via ultrasound (in a live animal). Loin eye area ranges from 1.5 to 4 in² in lambs and averages about 2.5 in². Goat carcasses usually have smaller rib eyes. Rib and loin chops are the most expensive cuts in the lamb carcass.



Kidney, pelvic, and heart fat (KPH) is the fat in the body cavity. It is expressed as a percentage of (hot) carcass weight. Most lamb carcasses have between 1 and 4 percent. KPH is no longer used to calculate yield grade in lambs. Goats (and Finn and hair sheep to a lesser extent) deposit more internal fat and will be fatter overall if they have similar measurements of backfat as woolled sheep.

Yield grades are an indicator of usable meat in a carcass. Backfat thickness is the only criteria used to yield grade lambs. The yield grades for lamb carcasses are 1-5, with 1 being the highest yield (leanest) and 5 being the lowest (fattest). Most lamb carcasses fall within yield grades 2-3. USDA grades for goats are Selection 1, 2, and 3. They are primarily muscle scores.



Quality grades are a predictor of eating satisfaction. In sheep, they are determined by three factors: quality (intramuscular fat), maturity, and conformation. Unlike beef carcasses, intramuscular fat in lambs is evaluated in the muscle of the flank. Also, lamb carcasses are not usually ribbed (split) for grading. The quality grades for sheep carcasses are Prime, Choice, Good, and Utility. At least 95 percent of lamb carcasses grade Prime or Choice. Good grade carcasses are leaner and may be desirable for some markets, especially non-traditional.



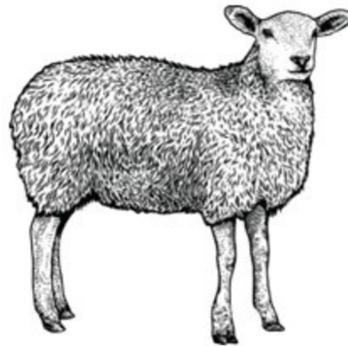
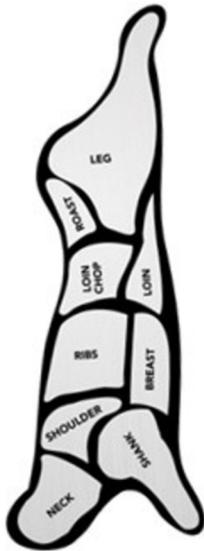
Leg conformation score is a subjective evaluation of the muscling in the lamb's hind legs. Scores typically range from 9 (high good) to 15 (high prime) and average 12 (high choice or slightly thick muscling). Leg scores no longer affect yield grade, but they are a good indicator of carcass quality and yield.

Understanding

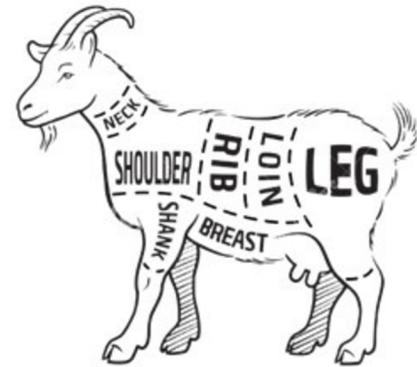
Dressing percentage

Dressing percent (DP; often called "yield") is important because it indicates the proportion of live weight that is contained in a carcass. Sheep have lower dressing percentages than cattle and hogs, due to the weight of their fleeces or coat. This also contributes to their greater variability in yield. Goats usually have lower dressing percentages than sheep due to having less fat and muscle.

$$\text{Dressing percentage} = (\text{carcass weight} \div \text{live weight}) \times 100$$



For lambs, the normal range is 44 to 56% with an average of 54 for shorn lambs and 52 for unshorn lambs. For calculations, 50% is often used.



For goats, dressing percentage varies from 40% in very young animals to 56% in entire mature males. 45% is a good average to use.

Many factors can affect dressing percentage.

- Age
- Breed
- Diet
- Distance trucked
- Fleece or hair length/weight
- Gut fill
- Hot or cold carcass weight
- Hydration
- Internal and external fat (finish)
- Mud and manure
- Muscling
- Sex
- Size
- Species
- Stress
- Suckling
- Weaning
- Tails, testicles, and horns
- Time off feed
- What's left in or on carcass, e.g., head, organs

By Susan Schoenian, Sheep & Goat Specialist Emeritus, University of Maryland Extension. 2023. For more information, go to sheepandgoat.com or sheep101.info

ETHNIC MARKETS FOR SHEEP/GOATS



An ethnic market is a group of consumers who share a common cultural background, such as race, color, national origin, religion, or language. Ethnic markets generally refer to cultures other than the majority culture in a marketing area. Researchers estimate that 58% of US lamb is consumed by “minority” populations. The two largest “ethnic” markets for sheep/goats are Hispanic and Muslim. Other important ethnic consumers include Orthodox Christian (e.g., Greek), Asians, Africans, and Caribbean Islanders.



Lamb (especially) has religious significance to many cultures around the world. Lamb consumption is traditional during celebrations on the Islamic, Christian, and Jewish religious calendars. Easter and the Muslim Festival of the Sacrifice (Eid al Adha) usually result in the biggest demand (usually highest prices) of the year for sheep/goats.

The dates on which many religious holidays occur vary each year, depending on the calendar they follow. “Western” Christian holidays follow the more popular Gregorian calendar. Orthodox Christians follow the Julian calendar, which is slightly different, resulting in DIFFERENT dates for Easter. Muslim holidays follow a lunar calendar, which is dictated by the moon. This calendar is about 11 days shorter; thus, holidays are 11 days EARLIER each year. Jewish holidays occur at the same time each year on a Jewish calendar.



Even within culturally-similar groups, there is no single ethnic market for sheep/goats. The ethnic market is composed of many different ethnic markets, with each segment having different preferences for the weight, age, and condition of the animal they want as well as when they want it.

There may also be preferences for how the animals are killed. For Muslims, the animal must be harvested according to HALAL dietary laws. For Jewish, KOSHER laws must be followed. Some goat consumers want the hair singed in lieu of skinning the goat.



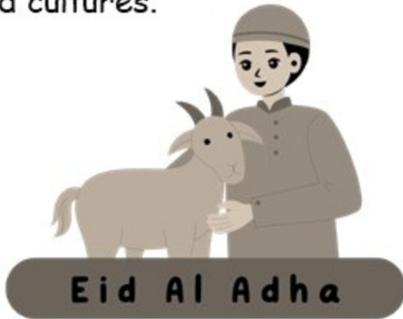
Sheep and goats destined for ethnic markets can be sold at auction or they can be sold directly to consumers. When selling to an auction, sheep/goats should be put in the market 3-10 days in advance of the holiday. For consumer sales, sheep/goats should be sold LIVE or processed in a USDA-inspected plant. Some ethnic consumers (especially older) may prefer to do their own slaughter (“sacrifice”).



Susan Schoenian (2023)
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sheepandgoat.com; sheep101.info; wormx.info

The MUSLIM Market

The Islamic or Muslim market is one of the most important markets for goats and especially sheep. There are between 5 and 8 million Muslims in the US, most concentrated in urban areas. The population is growing fast, both from immigration and through conversions. Muslims should not be stereotyped. The population is diverse, and it represents many different races, nationalities, and cultures.



The major holiday in which Muslims consume sheep and goats is the Festival of the Sacrifice (Eid al Adha), a multi-day festival (Eid) which commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son (Ismail) to God. The festival coincides with Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

Some Muslims prefer to do their own slaughter. Full carcasses are usually preferred, as the meat is divided into thirds for distribution, with one third being given to the poor.

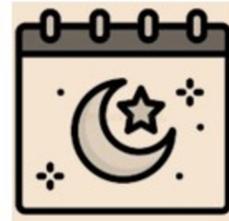


Other holidays

Other holidays in which Muslims may consume sheep or goat include the Islamic New Year (Muharram), the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (Mawlid al Nabi), Ramadan (month of fasting), and the "Festival of Fast-Breaking" (Eid al Fitr).

Moon not the sun

Muslim holidays move forward 11 days each year. This is because Islam follows a lunar calendar, which is dictated by the moon not the sun.



What is HALAL?

The word Halal means permissible. For an animal to be considered Halal by the Muslim population, it has to be killed by a Muslim, in God's name, with the animal facing towards Mecca. Slaughter is considered "ritual," since the animal is not stunned before it is killed. This is similar to Kosher.

An "unblemished" ram is usually preferred for the Festival of the Sacrifice. Besides being intact, the sheep should not have had its tail docked or horns broken or removed. The animal should be over 60 lbs. and over 6 months of age; thus, yearlings or older animals may be preferred.

While Muslims will consume sheep and goats of various sizes and conditions, they generally prefer the lighter, leaner (less finished) animals in the marketplace.

It's a boy!

It's also common for Muslims to sacrifice sheep (or goats) on the occasion of a child's birth (Aqiqah): two for a boy and one for a girl.



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SPOTLIGHT ON YOUTH

BY KAGE HUNT REVISED BY ELLEN PITTMAN (MAMMY)

Hi there! My name is Kage, and I'm six years old. I live on our awesome goat farm called Kage Acres! At my Mammy's house, I run to the barn, where my baby goats are waiting for me. They are so much fun to play with! I love teaching them how to hop over little obstacles, and it makes me laugh when they chase me around with their curious eyes and wiggly tails. Feeding them is the best part of my day! I giggle as they nibble grass and hay right from my hands. Each day at Kage Acres fills my heart with joy and laughter because my goats are my best friends!

Mammy, Ellen Pittman, summed up what he said when he was asked about his goats as he kept going on and on and on and on and on and she feared the whole newsletter, would've been just Kage. As editor, I can tell you that I could use his help!



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FALL FUNDRAISER
DONATIONS NEEDED

Please message me with pictures & details of donations.
Items do not have to be goat related.
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Myotonic Goat Registry
It's all about preserving the breed!™

Due by the end of the day 9-9-25

MYOTONIC GOAT REGISTRY
Fall FUNDRAISER

All MGR Members are invited!

September 11 through 14

Myotonic Goat Registry
<https://facebook.com/groups/myotonicgoatregistry/>

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The Myotonic Goat Registry was formed in 2005 as a sole ownership registry by Gene McNutt with input from an initial Board of Advisors made up of Dr. Phil Sponenberg and Barbara Roberts. The current Board of Advisors includes Dr. Phil Sponenberg, Cindy Bene, Eve Williams and Anna Garrett. The owner and Board of Advisors will make decisions concerning the registry and its procedures. This method of governance is meant to provide Myotonic Goat breeders with a registry that will not have frequent changes, and will have the longevity and consistency needed to successfully promote the Myotonic Goat breed, while at the same time make it responsive to the needs and wishes of the breeders. In 2009, Gene retired and the registry was sold to Tara Lawrence. As the Myotonic Goat Registry grows, additional Board of Advisor members may be added in order to more broadly represent the breeders. The owner, along with the Board of Advisors, will be responsible for providing for its own replacements and/or expansions.

The Myotonic Goat Registry takes into consideration all breeders, from pet owners to commercial meat growers. Regardless of which aspect of this breed appeals to you, the Myotonic Goat Registry is the place for all breeders to register their Myotonic Goats.

The Registry will help breeders promote their goats through sales, shows, and advertising, and will educate the public about the Myotonic Goat and its usefulness in a variety of settings.