

Boer Goats South Africa

Everything you ever wanted to know about the South African Boer Goat



Kidding



The lambing period is the most important phase of any smallstock operation. Lamb mortalities under extensive conditions is an important problem which can negatively impact on production levels. Losses of up to 50% can occur as a result of poor supervision and poor or overfeeding of ewes. Nutrition and care of the ewe during late pregnancy is thus of great importance. Good feeding and nutritional regimens during late pregnancy are important as the ewe must gain 7 – 9kg during the last six weeks of pregnancy.

Select the time of year during which the most plentiful supply of food is available up to the period after weaning occurs; in other words, the period during which food will be available for at least 3 1/2 – 4 months in order to breed kids as well and as cheaply as possible. If possible, it is preferable to plan in such a way that food will still be in plentiful supply for a further 2-4 months, since it is best to market Boergoat kids at the age of 3-6 months. This enables the producer to withhold only his replacement goats during the period of the year when food is scarcer, especially in those areas where farming is on an extremely extensive basis. Try to keep mating time as short as possible – ideally, 36 days. In this way, each ewe will have two cycles with the ram. This also facilitates management and marketing considerably.

PRIOR TO KIDDING

Ewes in the final stages of pregnancy (last six weeks) must be dosed for internal parasites, especially noseworms so that they don't lose their lambs. Scent plays an extremely important part in lamb recognition and therefore it is important that the ewe's nose is clear of any parasites and other obstructions. The administration of Vitamin A will improve general health, raise immunity levels generally and prevent afterbirth retention. Inoculate against gangrene of the uterus 2-3 months before the kidding season. The symptoms of this disease are: ewes die shortly after a period of up to three days after birth as a result of severe inflammation of the uterus. Inoculate against scabby mouth one month before kidding season in order to guard against udder infection. Two thirds of the growth of the fetus takes place during the last three weeks of pregnancy. For this reason, it is very important to make extra nutritional provision during this period, in the form of the same treatment as that administered before mating time.

Among Boergoats, the average percentage of kids is 180 % and many triple births occur. Extra nutrition will make kids stronger and better able to maintain life at birth, especially in the case of multiple births. This is why the sonar is of inestimable value in determining the presence of triplets or quads, in order to ensure that each of the kids is born strong and with a good capacity to maintain life. During droughts it is essential to prevent abortions by giving supplementary feed following two months of pregnancy.

DURING KIDDING SEASON

This is the only period during which Boer goat farming requires a great deal of care and attention. This is why it is important to keep the kidding season as brief as possible, so that full attention can be focused on it. It is extremely important to carry out planning properly. Therefore, it is necessary to plan this aspect thoroughly and consider using one of the following methods, or a combination thereof, in accordance with your particular circumstances.

ENCLOSURE OF KIDS IN A LARGE PEN

In this instance, all the kids remain behind in the pen when the ewes go to pasture. This system is not recommended, since the kids are invariably thirsty when the ewes return, with the result that any kid will tend to drink milk from any ewe. It is surprising to note how often this method is still used in spite of all its inherent disadvantages.

SMALL CAMPS

The establishment of small camps with sufficient food, shelter and shade, which are kept aside for the kidding season, is showing signs of becoming the accepted method for the future, especially in cases where farming with large numbers is practiced. In terms of this system, 10-20 ewes are placed in a small camp, where they are able to give birth in peace and remain with their kids until the latter are strong enough (2-3 weeks), after which they may be incorporated into larger flocks. Each ewe which has given birth (along with her kids) receives the same paint serial number. Different colours may be used for single kids, twins and triplets. All that the flock manager has to do is to walk amongst the ewes three times per day and place kids correctly with their siblings, and ensure that the ewe allows each kid to drink. The manager may also sort the ewes into camps according to single or dual births once they have given birth, so that it is easier to ascertain whether a ewe should have one or two kids.

The birth of triplets tends to present problems, and the following alternative solutions are suggested:

- Use system number one for the first three weeks, namely small enclosures.

Since there is no place for three kids to drink simultaneously, triplets usually present the problem that the weakest kid is always pushed aside. If three kids are left with the ewe, she is able to raise them successfully if she is very well fed or if the third kid can be removed by means of one of the following systems:

- Giving the kid to an ewe with a single kid by means of the use for system one, using a small enclosure. What is important is that the ewes with only a single kid should each receive a new kid as soon as possible after having given birth to their own. Ewes usually accept a new kid within one or two weeks.
- Raising the third kid by hand with a bottle, or making use of a milch-goat. The latter method works exceptionally well, and a good milch-goat can simultaneously raise four kids exceptionally well if a system of separate enclosure is used.