

## **Judging Breeding Goats in Tennessee**

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When evaluating animals for breeding traits and determining which are to be selected, you must utilize several different standards for the visual appraisal. Breeding goats are no different than any other specie of animal. Livestock producers have the advantage to weigh the visual appraisal against pedigree information and performance data. We must, in youth judging, use only visual appraisal for the selection of the attributes that we consider valuable. The information in this fact sheet can be used when judging any breeding goat. Most of the classes used in youth judging contests in Tennessee will be Boer and Boer crosses. The information in this fact sheet will be mainly aimed at these animals. When judging other meat breeds, there is information on specific breed characteristics found on these breed's web sites. This information will be valuable when judging these breeds.

For any type of breeding goat evaluation, there are four general areas which must be addressed in the evaluation and selection process. These are: 1). Structural Soundness, 2). Skeletal Dimension, 3). Muscularity, and 4). Eye Appeal. It doesn't matter whether you are judging purebred registered animals or commercial; bucks or does, these attributes must be considered for every animal.

### **Structural Soundness**

Structural Soundness is listed first for a very good reason. The structure of any animal is the foundation of that animal. Everything which is added must be built upon a sound structural foundation. Judges will start judging animals by evaluating different parts when talking about structure; I will start at the head. Since we are talking about correctness, the eye and ear must be sound. A goat that cannot see will not perform well and this defect should be used to greatly discount this goat. In the same manner, a goat that can not hear will not usually perform as needed and this should be used as a discount also. In most judging contests, you will usually be told to assume that the goat is sound in both eye and ear. When evaluating a goat for your herd, you should never assume these items are sound unless you have evaluated them for yourself. The jaw of a goat should be evenly opposed so that the teeth touch the dental pad when the goat's mouth is closed. There are all kinds of variations on this anatomical makeup of goats. Some breed standards allow the goat to have a slight under or over bite. Youth judges must realize that this part of the goat must work correctly if the goat is to survive and thrive.

Progressing to the neck and shoulders area, the animal must have a strong neck that is balanced in length to the body and blends in well into the shoulders. The neck should come off of the top of the shoulders and not be low set. This high neck set will cause the goat to keeps its head up and be alert. Animals that are more alert and upheaded are usually more healthy and thrifty. As we progress to the top of the shoulders and the topline of the goat, we need to see a strong topped goat. The topline should be relatively level from the shoulder/neck junction to the hip bones or hooks. It is an

advantage if there is a slight drop from the withers to the hooks. Dips or roaches in the topline is a major indication of a weakness and needs to carry a major criticism when judging. The hip of a goat should be nominally level and not too steep. Steep rumps are generally the starting place for unsound rear legs. Speaking of legs, they should be on the corners of the body and be strong. Pasterns should be strong and have enough flex to allow the goat to move freely. The pastern should also be relatively short in length and not be too straight. When viewing a goat from the rear, the rear legs should be perpendicular to the ground. When viewing from the side, a vertical line from the pins should follow the rear leg to the ground. Anything other than that should receive criticism. When viewing the front legs of a goat, the front legs should be perpendicular to the ground. The hooves should point straight forward as the animal sets its foot on the ground. Hooves which turn in or out or splay toes should be considered as a criticism. When viewing the animal from the rear, the base of the animal's tail must be centered and straight. The rest of the tail should curve upward in a natural position.

When dealing with breeding animals, one must pay close attention to the reproduction organs of the animal. The buck should have two large well-formed equal sized testes in a single scrotum. Occasionally bucks will exhibit halving in the scrotum area. The scrotum must not split in it more than 2 inches and no split is desirable. The external genitalia of the female should be well developed and properly structured. Infantile vulvas and vulvas that turn up are indicators of poor fertility in does. These can also be an indication of a hermaphrodite.

When surveying the structure soundness of a breeding doe, one must assess the structure of the udder and teats on that animal. Does should have a well formed udder that has strong attachments and the number of functional teats not to exceed two per side. Cluster teats and fishtail teats are definite faults and these animals must be strongly criticized and moved to the lower part of a class. A split teat with two distinctly separated teats and openings with at least 50% of the body of the teat separated is permissible, but teats without splits are preferred. When evaluating bucks, one must also look at the teat structure of bucks. A buck with bad teat structure will pass this on to its female offspring and discounts should be made on these structures in the same manner as what was done with breeding does.

### **Skeletal Dimension**

The next important area of evaluation is Skeletal Dimension. Once again, I will start with the head and proceed down the body. The size of the skull is a good indicator of overall skeletal dimension. Breeding goats should have a prominent, strong head. The width between the eyes and the horns indicates a stoutness of skeleton. The length of the head is an indicator of growth. It is always very proportional to the length of the rump and other skeleton areas. The forehead should be prominent on Boer and Boer cross goats. The sex of the animal will dictate the appearance of the animal in the head. Bucks should have a masculine appearance and does must exhibit a feminine appearance.

Progressing to the neck, the length of neck is also an excellent indicator of growth. A long clean neck that has balance is also an indicator of the length of body. The length of neck and length of body has a major influence on the overall dimension of a goat. The overall dimension of any animal is three dimensional – length, width, and depth.

The length of body needs to be balanced with the depth of body. An open rib which is well sprung off of the topline of the animal is necessary for breeding animals. This openness of rib allows plenty of room for internal organs and offspring which are to be produced. Breeding animals must have a deep body in the chest that carries out into the rear flank. Breeding goats need to have a broad, long rump that has a gentle slope to the pins. The length and depth of any animal must be balanced with the width. When observed from the front, the floor of the chest should be wide. This area must be balanced without being coarse or opened fronted. When evaluating an animal from the rear, the animal must show width in the rib and middle portion of the body and width between the rear legs. While length of leg is usually not addressed by many breeds, balance of the animal is the key. As a general rule, the depth of body of any breeding animal should be about 60% of the total height on the animal. Legs that are too short will hinder the animal's ability to cover large amounts terrain and legs that are too long offer little merit either. Once again, balance is the key.

The bone in the leg of a goat should be large and flat. The foot should be large and sound and dark colored hooves are almost always sounder than light colored hooves.

### Muscle

While structure and dimension are the essential foundation of a goat, the reason for this animal is the production of an edible product called red meat. This red meat is called **muscle**. While we started with the head and move back and down to evaluate the two previous areas, now we will start ground-up and rump forward. Muscling is apparent everywhere on the skeleton. However, a good evaluator selects certain areas to assess the amount of muscle present. One of the easiest places to evaluate the amount of muscle in a goat is to view this animal from the rear. The thickest place on a well muscled goat should be from stifle to stifle while the goat is on the move or standing naturally. It is also advantageous to evaluate the muscle development on the inside and outside portion of the leg and to see how far the goat carries muscle down to the hock. A visual examination of the thickness of the top of a goat is also a good indicator. It is easy for the inexperienced eye to be fooled by fat when using only the loin and rack to evaluate muscle on a goat. Body condition can influence the thickness of a goat in certain areas. Probably the best indicator of true muscle in a goat is in the forearm. The muscle in the forearm of a goat is directly proportional to the longissimus dorsi muscle which extends the length of the topline. The more muscle that a goat has, the more salable product a producer has produced.

## Eye Appeal

Eye appeal is the final attribute that must be considered when evaluating goats. Its importance must never be underestimated. Balance and symmetry in the ways all of the animal's parts fit together is the most important factor in eye appeal. When selecting females, they should be feminine in their appearance with clean fronts with feminine heads. They should show feminine angularity such that the animal appears up fronted and the depth of body should increase into the region of the rear flanks. Bucks, on the other hand, should express a masculine appearance. They should possess a rugged appearance throughout, especially in the head and neck area. They must have a rugged bold spring of rib to carry the respiratory system. This is essential for them to survive during the stress to their body during the peak of rut and breeding season. They should have plenty of muscle throughout since they will provide one-half of the genetics of all the offspring in the herd. Loose supple skin is desirable in breeding goats. If judging registered goats, color is also important, but I will not try to go into that with this information.

Records and pedigrees are very important when selecting breeding and replacement animals, but this information is currently not being used in judging in Tennessee Youth Judging activities.

## Terminology

### **Structural Correctness**

#### Advantages

More correct bite  
Larger testicles  
More functional udder  
More desirable size/number of teats  
More structural correct on feet and legs  
Tracks wider and truer in front/rear  
Squarer on feet and legs  
Truer tracking  
Exhibits more style and erectness when traveling  
More desirable slope of shoulder  
More angle to shoulder  
More correct /desirable set to pastern  
Longer, freer striding  
More fluid/flexible stride  
Neck blends more smoothly into shoulders  
Shoulder blades set tighter against chest wall  
Smoother, cleaner through shoulders  
Stronger, more level top  
More nearly level from hooks to pins  
Straighter/stronger/more correct in the foreleg when viewed from the side

#### Criticisms

Mouth is out  
Parrot Mouthed  
Monkey Mouthed  
Small Testicles  
Udder problems indicated by:  
Weak top  
Weak/down in the pasterns  
Hocks in/cow hocked  
Splays out/toes out in front  
Steep rumped  
Short hipped/rump  
Short bodies  
Post legged  
Sickle hocked  
Restricted in movement  
Straight shouldered  
Short, tight strides off both ends

More width between the fore/rear legs  
Legs placed more squarely under body

### **Growth Potential**

#### Advantages

Larger framed  
Larger, growthier  
More size and scale  
Greater length and extension through front end  
More future growth and outcome  
Appears to be faster growing  
Higher weight per day of age

#### Criticisms

Smaller framed  
Less future and outcome  
Earlier maturing  
Quicker patterned  
Lower weight per day of age

### **Body Capacity or Volume**

#### Advantages

More capacious  
Higher volume  
More overall dimension and capacity  
Longer, deeper bodied  
Wider chested  
Bolder sprung  
Broad through the chest floor  
More spring of rib  
Deeper and more expandable in the rib  
More circumference of heart  
Deeper in the hearth girth  
More substance of bone  
Longer bodied/loin/rump  
Deeper ribbed

#### Criticisms

Tighter ribbed  
Narrow gauged  
Narrow chested  
Shallow bodied  
Constricted in the fore rib  
Narrow through the chest floor  
Lacks volume/depth/capacity  
Slab sided  
Lacks spring of rib  
Pinched behind the shoulders  
Sharp through the rack  
Frail  
Short bodied/loin/rump

### **Muscle**

#### Advantages

Heavier muscled  
More expressively muscled  
More volume of muscle  
More natural thickness  
Thicker topped  
More muscle expression in shoulder/forearm  
loin/rump/leg  
Thicker in loin/lower leg  
Meatier topped  
Wider from stifle to stifle  
Thicker, squarer rump/hip  
Deeper through the twist

#### Criticisms

Lighter muscled  
Flat legged  
Flat/narrow loin  
Tapered into lower leg  
Tapers from hooks to pins  
Narrow tracking  
Narrow chested

More uniform width from hooks to pins  
Wider tracking  
Wider chested  
More forearm muscling

### **Eye Appeal/Balance**

#### Advantages

More style and balance  
More stylish  
Cleaner patterned  
Nicer balanced  
More eye appealing  
Nicer profiling  
Smoother  
More level top/hip/rump  
Squarer hip/rump

#### Criticisms

Coarse  
Weak topped  
Ill made  
Poorly balanced  
Steep hipped/rumped

### **Femininity**

#### Advantages

Exhibits more feminine wedge  
More femininity through head, neck, and shoulder  
More angular fronted  
Longer, cleaner necked  
Smoother blending through the front end  
Blends smoother through neck-shoulder junction  
Blends smoother from shoulder to fore rib

#### Criticisms

Lacks femininity  
Coarse fronted  
Coarse shouldered  
Short necked  
Too masculine  
Wasty fronted

### **Masculinity**

#### Advantages

More rugged  
More masculine  
More testicular development  
Cleaner fronted

#### Criticisms

Refined  
Frail  
Small testicles  
Too feminine  
Coarse fronted  
Wasty fronted

Adapted from the American Boer Goat Association Selection and Evaluation by Preston Faris and Dr. Frank Craddock