

History and Development of the Kiko goat

Background

The Kiko goat was developed exclusively by Goatex Group LLC, a New Zealand corporation which has been solely responsible for the breeding of Kiko goats in New Zealand. The corporation was originally a consortium of large farmers who were actively involved in the capture and farming of New Zealand's extensive native goat population for the purposes of upgrading for fiber production. All members of the consortium had a vigorous and ongoing interest in meat production as a consequence of which several thousand of the most substantial and fertile native goats were allocated to a breeding program in which population dynamics would be rigorously applied to produce a goat with enhanced meat production ability under browse conditions.

New Zealand Native Goats

New Zealand has a large population of native goats which roam unrestrained through the wooded hill country and mountain scrubland of both islands. These goats derive from the original imports of British milch goats introduced in the late eighteenth century to provide sustenance for whalers and sealers prior to New Zealand's colonization. Over time they have been supplemented by escaping domestic goats and farmed goats turned loose into unproductive scrubland during times of agricultural adversity, particularly the depressions of the 1890's and 1930's. Small colonies of hair producing goats were found in a remote part of the North Island's Waipu Forest in the 1970's, the legacy of a failed attempt to establish a mohair industry during the First World War.

New Zealand's total lack of predators and temperate climate meant that native goats have been able to breed without the strictures of mortality that are found elsewhere in the world. In addition, they rapidly adapted to the environment into which they had been released and established themselves throughout the country. As a consequence, comparatively small numbers of goats released into the wild had burgeoned to hundreds of thousands of goats by the mid 1970's. Goats (along with deer) were ravaging New Zealand's native flora to the extent that the government permanently employed substantial numbers of professional hunters in an effort at control.

At this time a government sponsored scheme was introduced in another attempt to foster and promote the raising of Angora goats in order to develop a mohair industry. The strategy adopted was the use of Angora bucks over native does in an upgrading program. In the event, this prompted the wholesale capture and confinement of tens of thousands of native goats for use in the program

The Origins of Goatex Group LLC

Many of the native goats confined as part of the Angora upgrading program exhibited enhanced characteristics for growth and meat production. A number of farmers with large numbers of native goats formed themselves into the Goatex Group consortium. Members of the consortium, who amongst them farmed significant numbers of captured native goats, identified their superior producers and contributed them to a common herd for the purposes of applying population dynamics to the base aggregation with a view to the genetic enhancement of meat production characteristics.

The Name Kiko

The word 'kiko' had traditionally been used by New Zealand's native people, the Maori, to describe substantial meat producing animals. In New Zealand Maori, the Polynesian language spoken by the Maori people, 'kikokiko' is the generic term for flesh for consumption. The members of the consortium determined to continue the local usage to describe the enhanced meat producing goat they were developing.

The Development Program

The development program decided upon by consortium members was based upon population dynamics. Population dynamics is the application of selection parameters within populations displaying standard distribution characteristics for any given trait. By selecting animals at the upper end of the bell curve distribution for any given trait, the heritability of that trait is enhanced. Similarly, by selecting outliers appearing on a scattergram distribution chart, animals displaying superiority for that particular trait may be identified. The consortium members agreed that the traits which they would focus upon would be commercially significant (both in output and input terms) and readily measured. They also agreed that culling percentages would be rigorous and uniform amongst the members of Goatex Group.

© 2015 Graham Culliford. Reproduction prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.