A Guide to the identification of the Natural Indigenous Goats of Southern Africa

compiled by J W Morrison
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Nguni Type Goats (Mbuzi's) - multi colours - semi pendulous ears

Eastern Cape Xhosa - multi colours - lob ears

Northern Cape Speckled (Skilder) Goats - lob ears

Kunene Type (Kaokoland area) - multi colours - lob ears
Excerpts from: The origin and description of southern Africa’s indigenous goats

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Origin
According to Epstein (1937) a number of nomadic black and coloured nations inhabited North Africa hundreds of years ago. These nations could not readily migrate southwards due to a tsetse fly (Glossina morsitans) belt stretching along the equator across the whole of Africa.

Epstein (1971) showed by means of a schematic map of tsetse fly distribution in Africa that there is a narrow tsetse-free corridor in the region of the lake district near Lake Victoria and the Ruwenzori mountains. Epstein (1971) continued to explain that the Black Nations along the equator possessed cattle, some of these breeds were Nagana (sleeping sickness carried by the tsetse fly) tolerant. They also possessed goats, a few hairy sheep and dogs. Epstein (1971) said the coloured nations or Khoikhoin possessed domestic animals such as Zebu type cattle, such as the Boran, fat-tailed sheep and dogs. This coloured nation was driven southward by stronger nations armed with bows and arrows and battle axes. This migration started during the fifth century AD in the region of the lake districts. They proceeded through the narrow tsetse-free corridor and then they proceeded along the drier West Coast. From their sheep the fat-tailed Afrikaner sheep were bred and the lateral horned Afrikaner cattle. They later inhabited the dry areas such as Angola, Namibia and Namaqualand.

Bachman (1983) confirmed Epstein’s (1971) theory about migration. The Black Nations moved down the hot sweltering East Coast where tick borne diseases are numerous. According to Bachman (1983) the Black Nations possessed a variation of Zebu type cattle breed fairly well adapted to tropical conditions, small hairy thin tailed sheep and small tough hairy dogs. These nations, however, brought with them animals which eventually influenced animal breeding in Africa and around the world. They brought with them a mixture of long-haired and short-haired goats. Those goats consisted of a mixture of short and long-eared or lop-eared goats.

Subsequently, by means of barter or raiding, the Khoikhoin also acquired goats and the Black people acquired fat-tailed sheep. In fact, Barrow (1801) wrote that near the Hartbees river in the Northern Cape, he encountered some “Namaqua Hottentots who possessed a herd of small handsome goats that were speckled like the leopard.” The South African farmers called these goats ”skilderbokke” or speckled goats.

Black farmers, coloured farmers and white farmers soon recognised the fact that these indigenous goats could live on almost every sort of plant material on a farm and could survive and reproduce under extremely unfavourable conditions. Indigenous goats spread rapidly over Southern Africa and were used to produce milk, meat, skins and were also used in numerous trading deals with travelling traders by all farmers.

Development
Especially in the thorn-bush country of the Eastern Cape goat farming flourished. In the Border areas of the Eastern Cape the black and white farmers met and here white farmers acquired shorthaired lop-eared goats. These goats were used to “open up” thorn-bush country for Angora goats, woolled sheep and mutton sheep such as the Dorper and even for cattle farming.

Here farmers started improving their indigenous goats during the twentieth century. The late Mr T.B. Jordaan of Buffelsfontein, Somerset East, can be regarded as one of the pioneer breeders of the modern Boer Goat. In the first journal of the S. A. Boer Goat Breeders’ Association published in 1959 he described how breeders of the Eastern Cape developed the Boer Goat. He stated that in 1918 his father, Mr W.G. Jordaan, bought some goats from the farm Slot, Somerset East. These goats were short-haired and had white bodies and light-coloured red heads. Farmers claimed goats of this colour were easier to see and easier to manage in thorn-bush country. Simultaneously he bought a big robust dapple-coloured male goat from Mr I.B. van Heerden of Kaalplaas, Cradock. From these goats the well-known ‘Buffelsfontein Boer Goat stud’, which influenced the development of the Boer Goat not only in the Eastern Cape, but throughout Southern Africa to a marked extent, was developed.

According to Van Rensburg all these goats could often be found in the same flock.
However, the unimproved indigenous goats appear to be less susceptible to tick borne diseases such as heartwater.

Conformation

This is a point of a heated debate among goat breeders of different breeds. Some breeders prefer the long-legged straight nosed unimproved conformation of indigenous goats. Other breeders prefer the roman nosed compact, well-muscled, short-legged conformation of the improved Boer Goat. Unimproved goats appear to be more drought and disease resistant than Boer Goats.

References

Barrow, J., 1801. Travels into the interior of Southern Africa in the years: 1797 and 1798 Part 1. London. Strahan Printer’s Street.

Map 2: Possible Khoikhoi migration routes, as proposed by C. Ehret (1982) and R. Elphick (1985).
Indigenous Veld Goat Club
Inheemse Veld Bok Klub
General

The Veld Goat is indigenous to southern Africa. It almost disappeared with the purifying of the Boer Goat. Over centuries the Veld Goat survived a long and dangerous journey through Africa, and it's genes is to a marked extend, developed by natural selection.

These goats are naturally bred for functional efficiency;
they move with ease and can walk long distances;
they are antelope like with longer legs; cow hocks and sickle hocks can occur;
they can either graze or browse on a wide variety of plants, shrubs and grasses.

They are highly fertile even from a young age, have a long breeding season and produce offspring the year through, and have a long productive lifespan.

Their meat is succulent with good flavour, and very low in cholesterol.

They are multi-coloured, speckled ("skilder"), dappled ("apple"), or solid coloured patterns,
due to their different colourations, they are difficult to spot by predators.

They have excellent herding instinct to help protect themselves from predators,
and will even fight them off with their sharp horns.

The Veld Goat ewes are known for their remarkable mothering abilities, and protection of their offspring.

Due to their hard brown hooves , there is almost no sign of growing claws.
They are highly tick and parasite tolerant.
Naturally polled goats may occur occasionally.

Dr Laurie Hammond (1995) director of the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization, stated that 40% of the world's 4000 domestic livestock breeds are in danger of becoming extinct. The world wide trend for super breeds could be wiping out thousands of indigenous breeds with their unique abilities to perform in harsh environments. Hammond (op.cit.) continued: "Breeds of cattle, pigs and poultry, once the backbone of farming economics in many countries, were being replaced by a few super breeds which only performed in ideal conditions. Irreplaceable genetic resources are being lost. Many of these native breeds have maintained humans for more than 10 000 years. Their loss is not just a matter of heritage. It's very much about our future."

Man had almost no say in the development of the Indigenous Veld Goat - and it must stay that way.
The basis for every breeder's selection should be natural, unimproved, and unchanged animals.

Dr Herbert Atkinson said in the 18 th century about man always wanting to "develop" the animals around him:

"Please do not spoil, transform or improve them out of existence"
Nguni Type Goats (Mbuzi's) - multi colours -
semi pendulous ears

Distribution:
The Nguni type is probably the group that occurs more abundantly than the other distinct types of indigenous goats, in southern Africa. They occur specifically in the higher rainfall area stretching from the Ciskei, Transkei, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Swaziland, Mpumalanga, Northern Province, Botswana, the Caprivi, and extreme northern, high rainfall area of Namibia.

Distinctive Characteristics:
With closer investigation of indigenous goats in the abovementioned areas it is obvious that these goats belong to the same phenotype, with rather small geographic variations. The ears of the Nguni-type goat are medium to small and semi-pendulous, but not dwarf- and milk goat ears. They are medium to small frame, well proportioned goats. Sexual demorfism is a characteristic of the breed - small females with much larger males.

Body Conformation:
Head
The profile of the face tends to be flat or slightly concave, although some males exhibit a slight roman nose. The muzzle is predominantly dark pigmented. Shade of darkness may vary. The ears are small to medium in size and have a lateral and slightly forward orientation, some are semi-droopy - first pointing lateral and then starts drooping. Horns are present in both sexes. Naturally polled animals are found in the breed, but are rare in most areas. In females the horns grow upwards and curve outwards. In males the horns are more inclined to curve backwards and outwards. In females the horns are short and lighter, and in males of medium length and heavier. Toggles are present in a percentage of male and female animals. Beards are present in both sexes; small in females and large in the case of males where it flows into the longer hair of the neck. (In some strains the occurrence of beards in females are lower).

Neck & Fore Quarters
The neck is slender in females and well attached to the shoulders. Males have thicker, well-muscled necks and shoulders covered with long hair. The fore arm is slender in the females and heavier in the males. The females have a fine bone structure in comparison to the heavier bone structure of the males.

Middle piece
The breed has good length and depth of body. The back tends to be slightly hollow.

Hind Quarters
The females and some of the males are not well-muscled. In good quality males the hind quarters are well-muscled on the inner and outer thighs. The breed has a sloping rump. The tail is short to medium, erect, with a thin base.

Legs & Hooves
Both sexes have strong, but fine, and medium to long legs. Hooves are predominantly dark in colour. Occasionally lighter colour and striped hooves occur.
Colour & Hair Covering:

The Nguni goat is a multi coloured breed, with a wide variety of uniform colours, white, black, fawn, brown and red-brown, pied, dappled and speckled, and all combinations of these colours.

Most goats have a short, glossy hair coat, and some goats are inclined to grow cashmere in cold winters. Individuals with longer hair on the lower body and hind quarters are sometimes found.

Male & Female Organs

In rams the testes are of functional size and shape, equal in size and situated near the body. The scrotum normally has no split.

In females the udders are normally well developed with more than enough milk for twins and even triplets. Droopy udders, cluster teats, thick bottle-shaped teats, are undesirable, but luckily very rare among Nguni-goats.
Eastern Cape Xhosa - multi colours - lob ears

Distribution:
This strain originally occurred in the medium to lower rainfall area of the eastern Cape.

According to history the modern improved Boer Goat was developed by breeders of the eastern Cape, by using Xhosa lob eared goats, including a specific big, robust dapple coloured male goat, that formed the basis of the well known Buffelsfontein Boer Goat Stud. This stud influenced the development of the Boer Goat in South Africa to a marked extent. Only a handful of breeders in South Africa preserved some of these original muli coloured, lob eared goats.

Distinctive Characteristics:
This is a medium to large frame goat, rather well-muscled, with long lob (hanging / droopy) ears. Dapple and marble patterns of various colour combinations occurs generally among this strain of indigenous goats, although single colours and combinations thereof, are found.

Body Conformation:

Head
The face are rather long with a profile that is flat or slightly convex. The muzzle is predominantly dark pigmented. Shade of darkness may vary. The ears are long and droopy (lob ears). Horns are present in both sexes. Naturally polled animals occurs rarely. In females the horns grow upwards and curve outwards. In males the horns are more inclined to curve backwards and outwards. In females the horns are of medium size, and in males large and heavy. Toggles are present in some male and female animals. Beards are present in males, and in a small percentage of females. Male beards are large.

Neck & Fore Quarters
The neck is slender in females and well attached to the shoulders. Males have thicker, well-muscled necks and shoulders covered with long hair. The fore arm is slender in the females and heavier in the males. The females have a fine bone structure in comparison to the heavier bone structure of the males.

Middle piece
The breed has good length and depth of body.

Hind Quarters
The males and females are well-muscled on the inner and outer thighs. The breed has a sloping rump. The tail is erect and of medium size.

Legs & Hooves
Legs are strong, and medium to long. Hooves are predominantly dark in colour.
Colour & Hair Covering:

A wide variety of uniform colours, white, black, fawn, brown, and red-brown, pied, speckled and especially dappled and marble patterns, and all combinations of these colours, occurs.

Most goats have a short, glossy hair coat, and are inclined to grow cashmere in cold winters. Occasionally some individuals are found with longer hair on the lower body and hind quarters.

Male & Female Organs

In rams the testes are of functional size and shape, equal in size and situated near the body. The scrotum normally has no split.

In females the udders are normally well developed with more than enough milk for twins and even triplets. Droopy udders, cluster teats, thick bottle-shaped teats, are undesirable.
Northern Cape, Lob Eared, Speckled (Skilder) Goats

Distribution:
The Speckled Goat has its origin in the dry Northern Cape, Karoo area, stretching from Sutherland to Upington. Barrow (1801) wrote that near the Hartbees river in the Northern Cape he encountered some "Namaqua Hottentots (Khoisan) who possessed a herd of small handsome goats that were spotted like the leopard"

The Speckled Goat went with pioneer farmers to Namibia, around World War 1 and the "Dorslandtrek" during the previous century. Here some Namibian farmers preserved them and kept them pure. Over time breeders in South Africa bought Speckled Goats from these farmers, and brought them back to various parts of South Africa.

Distinctive Characteristics:
This is a medium to large frame goat, rather well-muscled, with large drooping lob ears. The Speckled Goat's whole body is covered with red, red-brown or black spots. The lower part of the legs are an almost solid dark pigmented colour. The head are protected by a concentration of colour around the muzzle, eyes and on the ears, with a white blaze on the forehead. They are highly heat and sunlight tolerant. In respect of productivity, Dr QP Cambell stated that the Skilder Goat is equal to, or better than any of the other types of goat breeds found in South Africa. Under favourable conditions it is common for a flock of Skilder ewes to produce an average of twins every eight (8) months – that is a possible lambing percentage of 300% p.a.

Body Conformation:

Head
The face is rather long with a profile that is flat or slightly convex, with a slight dip in front of the eyes. The muzzle is predominantly dark pigmented. The ears are large and droopy (lob ears). Horns are present in both sexes. Naturally polled animals occurs rarely. Female horns grow upwards and curve outwards, with the tips inclining to tilt inwards again - almost giving it a springbuck appearance. In males the horns also grow upwards, (some backwards), and curve outwards. In females the horns are of medium size, and in males large and heavy. Toggles are present in some goats. Beards are present in males, and a small percentage of females. Male beards tend to be large.

Neck & Fore Quarters
The neck is slender in females and well attached to the shoulders. Males have thicker, well-muscled necks and shoulders covered with long hair. The fore arm is slender in the females and heavier in the males. The females have a fine bone structure in comparison to the heavier bone structure of the males.

Middle piece
The breed has good length and depth of body.

Hind Quarters
The males and females are well-muscled on the inner and outer thighs. The breed has a sloping rump. The tail is erect and of medium size.
Legs & Hooves
Legs are strong, and medium to long. Hooves are predominantly dark in colour.

Colour & Hair Covering:
The Speckled Goat’s whole body is covered with red, red-brown or black spots. The head and legs are almost solid colour, with a white blaze on the forehead between the horns. They have a dark stripe on top of the back, and on the front of the neck. Speckled Goats have excellent pigmentation with good colouration on the most vulnerable parts of the body (muzzle, eyes, ears, top of the back, lower legs, front of the neck).

Most goats have short glossy hair, and are inclined to grow cashmere in cold winters.

Male & Female Organs
In rams the testes are of functional size and shape, equal in size and situated near the body. The scrotum normally has no split.
In females the udders are normally well developed with more than enough milk for twins and even triplets. Droopy udders, cluster teats, thick bottle-shaped teats, are undesirable.
Kunene Type (Kaokoland) - multi colours - lob ears

Distribution:
This breed is found in the North Western Areas of Namibia, known as the Kunene Region. It is a very dry, mountainous area with low and very variable rainfall. The vegetation is Mopani-Savanna veld. The Himba people live a semi-transhumance lifestyle, moving with their animals to where grazing is available.

Distinctive Characteristics:
The Kaokoland goat can be described as a hardy, lanky, large framed breed with slender, finely boned legs, well adapted to the harsh climate of the Kunene Region. They are excellent walkers, adapted to walking the long distances between water points or any available water.

Body Conformation:

Head
These goats have long narrow faces with a flat to slightly convex profile. The muzzles are pigmented with pigment ranging from light to dark. Speckled muzzles are also found. The ears are large and droopy, similar to those of the Boer Goat. Horns are present in both sexes. A very small percentage of the population are naturally polled animals. The horns curve upwards and outwards, and are medium to long in length. The base of the horns is closely spaced. Toggles are rare in both sexes. Beards occur in both sexes. The occurrence is much lower in females than in males. In females the beard is small, and in males it may vary from small to large.

Neck & Fore Quarters
The neck is long and slender in females and well attached to the shoulders. The males have thicker, well-muscled necks. The fore arm is slender in the females and heavier in the males. The females have a fine bone structure in comparison to the heavier bone structure of the males.

Middle piece
The breed has good length of body, tending to lack in depth, especially in the females.

Hind Quarters
The breed are not well-muscled. Males are generally better muscled than the females. The females tend to be narrow between the sit bones. Kaokoland goats have a characteristically sloping rump. The tail is of medium length, with a thin base, and may vary in colour.

Legs & Hooves
Kaokoland goats have slender, finely boned legs. Light and dark coloured hooves are found.
Colour & Hair Covering:

The Kaokoland goat is a multi-coloured breed, with a wide variety of uniform colours, white, black, fawn, brown and red-brown, pied and all combinations of these colours, including speckled combinations.

The goats are sometimes covered with hair varying from short straight hair, to long straight hair, and long slightly curly hair. Hair covering of the legs and lower body also varies, as mentioned above.

Male & Female Organs

In rams the testes are of functional size and shape, equal in size and situated near the body. The scrotum normally has no split.

In females the udders are normally well developed with more than enough milk for twins and even triplets. Droopy udders, cluster teats, thick bottle-shaped teats, are undesirable.
References

Dr Q P Cambell; *The origin and description of southern Africa's indigenous goats*  


Barrow J; 1801. *Travels into the interior of Southern Africa in the years: 1797 & 1798* Part 1  
London. Straham Printer's Street.


(National Coordinator for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources)

Dr Jan Raats; University of Fort Hare - Alice; *Characteristics of the Indigenous Goat*
Indigenous Veld Goat Club
Inheemse Veld Bok Klub

Minimum Screening / Keuring

* Nguni Type Goats (Mbuzi’s) - multi colours - semi pendulous ears
* Eastern Cape Xhosa - multi colours - lob ears
* Northern Cape Speckled (Skilder) Goats - lob ears
* Kunene Type (Kaokoland area) - multi colours - lob ears

Rams are masculine, with a well developed fore quarters, with prominent hair on the neck and shoulders, Horns grow wild or upwards,
The size and shape of the testes should be well developed, equal in size and situated near the body, The scrotum of elite-rams should not show any split.

Ewes are feminine with a long and slender neck, and are very good mothers;
Ewes are feminine and not heavy and masculine in the fore quarters (fertility).
Horns grow upright or in many different shapes and sizes;
They have well developed udders with more than enough milk for twins and even triplets;
Udders must not droop, should not be malformed or damaged, with functional teats;
Cluster teats, and excessively thick, bottle-shaped teats, and are not allowed.

Ramme is manlik, met goeie ontwikkeling in die voorlyf, met prominente hare op die nek en skouers,
Horings groei wild of opwaarts,
Testikels se grote en vorm moet goed ontwikkel, ewe groot wees, en naby die liggaam gedra word,
Die skrotum van elite-ramme moet geen spleet toon nie.

Ooie is vroulik met ’n slanke nek en is baie goeie moeders,
Ooie is vroulik en nie grof en swaar in die voorlyf nie (vrugbaarheid).
Horings groei opwaarts of in verskeie vorms en grootes.
Hulle het goed gevormde uiers met meer as genoeg melk vir tweelinge en selfs drielinge,
Uiers moet nie uithang, misvormd of beskadig wees nie, en moet funksionele spene hê,
Trosspene, en oormatige dik, bottelvormige spene word nie toegelaat nie.

Screening at sales will be done on the basis of natural, unimproved goats.
Keuring op veilings sal gedoen word op die basis van natuurlike, onveredelde bokke

Culling will take place of any abnormal, or deviation from the normal, natural, functional, efficient, structure of the goats - for example:
- Unfunctional jaws and/or muzzles
- Unfunctional legs and joints
- Unfunctional testes and scrotum
- Unfunctional udders and teats
- Incomplete or no pigmentation

Enige abnormale, of afwyking van die normale, natuurlike, funksionele struktuur van die bokke, sal uitgegooi word - soos byvoorbeeld:
- Onfunksionele kake en/of bekke
- Onfunksionele bene of kootgewrigte
- Onfunksionele testikels en skrotum
- Onfunksionele uiers en spene
- Onvoldoende of geen pigmentatie
Indigenous Veld Goat Club

16 Febr. 2007

Mission

(a) to encourage and promote the collection, preservation and improvement of all the eco-types by good selection in terms of the accepted description of the Natural Indigenous Goat,

(b) to eliminate interbreeding between different eco-types and with other goat breeds.

(c) to preserve the breed characteristics of the different eco-types in South Africa, and to encourage interest in one or more eco-type/s, by all means possible

(d) to preserve and encourage selection within the various eco-types with regards; fertility and adaptability,

(e) to compile an Identification Guide, based on existing core genetics of the various eco-types, and to apply and maintain visual inspection for genetic deviations which may possibly be linked to functional efficiency. This Guide must be used as the basis by which inspectors, breeders, and traditional owners, are educated, and thus, re-instill a pride in this heritage.

(f) to compile and maintain reports of the various family trees and keep record of all the animals that are registered or noted through the Society with Studbook;

(g) to promote and encourage displays and exhibits of the breed at agricultural exhibitions and shows

(h) to promote the sale and purchase of animals amongst all breeders; and

(i) to do everything within our means to promote the best interests of our members and of the Natural Indigenous African Goat within South Africa.

"Do not spoil, transform and improve them out of existence"