

WESTERN MARYLAND PASTURE-BASED MEAT GOAT PERFORMANCE TEST



OBJECTIVES OF THE TEST:

- To evaluate meat goats in a common production environment to measure genetic differences for economically-important traits.
- To increase the profitability of meat goat production by increasing the selection and use of performance-tested males.
- To provide an alternative to traditional pen and feed-based small ruminant performance testing programs.
- To field test the FAMACHA© system for controlling internal parasitism in goats grazing summer pastures.

**Western Maryland
Research & Education Center
18330 Keedysville Road
Keedysville, MD 21756**

**Phone | 301.432.2767
Fax | 301.432.4089**

mdgoattest.blogspot.com

PERFORMANCE TESTING

The Western Maryland Pasture-Based Meat Goat Performance Test was initiated at the University of Maryland's Western Maryland Research & Education Center (WMREC) in 2006.

The purpose of the annual test is to evaluate the performance of meat goats consuming a pasture-only diet, with natural exposure to gastrointestinal parasites (worms).

While on test, the goats are evaluated for growth, parasite resistance, parasite resilience, and carcass merit. In 2009, the first goats were harvested to collect actual carcass data.

THE MEAT GOAT INDUSTRY IS ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN THE UNITED STATES. THERE IS AN INCREASING DEMAND FOR GOAT MEAT (CHEVON) AMONG MANY HEALTH-CONSCIENCE CONSUMERS, AS WELL AS PEOPLE OF CERTAIN RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS.



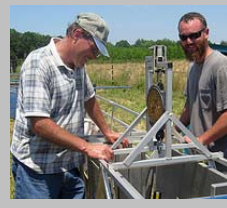
"A CENTRAL PERFORMANCE TEST IS WHERE ANIMALS FROM DIFFERENT HERDS ARE BROUGHT TO ONE CENTRAL LOCATION WHERE PERFORMANCE IS RECORDED. THE RATIONALE IS THAT MEASURED DIFFERENCES ARE MORE LIKELY DUE TO GENETIC DIFFERENCES, WHICH WILL BE PASSED ONTO OFFSPRING, RATHER THAN ENVIRONMENTAL DIFFERENCES WHICH WILL NOT. THE GOAL OF A CENTRAL PERFORMANCE TEST IS TO IDENTIFY GENETIC DIFFERENCES AMONG ANIMALS."
(DR. DAN WALDRON, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY)

WESTERN MARYLAND PASTURE-BASED MEAT GOAT PERFORMANCE TEST

<http://mdgoatatest.blogspot.com>

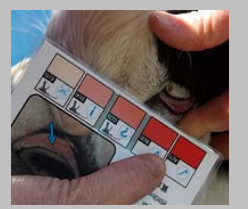


CARCASSES



WEIGHING

FAMACHA©



CONSIGNER



PERFORMANCE TESTING GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOL

The test is open to weanling male goats of any breed or breed cross, with or without registration papers or registration eligibility.

Goats must be born between December 15 (of the previous year) and March 20 (of the test year) and weigh between 35 and 70 pounds at the start of the test. They must have been weaned for at least two weeks and received two vaccinations for *clostridium perfringens* type D and tetanus prior to their arrival at the test site.

Goat breeders from any state may consign up to five goats. Half-sibs are recommended. A maximum of 70 goats will be accepted for the test, with preference given to Maryland residents and previous consigners.

Nominations are accepted from April 1 to May 15 of each year. A nomination fee of \$20 per goat must accompany each nomination. A nomination form and other documents pertinent to the goat test may be downloaded from the blog at <http://mdgoatatest.blogspot.com>. Nomination packets may also be requested by calling (301) 432-2767 ext. 343 or 315.

The test is conducted every year for 100 days from early June until early October. While on test, the goats are rotationally grazed among five 2-acre paddocks. They are handled every two weeks (using low-stress techniques), to determine body weights, FAMACHA© eye anemia, body condition, and coat condition scores. Individual and pooled fecal samples are collected to determine fecal egg counts and identify worm larvae. Bi-weekly reports are shared via the blog.

ANNUAL FIELD DAY & SALE

Bucks meeting Gold, Silver, and Bronze standards of performance and minimum standards for structural correctness and reproductive soundness are eligible to sell via public auction. Buck consigners may also consign does to the sale.

The annual Western Maryland Goat Field Day & Sale (and youth goat skillathon) is held at the Washington County Agricultural Education Center near Boonsboro, Maryland.

University of Maryland Extension programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, gender, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, or national origin..

The goat test is conducted by a committee of extension agents and specialists, with input from consigners. Members of the committee include Susan Schoenian, Dr. Jeanne Dietz-Band, Jeff Semler, Willie Lantz, David Gordon, Dr. Mary Beth Bennett, Shannon Uzelac, Dr. E. Nelson Escobar, Dr. Dahlia O'Brien, and Dr. Scott Updike. Dr. Kevin Pelzer serves as the consulting veterinarian.