

Meat Goats: Fact or Fad?

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Many livestock producers look at the meat goat industry and wonder if it is in fact an actually viable agricultural enterprise or is it another fad like the ostriches that will disappear as quickly as it started. In fact, there are several key differences between the meat goat industry and those fad agricultural enterprises of the past. This article will point out the most relevant of those differences.

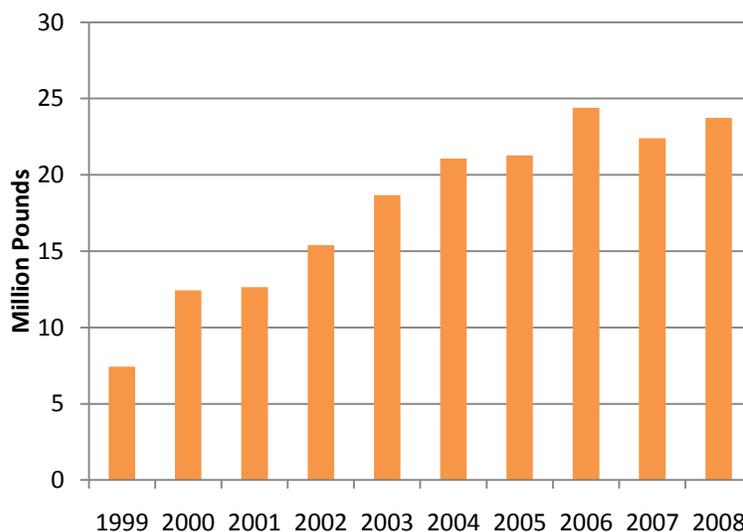
Market Demand

The biggest factor going for meat goats is there is an actual demand for the product. As the ethnic population in the United States has grown so has the demand for goat meat. Outside the U.S. goat meat is the most consumed meat protein. The graph below shows the amount of frozen goat meat that has been imported into the U.S. since 1999. Imports of frozen goat meat have increased from 7.42 million pounds in 1999 to its highest level of 24.4 million pounds in 2006. In 2008 the U.S. imported 23.7 million pounds of frozen goat meat.

Typically, consumers of goat meat prefer the product be fresh not frozen, but because of the inadequate production in the U.S. consumers are forced to purchase imported frozen goat meat.

As long as this demand continues there will be an opportunity for producers to have a viable market. In fact, since the preference is for fresh meat not frozen, there is still opportunity for expansion to fill the need that is currently being filled by imported goat meat.

US Frozen Goat Meat Imports



Sustainable Production System

Unlike past fads the meat goat industry is a sustainable production system that has its own set of established infrastructure (markets, packers, retailers, etc.). This is largely in part because of the aforementioned demand. Infrastructure was never established with other fad enterprises and that left producers with little options.

Meat goat operations also can be complimentary to an existing livestock operation. The opportunity to have multiple revenue sources from one resource center is appealing to some producers.

Meat goat operations can also use land resources that are typically not well suited for other types of livestock operations. This allows producers to utilize more of their land resources that would otherwise be setting idle or underused.

Overall, the meat goat industry is not a fad. It has a market demand and the ability to sustain itself over time. As long as the demand stays and the infrastructure can continue to meet the needs of the consumers, the meat goats should be a viable production system for the foreseeable future.