

# **OVERVIEW OF THE MISSISSIPPI MEAT GOAT INDUSTRY**

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An unofficial survey of livestock markets in Mississippi conducted in August 1995, indicated approximately 14,000 head of goats were sold in the year of August 1994-July 1995. The majority of goats are sold by the head on a year round basis, with the largest runs coming from the late spring to July. There are a few markets that will pay on a per pound basis for kid goats. Most goats sold through the auction sales go back home with local farmers and are recycled through the auction barn later. The goat market is a thinly tested market of which we know very little, however, it is suspected that many goats are sold more than once in the same year.

The addition of Boer breeding stock to the native mix of goats has spurred new interest in the Meat Goat industry. Since the survey in 1995, a large number of “special sales”, bringing in outside goats, as well as locally raised goats have come into existence. The opening of receiving stations or special goat auctions has provided producers with yet another outlet for their goats. It is quite possible that sale numbers have surpassed 20,000 head per year in Mississippi. This does not reflect “on farm” or private treaty sales between individuals.

In the beginning of this new industry, goats reached new highs at auction and private sales soared. It appears that the commercial market has leveled off somewhat, but at prices that would indicate a viable industry has been created here in the state. There have been successful goat sales, field days and shows within the last few years. More numbers are being sold for commercial purposes than breeding stock for the first time in the industry. Most successful producers have created their own local markets and are operating at manageable levels. Various educational programs have been implemented to insure good husbandry and continued progress for producers. Present health regulations appear adequate and in line with other specie regulations within the state and adjoining states. Proper education regarding disease control combined with enforcement of present regulations should help this growing industry.

Whether planned or unplanned, large numbers of goats now exist in the state. Producers will need even more assistance in marketing education and health care issues. The good news is that there is a market for goats at some price at the local auction barns every week. However, successful producers will become savvy marketing experts and identify the best and highest paying market for their product.