

PYGMY GOAT POST

NPGAA OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2019 | EDITION 1



THE NATIONAL PYGMY GOAT
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.



FROM THE PRESIDENT ...

Ever since I was a young boy a number of movies had a profound influence on my life. The movies Dr Do Little, The Bird Man from Alcatraz, The Incredible Journey and Born Free, meddled with a child's imagination. The possibility of being able to talk to animals and tame the wildest creatures was enthralling. Luckily my parents gave me the childhood and space to explore my passion, and by buying me two female guinea pigs they then left me to work out the puzzle of reproduction.

Decades later in 2010 I discovered a tiny relatable goat that ticked all the boxes. Like a 'Pushme Pullme' they were intriguing, they were playful, colourful and just darn cute. Living the goat industry 24/7 for over 30 years, what I learnt was an evolution of skills, rather than a simple done deal.



Enormous changes have occurred in all goat industries over this period. The loss of the Condobolin Meat Goat with the introduction of the SA Boer Goat, the restructuring of the Angora industry with both the Texan and SA Angora as well as the competition from the introduction of Alpacas, put great pressure on breeders. The buoyant cashmere industry was severely hampered by Chinese control of the hair processing and controlled world prices.

The point I am trying to make is that these industries had to adapt to change, much of which was stressful to the breeders. Some were forced to even leave the industry.

In 2013 I naively imported the first Pygmy semen into Australia never imagining the turmoil I was about to create for some people in the miniature goat industry. Ultimately the easiest and most positive solution was to stop trying to integrate into the miniature goat associations, but to follow the lead of the USA NPGA.

July 2019 saw the registration of NPGAA, the National Pygmy Goat Association of Australia. As the first President of the NPGAA I envisage a totally different industry to the one that currently exists. The changes will be gradual, giving breeders adequate time to adapt their animals to the standards imposed. The decisions made will be in consultation with industry leaders both here and overseas.

As only a caretaker of the Association, as is the current committee, our vision is simply to construct a strong and viable business-based organisation.

We promise to encourage new people and new ideas that will give a sense of ownership for all who care to make contributions. Our goal is to give a vision of the animal 'type', develop a show platform and a registration structure.

We do not aim to take away a breeder's freedom to create unique individuals or move fashion in all sorts of directions. The industry and independent trained judges can make those calls.

As the current President I am extremely excited about the future of the industry as it expands throughout Australia, and in the potential export market overseas.

I would at this time like to thank the current committee for their faith and support. I would also like to thank the breeders and social members from local and overseas that are signing up to join us, in what can only be a bright future.

Paul Hamilton

PRESIDENT, NPGAA

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Deadline for copy for next newsletter is 21 February 2020.

The NPGAA is affiliated with the NPGA.



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Front cover: Trevor and Lynne Nardi's Narion Farm property near Gympie.

Photo above: NPGAA President Paul Hamilton

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FROM THE COMMITTEE

Welcome to the first edition (Summer 2019) of the Pygmy Goat Post. We trust that you find it interesting. Our intention is to publish the newsletter each season. If you have anything you'd like to share with other members of the Association, please submit copy for the Autumn edition by 21 February 2020.

We would like to wish everyone a happy and safe Christmas. We look forward to an exciting year ahead for our new organisation and welcome your input to help make this the premier pygmy goat association in Australia.



SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS

We welcome members to contact us for advice and assistance. We are here to help and are both very experienced in our role as Registrars. We will strive to ensure registry records are completed and updated in the NPGAA data base within fourteen days.

The NPGAA database is the new version of Premium Breed. We are the only Association in Australia to be using this version.

With memberships increasing, we are now asking members to forward their stud registry records of their animals to be processed and updated in the NPGAA Premium Breed data base. Registry forms are on our website www.npgaa.com.au

If you have any questions or need help please do contact us and we look forward to hearing from you

Chris and Karen



Member Profile

Sorell School Farm
Tasmania



Lynn Murfet teaches secondary students in Certificate II and III V.E.T. Animal Studies at Sorell School in Tasmania. She is a former finalist in the Rural Woman of the Year and passionate about the value and importance of agricultural education. She also loves her pygmy goats.

We started our goatie adventure when I spotted the most adorable little girl I had ever seen sitting in the back of a ute at our local Sunday market. She was jet black, shiny and had the most adorable big brown eyes. She was an Australian Miniature only 3 months old and of course, tiny.

I was a total novice; never in my wildest dreams could I have believed this gorgeous little girl would grow as large as she did.

When the students arrived at school the next day they were instantly smitten.

It was not long before we purchased our second, third, fourth ... and before we knew it, we had a herd. Luckily we soon realised there was a difference in what some people called 'miniature goats,' and actual Australian Miniatures, so the height of our herd reduced.

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Member Profile

Sorell School Farm
Tasmania



One of the main drivers behind our ever-increasing herd was one of my students Josh who rapidly became obsessed with the goats. He would often sneak out of his other classes to go and hang out with the goats. It wasn't long before he was affectionately called 'Goat Boy'.

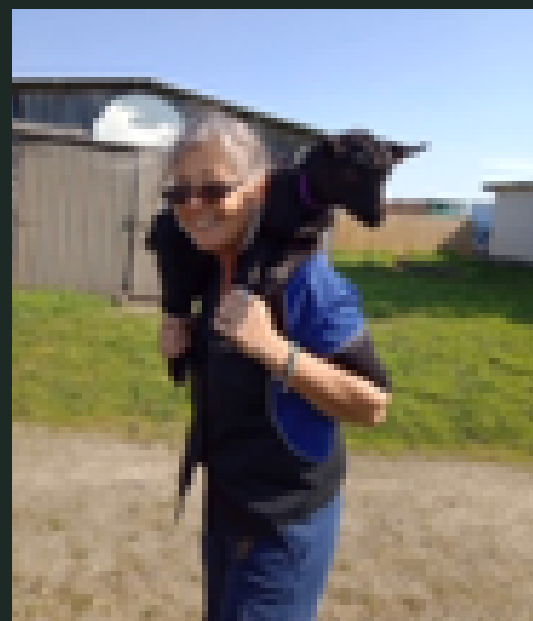
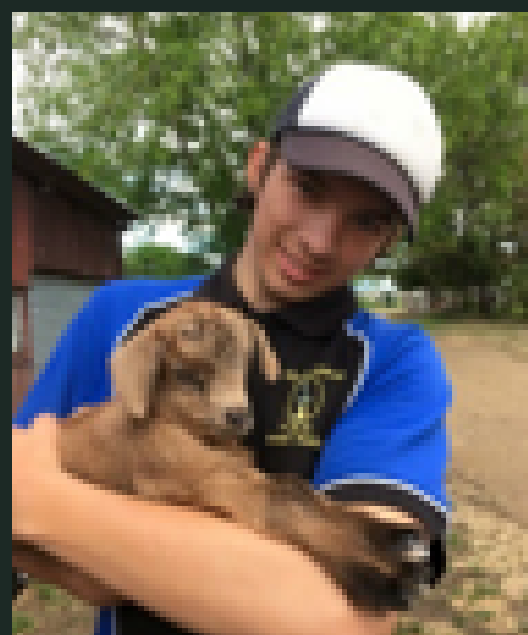
Josh was constantly trawling Gumtree and Facebook pages in the quest to purchase more and more goats. It was through his incessant search that he came across Semtech Breeding Services, Paul Hamilton, which led to our first pygmy, 62.5% Trinity Maxwell Smart.

He was stunningly handsome, short and stocky with a beautiful wide gait. We brought him into Tasmania with two wethers Harry and Harold to keep him company. The trip up north to get them was quite the adventure as after driving around half the state we ended up finding them at the regional cattle sale yards. Josh and the students were over the moon with the new additions to the farm.

It was the turning point of the educational aspect of the students learning. Up until then we had a focus on using the goats as a popular attraction for farm tours, animal nurseries and of course, cuddles. These little ones were not only going to be a massive hit with the public they were an excellent learning opportunity for our Certificate III in Animal Studies students. They started viewing at the Australian Miniatures with fresh eyes, looking for certain qualities that would enhance the offspring of our animals on the farm.

I have learnt a lot over the past few years and the animals we are producing now at Sorell School are certainly like a different species from when we started. During a recent trip to Victoria, I was lucky enough to visit Paul Hamilton and see his wonderful animals. Little did I know when I walked through his front door I would end up purchasing the most gorgeous little man I had ever seen. Trinity Mr Sheehan aka Mick.

And so ... our adventure continues!



The Art and Science of Judging Goats

By Denise Fraser

Denise has been breeding pygmy goats for close to 20 years and has been a judge since 2008. She is a past president, and current secretary, of NPGA and is also involved in her local club, the Southern California Pygmy Goat Association.

Livestock judging is the art of comparing like animals against a breed standard to determine the superior animal. While that may sound important, the reality is more like trying to analyze unruly goats while being stepped on, run over, knocked down, and occasionally being urinated on by an overly zealous buck! But sore toes and wet trouser legs are a small price for meeting and making new friends that share our crazy passion.

NPGA judges basically judge according to the design principle “form follows function,” meaning, simply, that our goats’ structure must suit the function for which it is intended.



When the National Pygmy Goat Association began in the 1970s, the founders created a breed standard to describe a useful, structurally-sound animal true to the original African dwarf goat.

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There is a scorecard assigning point values for the different categories according to gender. For instance while our does have a 12-point section for udders, bucks have greater points for masculinity and more emphasis on legs and feet. Because there are no perfect goats, we have a faulting matrix to determine which faults – if equal in points – are more serious. There are three aspects to analyzing a class of pygmy goats when I judge: visually, by feel, and watching the animals on the move.

1. Visually examining animals from the front, rear, and side allows me to evaluate the goat as a whole. Set/angulation of fore and rear legs, body capacity and depth, and the strength of the topline. I'm looking to see how the shoulders are laid on and how the neck ties in. I want to see a deep-bodied animal with plenty of room to carry kids and straight, strong legs to support the size of the body.
2. The hands-on portion is a confirmation of what I've seen in the line-up. I run my hands all over the animal feeling muscle and blending, stifles and elbows. I feel the width of the chest floor – checking any structure that cannot be seen easily, such as is the case especially with bucks and their full manes.
3. Walking the goats gives me the chance to see how they track and check their soundness. Watching the animal track gives insight into their actual build: Loose stifles may cause them to “toe-out” behind or track unevenly behind; elbows out can cause them to toe-in as they walk or stand.

When we have pulled our choices into our final lineup, we give our placings and reasons why each goat has placed above the one behind him. This gives the exhibitor some feedback, and I always encourage everyone to ask questions. Isn't that what makes it fun?

The Importance of Feet

By Harvey Considine

*Kindly reprinted with permission of the
National Pygmy Goat Association (from Goat World magazine)*

Many factors contribute to the health, well-being and longevity of goats. We want our particularly desirable animals to stay with us for a long time and be able to reproduce themselves, so we need to be aware of the many things which influence their lives. Of course, one can also say that one of the things that make them desirable to us is a long life. At any rate, we need to recognize that both heredity and environment make our goats what they are.

Heredity will help to determine most physical features but is still limited by what the environment will allow. As an illustration, consider the goat, born with a genetic predetermination to have sound, straight, strong forelegs, but is born into the herd of a well meaning goat keeper who has never heard of vitamin D. Suppose further that the owner is in a northern climate, the kid is born in early winter, the barn is warm but dark with no sunshine. In a misguided effort to keep the kid comfortable, it is never allowed outside to get sunshine. The hay and grain being fed the mother is ancient and poor quality, and no vitamin supplements are used so the milk is low in vitamin D. By spring, the kid will have grossly formed forelegs - bowed, bent, frail and weak. The hind legs, too, will be affected and the leg structure will not at all resemble what heredity wanted because the animal will have developed the disease we call rickets.

The physical structure, that which we call conformation has much to do with how well our Pygmies and other goats perform their function of living, reproducing and making themselves useful. Let us list a few of them: 1) a sound jaw and proper bite makes eating easy and enjoyable; 2) a wide chest and deep heart girth makes plenty of room for the heart and lungs so they can pump blood and breathe easily; 3) straight, well formed feet make walking and running pleasant as well as hoof trimming easy; 4) a deep and well- sprung barrel provides plenty of room for digestion and carrying kids; 5) proper structure and motion of rear legs also makes such chores as getting to food easier; 6) the correct structure of rump makes possible correct set and action of rear legs as well as providing easy birthing of the young.

In this article we will confine ourselves to feet structure and maintenance through correct feet trimming. Through centuries of minimal feet care when wild or semi-wild, our Pygmies have developed strong durable feet that usually serve them well. The ones with good feet were the ones who lived longer and were more able to reproduce themselves.

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The Importance of Feet cont...

Different living conditions encouraged different foot shapes to develop. Living constantly on rocks required feet that grew faster as the toes wore down on the rough, rocky surfaces. The goats living on sand were more likely to have slower growing feet with a larger foot surface to support them on the soft surfaces they walked on. Some goats became adept at climbing small trees and their feet were a bit more likely to have somewhat divided toes so they could pinch the toes together and get a grip on the tree trunks.

From these many different specially developed feet have come our Pygmies of today and now we introduce them to yet another possible environment - the confinement housing. No longer do they have to forage far and wide for their food, so there is less wear on the feet. Walking conditions are made easy and the feet that were so neatly adept at gripping tree trunks are simply spreading toes that in many barn conditions collect debris between them and are hard to trim. Yes, now we have introduced the chore that goat lovers of all kinds must face more or less regularly, the job of trimming feet.

Neglected feet grow too long where there is little exercise on rough surfaces and endanger the well-being of the goat. First, they are uncomfortable to walk on and enhance the vicious circle of longer feet because of less exercise and less exercise because of uncomfortable long feet. Second, they increase the likelihood of foot diseases such as hoof rot. This malady is an infection caused by bacteria growing inside the areas of the hoof that are chronically damp. While the chances of hoof rot are much greater during those times of year when rain makes continually wet ground, it is also true that an overgrowth of hoof tissue, especially the horny outer shell, makes the inside of the hoof in the soft tissue, an ideal breeding place for these bacteria. The solution is simple, remove the offending extra hoof material and keep the goats on relatively dry surfaces.

There are different ways of trimming feet using different tools to do the job. The most common is the small pruning shears type. A variance is found in using the small picking shears used for clipping citrus fruit off the trees. With this type of trimmer, the hard outside shell is slipped off using several bites to get all the way around. Care must be exercised to follow up with a small rasp or plane so that the entire bottom surface of the foot is left level. Two common mistakes with this style of trimming are: 1) the horny outer shell, which is excellent to walk on, is pared too far down and the weight must be borne on the soft inner "frog". This can be so severe as to temporarily cripple the animal. 2) The heel is not pared off sufficiently to be level with the rest of the foot. The result is a misalignment of the whole weight bearing structure of the foot and pastern; the pastern will tip forward and the goat is crippled. Fortunately, this seems to happen less with Pygmies than the larger varieties of dairy goats, but it must still be avoided.

In my 50 years of experience, the best tool is a simple carpenter's utility knife with trapezoidal, throw-away, reversible blades. It is cheaper than clippers and, with practice, many times faster. It will produce a foot trimmed so correctly that the animals will find it a joy to run and play.

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The Importance of Feet cont...

Before trimming feet we should familiarize ourselves with what we want to do. For the common terrain encountered by most Pygmy goats in the United States we should try to accomplish the following: 1) The bottom of each toe should be level and trimmed close enough over the entire bottom surface so that a bit of pink can be seen. Avoid cutting into the tissue so deeply that blood is drawn. Remember, where there are blood vessels, there are also nerves and cutting that deeply will make it hurt and the animal lame. This level surface should begin at the heel and continue forward to the end of the toe. 2) The two toes on the same foot should be trimmed as closely to the same depth as possible. 3) The toes should be as close together as possible to avoid catching bedding or other debris between them. In some strains of animals, one toe will be wider than the other and some will have a growth between the toes which spreads them. This can be discouraged by trimming since this is often just a tough callous-like tissue which the knife easily removes. Just operate the knife at right angles to how it was used on the sole of the foot, and cutting on the inside of the offending toe, take off thin layers of tissue to effectively narrow the toe to proper size.

There has been much discussion in recent years about "shallow heels" so I should put in a word about them. They seldom exist, if at all. What is common and dangerous is the heel that is never trimmed and grows entirely too long. I have seen many animals completely crippled by heeding some advice (still given, unfortunately) to only trim the toes.

Another relative word should be given about weak pasterns. They seldom interfere with an animal's usefulness UNDER OUR COMMON CONDITIONS. Under severe browsing conditions they will be uncomfortable and hurt the animal as thorns and sharp objects are able to penetrate the lower side of the joint. From the standpoint of beauty, the animal will not be able to walk as gracefully. While somewhat hereditary, weak pasterns are intensified by poor nutrition, (lack of sufficient vitamins and minerals), poor trimming and lack of exercise.

TO BREED OR NOT TO BREED?

By Paul Hamilton

Over and over again I hear the same two statements from livestock owners. The first is that the best stock always produce the best replacements. The other is it costs the same to feed poor animals as it does to feed the good ones. The simple message is to start with quality and not quantity. Obviously quality costs more to purchase and that must be considered in the budget.

Recently there have been a couple of FB adds saying "reluctant sale" or "forced to reduce numbers". These goat producers are selling junk that are not part of the quality equation. Thought must be given when breeding, where the outcome is likely to end up. Unlike the animal production industry, our aim should not be to maximising output and sell by the kilogram. It will be a sad day when these little animals end up in the Livestock Exchange facilities.

In the USA many Pygmy enthusiasts do not breed every doe every year. Their attitude is that as a companion animal, that aspect of tending to the doe is enough, breeding with her every year is not the priority. There seems to be a number of matriarchal does that are retired from reproduction as could be imagined. Other breeders in the USA take orders prior to joining for specific matings, aiming at guaranteed saleable outcomes. Genuine pygmy breeders understand the temperament and appearance of the breed is unique. They appreciate an animal carrying 12.5 % pygmy genetics is far from the the real deal, and recognise them for what they really are.

Our industry is expanding as is the Affiliated Association. Signs of oversupply are currently not evident for higher conforming stock, but still keep in mind that they are a companion, a show animal and lastly a mass breeding animal.



PIZZLE ROT IN GOATS

By Maxine Kinne

Kindly reprinted with the permission of Maxine Kinne

Pizzle rot is an unhealthy combination of urine scald and bacterial growth on the prepuce, the end of the penis sheath. If it is not treated the infection can scar the penis severely enough to end a male's breeding life. This condition is far less common in does but can occur in Angoras when they have not been britched (shorn around the vulva) and urine-soaked fleece irritates the tender perineal skin.

A buck with pizzle rot has the desire to breed and can mount vigorously, but he won't extend his penis to ejaculate. While he has this condition, the stud's a dud. He ought to return to reproductive health after you recognize and treat his problem.

Posthitis, the medical name for pizzle rot, is fairly common in bucks and wethers on nitrogen-rich diets, such as alfalfa or rapidly growing, improved pasture. The bacterium *Corynebacterium renale* causes the urine to contain more ammonia, which is very irritating to the skin. Change the diet to a lower protein forage if you have to treat this condition.

Excess hair retains urine on and around the prepuce which can exacerbate irritation. The first step in treatment is to trim the long hair on and around the prepuce. Brown, crusty scabs have to come off, too. This is one of the worst-smelling jobs you'll ever do. Soaking the scabs with cool water on a wash cloth before you rudely peel them off is a charitable gesture. The area will be very raw and sore, but there is very little bleeding, if any.

Depending on the severity of the lesion, antibiotic treatment may be needed (talk to your veterinarian!). Some severe cases require antibiotic infusions into the sheath.

When it is caught early, pizzle rot usually responds very well to daily application topical ointment. I prefer Nolvasan™ ointment but have also used Bag Balm™. Other goatkeepers use Desitin™ diaper rash ointment. Oil-based products stay on and provide a protective coating..

NPGAA MERCHANDISE



Karen Bowron with Chris Falconer and Karen's nieces at the Gidgegannup Show

NPGAA shirts are now available for purchase in a range of men's and ladies' sizes. For sizing specifications, please see <http://www.uniformsandworkwear.com.au/>

The shirts are made from a cool, moisture wicking fabric and are quick drying.

Cost: \$35.00 per shirt plus \$10.00 postage (up to two shirts can be posted per satchel)

To place your order, please contact Karen at springfieldfarm@westnet.com.au