

BUYING

YOUR

FIRST

GOAT

BRITISH GOAT SOCIETY INFORMATION LEAFLET

BEFORE YOU BUY

Before you buy your first goat, study all the British Goat Society (BGS) Information Leaflets that are relevant. BGS booklets on Goatkeeping, Breeds of Goat and Goat Feeding will also prove useful. You should also be able to find several good books at your local library.

After you have read all the literature, contact your local goat society (lists available from BGS), and ask if there are any herds you can visit in the area. Remember there are many different ways of keeping goats, so see as many herds as possible, as you will pick up many ideas that you can use or adapt.

WHERE TO BUY FROM

The best way to buy a goat is through your local goat society or the BGS Monthly Journal or Year Book. Many good goats are never advertised for sale. Using these methods you should purchase from reliable breeders who will give you much valuable advice both before and after purchase.

As the quality of goats can vary enormously, purchasing from newspaper adverts is only advised for the experienced, although you may be lucky enough to find a reputable breeder selling surplus stock.

Buying through markets cannot be recommended. Although sadly, some good goats do end up here, you need to be very experienced to select stock from this source.



WHAT AGE TO BUY

Kids under four months old will need to be fed on either a milk substitute or fresh goats milk, this can be expensive. Weaned kids (4mths+) will have plenty of time to get used to you and your environment before they become productive. If they are dairy goats, it does mean that they will not be in milk until virtually two years old.

Goatlings: These are between one and two years old. Again they have some time to get used to you before you mate them in the autumn and they have kids in the spring. If you have a dairy breed you do need to be experienced at milking before your goat suddenly comes into full milk.

Milker: Preferably buy one five years or less as they will have a good productive life ahead of them and will not be too set in their ways. You must learn to milk before you buy a milker, otherwise your amateur efforts could dry her up, however, this is not such a disaster if she is due to be mated that autumn anyway.

Often, if you want a specific breed, you may have to take whatever age is offered.

Remember, you should buy a minimum of two goats – one goat would be lonely and may refuse to eat.

WHAT BREED TO BUY

There are seven breeds of dairy goats, two breeds/types of fibre goats, one meat breed, one rare breed and pygmy goats.

Purchase the BGS booklet Breeds of Goat and read this first. Agricultural shows are a good place to see all the dairy breeds and Angoras. To see the other breeds you will probably have to make appointments with breeders.

After you have seen the breeds available, it is simply a matter of deciding which breed you prefer and which would most suit your requirements.

WHAT SHOULD THE GOAT LOOK LIKE?

Although you may not wish to show goats, you do want a goat with good conformation as this is linked to productivity, easy kidding and longevity.

You want a goat with an alert attractive head on a slender elegant neck. Shoulders should be slender and lead into a level back with only a slight slope to the tail. Feet should be upright and front legs straight from all angles, with hind legs straight when viewed from behind. There should be plenty of 'heart room' between the front legs.

All goats that milk should have an udder that is attached to the body over a wide area. Teats should be of a sensible size for milking and well placed with a clear definition from the udder. The whole udder should be held high with teats above hock level.

In short-coated breeds the coat should lie flat and be smooth to the touch. In Breeds of Goat there are some photographs of dairy and other goats of good sound conformation. Fleece quality is important in Angora and Cashmere goats.

Boer goats and some pygmies are stockier built, Angoras are shorter in the neck than dairy breeds.

Registered and Pedigree goats

A pedigree goat is any goat with a known pedigree, but this can only be proven if the goat is registered. To be correct a goat should only be described as Anglo Nubian for example, if it is registered as Anglo Nubian. If it is not registered and simply looks like an Anglo Nubian it should be referred to as Anglo Nubian type.

It is always sensible to buy a registered goat. A registered dairy goat will have a unique identification number and the owner should have a registration card which will give details of the goat and the breeder's name and address. If it is not the breeder selling the goat, the current owner's name and address should be the last name on the card. If you buy such a goat, the owner should send the card, transfer form and fee to the BGS who will then transfer the goat into your name and forward the card to you. If the goat is Angora, Cashmere, Bagot, English, Boer or Pygmy the respective breed societies will deal with registrations.

If you have any queries about registration, do contact the BGS, preferably at the time of sale rather than later.

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