

BREEDS OF GOATS

INTRODUCTION

The British Goat Society was founded in 1879 and one of its stated aims is 'to improve the various breeds of goats, and especially to develop those qualities which are generally recognised and valued'. The establishment of many of the breeds of dairy goats in Great Britain has been very largely a result of the policies of the Society.

The Society set up a scheme for registering goats in 1886 based entirely on milking performance and conformation. Entry in the Herd Book was dependent on the goat itself and one of its parents having won a prize in open competition at a recognised show. Gradually, with the help of imported goats, distinctly different types of goats developed, which encouraged the formation of breed sections within the Herd Book. Sections established in this way were Anglo-Nubian (1910), English, British Alpine, British Saanen and British Toggenburg in 1925. In the early stages of development of the breeds it was necessary for the goats to be inspected to see if they conformed to type, as well as pedigree. The breeds were officially recognised for varying lengths of time prior to the opening of their section of the Herd Book. The English section ceased to be used many years ago, through lack of numbers, although there is a recent interest in its revival. The Toggenburg (1905) and the Saanen (1922) breeds were based entirely on imported goats of those breeds. Qualification for entry in the breed sections of the Herd Book is now based entirely on pedigree, and crosses between the pure breeds are registered in the British section (see below). British goats may well look exactly like one of the pure breeds, but their pedigree does not entitle them to be entered in the pure breed sections. It is possible, however, for their descendants to enter all breed sections, except Toggenburg, Saanen and Golden Guernsey, by means of up-grading.

A section of the Herd Book was opened in 1970 to enable the registration of Golden Guernsey goats: a self-contained section enabling the registration of imported animals and their descendants. In 1996 the British Guernsey was recognised as a breed and a section opened for them in the Herd Book.

In 2018 a section of the Herd Book was opened for Bonte goats which were imported from Holland.

British Goats. The name British is rather loosely applied to any goat registered in the Herd Book which does not qualify for a Breed Section. Goats entered in the grading-up sections, Identification Register, Supplementary Register, Foundation Book, fall into this category as do those in the general section, Herd Book. British goats thus comprise not only animals which are grading up towards a specific breed, but also those resulting from the crossing of two distinct breeds. Therefore, a British goat may be one that is just at the beginning of the slow process of up-grading from non-pedigree stock or a goat of high pedigree and bred from championship stock.

Goat breeding is unique among pedigree livestock raising in that animals can be up-graded in this way and blood infused from one breed to another. The advantages of up-grading are obvious but those of out-crossing are not always so clear. The number of different bloodlines within each breed is limited and by necessity a certain amount of inbreeding occurs. Each type unfortunately has its own inherent weaknesses and owners have the opportunity to draw on blood of a different breed and then progress back into their original section in a relatively short number of generations.

The success of the British Saanen, British Toggenburg and British Alpine breed and, more recently the British Guernsey are evidence of the advantages to this method of breeding, added to which some of the best goats ever seen in this country are member of the British section and the result of crossing between breeds

Anglo-Nubian

This goat originated from the crossing of those bred in the UK and others imported from the East. From the end of the 19th century goats were carried on P&O steamers on the homeward voyages to provide a fresh milk supply for the infant passengers and when the boats docked in London the lop-eared and 'Roman' nosed eastern goats were eagerly bought by interested goatkeepers. They were mated with goats in the UK and the resulting cross-bred animals gained the name Anglo-Nubian in about 1893. At the turn of the century four males were brought from the Jumna Pari and Chitral districts of India and from Nubia in the Middle East. These were important in Anglo-Nubian history, siring between them 101 of the first Anglo-Nubians to be registered when the Society opened the relevant Herd Book Section in 1910. The breed today contains the results of crossing Eastern and English with a little Swiss and other bloods. It is one of the most popular breeds.

Two distinguishing features are the long pendulous ears and the markedly convex nose. The stance is upright, the demeanour proud, even supercilious. Compared with that of other breeds, the milk is high in both butterfat and protein and

for this reason it is of such interest to cheese-makers. The addition of even a small proportion of Anglo-Nubian milk will increase cheese yield. It is also ideal for yoghurt production.

The breed is well suited to meat production, the kids growing quickly and putting on flesh easily. Moreover, many animals of the breed are prolific and well-managed dams can give birth to twins, triplets or quadruplets. Overseas Anglo-Nubians have been successfully crossed with native goats to improve yields of meat and milk. It is a very useful dual-purpose animal. Its capacity for adaptation to hot climates has resulted in demand for stock for export to the Middle East, South America and the Caribbean Islands. They have also been exported to Europe, Australia and the USA. Recently there have been a few Anglo-Nubians imported from Holland, these have a small amount of American blood in them, and they descend from Anglo-Nubians exported from the United Kingdom. It is the largest of the dairy breeds.

Breed Points

Head – Short, with a pronounced Roman nose. Ears long and pendulous, set low on the head, wide and open, longer than the nose, when measured against it. No tassels.

Body – Long, may be higher at the hips than the withers providing there is no curvature of the spine. Wry tail is not ideal. Upright stance.

Skin – Any colour.

Coat – Any colour or combination of colours. Hair fine and short, no fringing.

Male – The coat is generally coarser and longer than that of the female.

Bonte

A small number of Bonte goats were imported into the UK from Holland in 2017. This breed originated in Holland and was recognised by the Netherlands Organisation for Goatbreeders in the 1980s. A section of the British Goat Society Herd Book was opened in 2018 for Bonte goats.

Breed Points

Overview - A medium to large goat with sound conformation and possessing dairy qualities.

Head - Facial line should be straight or dished. The head should be neat and fine with jaws meeting evenly. The eyes should be full, bright and alert.

Neck - The neck should be long and slender, blending neatly into the shoulders, which should be fine and not coarse. With or without tassels.

Body - The body should be deep, full and wedge shaped with well sprung ribs. Legs should be straight with good width between them set on strong pasterns. Rear hocks should be wide apart.

Topline - The back should be straight from shoulders to hip with a slight slope to the tail.

Udder - The udder should be wide and deep, firmly attached to the body over a wide area at both front and rear. Teats should be well defined from the udder and a comfortable size for hand milking, slightly tapering and pointing downwards.

Skin - The skin should be supple with fine short and soft hair.

Colour - Animals are two tone in colour and can be black and white, brown and white or blueish grey and white. Tri-colours are not permitted.

Markings - The markings should be in definite and sharp contrast. Swiss markings are not permitted.

British Alpine

Of all the breeds which have been developed in Britain the British Alpine is one of the most distinctive and yet the origins are obscure, it being a product of the general cross-breeding practised to produce a better milking goat. It is generally accepted that the colour is attributed in some degree to Sedgemere Faith, a female Sundgau goat imported from Paris Zoo in 1903.

Apart from a white blaze on the forehead she was black with white Swiss markings. British Alpines resemble the Grison breed of Switzerland and during the 1970s BA males were exported to improve the hardy Grisons. The British Alpine Section of the Herd Book was opened in 1925 and since then dedicated breeding has developed an animal which breeds true to type and possesses excellent milking qualities. British Alpines have been exported to and recognised as a breed in South Africa and Australia.

Breed Points:

Head – Facial line dished or straight. With or without tassels.

Body – Long and rangy.

Skin – Fine and supple.

Coat – Black with white Swiss markings. White spots or flashes on the body are unacceptable. Hair short and fine. No fringing.

Male – The coat is generally coarser and longer than that of the female.

British Guernsey

When the Golden Guernsey first arrived on the Mainland in 1965, it became apparent that goats other than Golden would be mated to the males, however, it was not until 1973 that a scheme was devised for grading up and goats who met this criteria were registered as English Guernseys. This scheme started with a Saanen or British Saanen male being used on a Golden Guernsey female and the grading up from that first cross being via Golden Guernsey males. The first goats were registered in 1974.

Over the following years the British Goat Society together with the Golden Guernsey Goat Society worked on developing a breed which had the characteristics of the Golden Guernsey but were slightly larger and heavier boned. This resulted in the English Guernsey Register being replaced and a new section of the Herd Book opened for the British Guernsey in 1996.

Breed Points

Head – Ears erect with a slight upturn at the tips. Facial line dished or straight. Tassels permissible.

Body – Wedge shaped, good spring of rib, straight topline sloping slightly to tail. Good dairy quality. Larger and heavier boned than the Golden Guernsey.

Skin – A shade of gold, neither pink nor grey.

Coat – All shades of gold neither brown nor white permissible. White markings and blaze or star on head permissible. No Swiss markings. Hair long or short.

Male – Usually carries more hair than the female.

British Saanen

This is a breed of Saanen type, developed in Britain. Following the importation of five Saanens in 1905, the number of cross-bred, pedigree, Saanen type goats steadily increased until in 1921 the type was recognised for show classification purposes and named the British Saanen. Following a further Saanen importation in 1922, rapid progress was made and in 1925 the breed was recognised and the British Saanen Section of the Herd Book was opened. The British Saanen is larger than the Saanen, being heavier boned with longer legs, usually the facial line is straighter and the ears larger. It has inherited the heavy milking qualities and calm temperament of the Saanen, these attributes have contributed to the international renown of the breed.

Breed Points:

Head – Facial line dished or straight. With or without tassels.

Body – Larger than the Saanen.

Skin – Freckles and patches of colour permissible.

Coat – Uniformly white. Hair short and fine.

Male – Longer hair may be found round the face, neck, shoulders and hind legs.

British Toggenburg

This is another breed developed in Britain. Outside this country it is often confused with the Toggenburg. It is founded upon imported Toggenburg animals and pedigree cross-bred goats of Swiss origins. The British Toggenburg Section of the Herd Book was opened in 1925. From the Toggenburg some of the best points have been inherited, such as soundness of conformation and robustness. However, the British Toggenburg is larger than the parent breed. From time to time further importations of Toggenburgs have been used for out-crossing with often rewarding results.

Breed Points:

Head – Facial line dished or straight. With or without tassels.

Body – Larger than the Toggenburg.

Skin – Fine and supple.

Coat – Medium brown preferred, but darker and lighter colours acceptable. Swiss markings. White hairs elsewhere unacceptable. Hair fine and short but slight fringes permissible.

Male – Longer hair may be found round the face, neck, shoulders and hind legs.

Golden Guernsey

The Golden Guernsey, from the Bailiwick of Guernsey, has grown in popularity as a useful household goat with a pleasant temperament and a steady milk yield. Various theories have developed as to its origins. The Chamoisee, Maltese, Syrian and Saanen are possible forebears. Golden goats have occurred on the Island since the early 1800s, but it was the late Miss

Milbourne of L'Ancrese who revived the breed, even retaining the herd during the German occupation. She was responsible for exporting the first Golden Guernseys to the Mainland in 1965. For several years numbers were very low and although they have increased considerably the breed is still listed by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust in category five. The Golden Guernsey, like the Saanen and Toggenburg is a 'closed' breed to which it is not possible to breed up. A distinctive feature is the golden coat which ranges from pale blonde to deep bronze.

Breed Points

Head – Ears erect with a slight upturn at the tips. Facial line dished or straight. No tassels.

Body – Smaller than the other breeds. Fine boned.

Skin – A shade of gold, neither pink nor grey.

Coat – All shades of gold with or without small white markings and blaze or star on head. No Swiss markings. Hair long or short.

Male – Usually carries more hair than the female.

Saanen

The Saanen originated in the mountainous Bernese Oberland, in the Saanen and Simmental valleys, in the Swiss canton of Berne. This region, like several others in Switzerland, has practised the selective breeding of dairy goats for several hundred years. Of the various breeds developed there the Saanen is probably the most popular and highest yielding. It has been exported to countries all over the World which were seeking to improve their dairy goats. Several countries including Britain have thus developed their own white breeds based on Saanens. Our Saanens are descended from an importation from Holland in 1922, with a second, direct from Switzerland, in 1965. These imports totalled about 24 animals, and with natural losses and outcrossing removing several the base for selective breeding of Saanens is very small. More recently a few Saanens have been imported from Holland. Nevertheless, several gifted breeders have built up a small but influential herd which continues to grow and improve. In appearance the original imported Dutch stock varied in some respects from indigenous Swiss Saanens, being generally thick set, shorter in the leg, heavier in the head and neck and deeper and larger in the body. The second, Swiss, importation was of taller more slender animals which tended to be weak in the pasterns and hind-quarters. UK breeders have, over the years, developed more quality and better bone and hind-quarters. Possibly due to long domestication and the Swiss custom of stall-feeding through the winter, the breed has a calm and placid nature which allows successful management in a variety of herd sizes and environments. Such a quiet disposition is conducive to efficient milk production and amenable to zero grazing or free range, provided in the latter, shelter is available. The introduction of the Saanen into this country was largely responsible for the subsequent rapid advances in yield and long lactations in British goats. Like the Toggenburg and the Golden Guernsey, the Saanen is a 'closed' breed to which it is not possible to breed up.

Breed Points

Head – Facial line dished or straight. With or without tassels.

Body – Good length and depth, without legginess.

Skin – Supple, coloured pink or golden tan. Where black spots occur on muzzle, ears and udder. The black colouring should not extend into the hair.

Coat – Uniformly white. Hair short, tight and fine, but some fringe along the spine is permissible.

Male – The coat may be markedly fringed down spine and legs. Also, a pronounced crest, with long facial hair merging with a well-furnished beard and mane. The long body hair often forms a marked saddle and/or skirt.

Toggenburg

This was the first Swiss breed to reach England, arriving via Paris in 1884. It originated in the St Gallen Canton in eastern Switzerland within an area centred on the Obertoggenburg and Werdenburg valleys. The Swiss consider it to be the second most valuable of their seven breeds for milk production, close behind the Saanen. On arrival in England, the Toggenburg rapidly became the pre-eminent breed of its day, highly valued both for its milking capacity and for its ability to improve native stock. It soon featured strongly among the prizewinners at all major shows. Further importations followed over the next two decades, and in 1905, the Toggenburg became the first breed to have a Herd Book Section. Though some were not registered, 96 were included in the Section, either imported stock or with all ancestors imported. This condition still holds true, thus the Toggenburg, like the Saanen and Golden Guernsey, is a 'closed' breed to which it is not possible to breed up. Import restrictions have meant that since 1904 only two more importations have taken place, in 1922 and 1965, both introducing only small numbers, some of which were subsequently lost. The Toggenburg was outstripped both in popularity and numbers by the higher yielding 'home made' breeds, which often contained Toggenburg blood. The survival of the

breed in the 1940s and 1950s was due entirely to a few dedicated breeders who retained as many bloodlines as possible for future use. *Breed Points*

Head – Wide across the level of the eyes. Facial line dished. Muzzle broad. With or without tassels.

Body – Good length and depth, without legginess.

Skin – Fine and supple.

Coat – Ranging from mid brown, through mouse-grey to silver-fawn. Swiss markings. Hair any length, silky in texture usually fringing on flanks and quarters.

Male – Usually carries more hair than the female.

Breed Standards

The 'ideal' dairy goat is illustrated in the accompanying diagrams of an Anglo-Nubian type and Swiss type goat. Particular breed points accompany the descriptions of the various breeds registered in the British Goat Society's Herd Books and are detailed above.

The female should always exhibit femininity and quality: the male although a larger, stronger and heavier animal should likewise exhibit quality. In addition to the basic features of the 'ideal' dairy goat there are the breed points which distinguish a goat of one recognised breed from another of different breed. Any animal typical of its breed should exhibit these differences which relate mainly to its conformation and its coat colour where slight variations are permissible. Slight variations on the 'ideal' conformation are also permissible and a Judge may penalise exhibits brought forward for inspection according to the degree by which they differ from the 'ideal'.

Certain characteristics constitute major faults and are treated with appropriate severity by Judges. On the head such faults are a crooked face or an overshot or undershot jaw. The legs and feet should be sound and not mis-shapen in any way. Noticeably irregular toplines whether due to a drop behind the shoulder, a steep fault to the tail or a badly roached back are undesirable. Udders with uneven quarters, ill-proportioned or irregular teats, poor 'necky' attachment and very long pendulous shape are penalised accordingly to the degree of variation. Large lumps indicating past or present injury or diseased tissue are a fault. Double, supernumerary, or 'fishtail' teats are unacceptable.

The male – Males are larger and heavier than females of the same breed. Forequarters and hindquarters should be strong with good bone. The male should stand foursquare and feet must be very sound with pasterns strong and upright. Chest should be wide and deep and there should be good body development. Genital organs should be well developed with evenly hung testicles and each teat must have a single correctly placed orifice. The overall appearance should be masculine, with a long level backline, clean neat shoulders, arched neck and a general air of quality. The hair on a male is frequently longer and coarser than that of a female of the same breed.

Definition of Swiss Markings – White markings which extend as broad facial stripes from above the eyes to a white muzzle and around the edges and tips of the ears, also on the legs from the knees and hocks downwards, and on the rump beside and below the tail. White hairs around the tassel area are permissible. Swiss markings may be less pronounced on adult males.