



By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Attempts to get the message out that eating goat meat, or chevon, is a healthy option are hoping to make some strides following a major event in Imperial Saturday.

The first annual Nebraska Range Buck Test will be headquartered at the Chase County Fairgrounds Saturday.

After the group of 15 bucks from four states are ranked for their rate-of-gain while in the pasture, weight per age and ribeye measurement, they'll be auctioned off at the "performance-tested sale."

Bruce Peterson of Imperial is manager of the Nebraska Range Buck Test, which includes a field day and production-tested goat sale.

It's a first for the state and this area of the Midwest. Peterson said he knows of one other such buck test in this part of the country in Texas.

The 15 bucks in the test program were not placed in a confinement feeding program, Peterson emphasized.

Rather, these goats have been fed strictly on range and pastures as they clean up weeds and other invasive growth the landowner wants to remove.

"That has been their sole diet in this test," Peterson said.

"This will show what a forage-based diet can do."

It's a win-win situation for the goat producer and the landowner, Peterson said, as the animals are raised both for their meat and controlling weeds in pastures and ranges.

Three of the four types of goats used primarily for human consumption worldwide will be at Saturday's buck test.

Peterson and his father, Larry, operate Peterson Boer Goats. The Boer Goat is a South African breed.

The other types here Saturday will include the Kiko and Spanish breeds. Boer is most predominant in the U.S., Peterson noted, because of its bigger frame and ability to put on weight.

Peterson said goat meat is healthier than some other meats because it's lower in fat and high in protein. The demand for it is growing, he adds, and producers in the U.S. can't keep up.

Ranchers expected here for the test on Saturday hail from Nebraska, Colorado, Missouri and Kansas.

In addition to the 15 bucks to be auctioned, each breeder can also bring up to four additional animals for the auction who are related to the buck, Peterson said.

That will result in about 75 animals at the auction, which starts at 1:30 p.m. in the show arena on the fairgrounds.

The auction will be preceded by three different speakers in the morning and a noon lunch featuring chevon fajitas provided by Peterson Boer Goats.

The public is invited to stop by anytime Saturday, including for the lunch, Peterson said.

The goats will be arriving Friday night, and will be penned in the outdoor pen areas, north of the fairgrounds' show arena.

Plans are already underway for a second Nebraska Range Buck Test next year.

The Chase County Tourism Committee contributed funding for this year's Nebraska Range Buck Test and other events Saturday.

Grazing business staying busy

Peterson Boer Goats couldn't keep up with all the summer grazing jobs in the area this year, Bruce said.

They continue to line up new customers who want to use their goat business to control weeds on their land, he added.

The Petersons use a concept called "mob grazing," fencing off a five to 10 acre area at a time where the goats graze for a week to 10 days. They are then moved to another five to 10 acre area.

Petersons have a herd of 300 to 700 goats depending on the time of year, with the highest numbers on hand in the spring months.

They are discussing expanding next year by bringing in other owners' goats, some of which are on feed versus pasture, to provide a larger grazing service here. That will save the owners money in feed costs, at the same time expanding the service here.

Peterson said they've also had their first contact about bringing their goats to land near the Republican River, where invasive weed control has been a major effort.

Schedule of events

8:45 a.m. Welcome—Bruce Peterson.

9 a.m. Goat Nutrition—Steve Parks, Nutrition Services Feeds.

10 a.m. Preg Checking Demonstration—Kristi Traffas.

11 a.m. Commercial Goat Production—George Wagner.

12 noon Lunch (Chevon provided by Peterson Boer Goats).

1:30 p.m. Goat Auction—Regina Andrizeski, auctioneer.

All events at Chase County Fairgrounds in Imperial.