

Goat Herd Improvement Program
Ken Andries
Kentucky State University

Records are important to the growth and success of any business, including livestock production. Production-based records allow producers to do a better job selecting animals that are more productive, have fewer problems, and ultimately are more profitable. Performance records have been used by other livestock industries for years to improve traits of economical importance such as weaning weights, rate of gain, twinning rates, and parasite resistance. The goat industry has been slower to utilize records, but they will become more important as the industry matures over the next few years. Producers who start collecting and utilizing records now will have an advantage in markets for breeding stock as well as increase profitability of commercial herds.

Basic performance records need to be collected at least two times a year: at birth and at weaning. Birth records need to include identification of the kid, dam, and sire; birth date; birth weight; sex of the kid; type of birth; and a note of any difficulty related to the birth. Weaning records need to include the date of weaning and the weaning weight. Weaning needs to be done as close to a standardized date as possible. Many Kentucky goat producers use 90 days as a standard weaning date. Weights are adjusted to 60 or 90 days, using daily gain to get the standardized age.

Last year, I started a program to help producers obtain and utilize performance records. I'm still offering the service, free of charge, to any producer. Producers need to collect birth data on their animals, and I'm willing to come to your farm and help collect weaning weights and will bring a scale if necessary to help you collect this information. Once the data is collected, I will put the information into a spread sheet and calculate adjusted weights for your animals. I also summarize doe and buck performance for the kidding season so you can better identify the poor-doing does and best bucks in your herd. I will send you a report for your herd after I get the information finished.

If you already collect this data, I'm willing to come out and help you work your animals to get the weaning data as long as I can get a copy of the information. I am willing to do the analysis on your data and provide you the reports if you wish. You can also send me the data if you have it and I will do the reports.

To collect birth weights, you can use any type of scale, simply utilize a bucket or basket that will hold the kids still. Most electronic scales will allow you to "zero" the scale while weighting an empty bucket, if your scale will not allow you to zero the bucket weight out, simply weigh the empty bucket and subtract the weight from the total with the kid to get the actual kid weight. I do ask when possible to get birth weights on all kids born, including those born dead.

If you are interested in this program, please contact me at 502-597-5094 or by e-mail at kenneth.andries@kysu.edu. I may need a few days to plan a trip to your farm, so please contact me early if possible.