

Hackettstown, NJ, and Lancaster, PA, with lesser auctions in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. The largest processors are located in Texas, New Jersey, and Connecticut; privacy laws preclude publication of more detailed information (Pinkerton, 1992).

Many goats move into the marketing channel as "trader" animals, frequently changing hands several times prior to slaughter. The overall marketing system is in place and operating; however, consumers are sometimes forced to accept alternative products or do without. In a functional sense the system performs well, although in certain urban centers security problems abound and difficulties in collection necessitate informal, but specific arrangements. Most goat meat movement is on a strictly cash basis with only minimal transactions by check or on credit.

Higher quality goats are available in lesser numbers, but they do find a significantly better market than the more plentiful lower quality animals. Even for goats of superior quality, producers should attempt to access markets only through established channels and with reputable firms. To do otherwise could lead to frustration and financial loss. Processors and brokers marketing other animals could possibly expand into goat marketing with requisite planning and execution. In any case, there seems little question that the demand for both high and lesser quality goats is such that many more animals could be taken.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FLORIDIANS

Opportunities abound. However, to be properly exercised, opportunity almost always requires an improvement in management. The discussion up to this point describes an industry that probably presents an opportunity for Florida producers, processors, and marketers.

Opportunity for Producers

Shrewd management practices call for an admonition to goat owners everywhere, one seldom heeded:

"If you 'love' your goats and that love affects decisions about selling and retention, you are in the goat business for a hobby. If you are in the goat business for a hobby, you are very likely not in the goat business for a profit."

To be sure, some goat owners strive to run an efficient operation, though it may swim in a pool of red ink created by excessive investment in champion breeding stock, massive barns, and gleaming white fences. Further, the farm manager may be overpaid, the feed bill too high, and health care charges greater than that required to squelch an epidemic.

Growers often do not realize that when they make a production decision, they have also made a marketing decision. It may be a poor decision, but the very act of production causes something to be placed on the market.

When enterprise analysis is mentioned to many goat producers, they think in terms such as yield per acre, percent kid crop, weight of weanling kids, kids produced per doe, feed consumed per head, and so on which apply to the goat world. If production efficiency is the only goal, one can stop with such measures, all related to physical performance. Devotion only to physical performance makes good coffee shop talk, may win a ribbon at the county fair, and requires only that substantial financial assistance come from outside sources. However, in contrast to the hobby producer, a successful manager looks at an enterprise in terms of costs and revenues, their difference being profits or losses. Enterprise analysis is used to examine all factors leading to the "bottom line." Many of the numbers do indeed come from physical performance measures, but with dollar values attached. Enterprise analysis is discussed thoroughly in another chapter of this publication. Suffice to say that if goat owners are to take advantages of market opportunities, they must be both efficient and profitable.

Opportunities for Processors and Marketers

The goat meat industry is in its infancy, and heretofore very little has been attempted in product development and innovative marketing. The list below suggests several opportunities already technologically feasible which could be done with processors:

- Evaluate carcass processing, such as electrical stimulation, blade processing, vacuum packaging, and freezing whole carcasses and components.
- Test market primal and retail cuts and fabricated products such as sausages and jerky.