

reputation for quality, timeliness and a commitment to service. Finding the right processor is critical; this means one who is willing to play an active role in the marketing process, shows that he or she recognizes an opportunity and is eager to do business.

The Florida Department of Agriculture (Division of Meat Plant Inspection), like other state Departments of Agriculture, has information available about slaughter and processing facilities state-wide. After a review of facilities, contacts can be made based on where the product is going to be marketed. Meat plants are identified as follows:

- USDA - Federal inspection. Meat and meat products processed can be shipped out of state and overseas.
- Talmadge-Aiken - Federal inspection carried out by state employees. Meats processed can be shipped to adjacent states.
- State - State inspection. Meats processed can be shipped intrastate.

Before doing business with a plant it is a good idea to prepare for a meeting with some general information. Producers should attempt to become familiar with regulations, whether they are state or federal. Copies of regulations are available through the U.S. Government printing office and state department of agriculture.

The producer or representative from the producer organization should visit the plants under consideration and talk with owners about capacity, storage, packaging and delivery. It is important to look at the holding facilities for livestock and determine familiarity with the animals -- in this case, goats. Ask about current customers; there should be a willingness to discuss satisfied clients. Be clear about specifications and needs, and get an estimate of what costs are going to be. Ask about the per head slaughter fee, deboning, cutting and wrapping, and any further processing such as smoking or curing. After the visit, stay in touch with the plants you want to work with and keep owner/managers apprised of your progress so that they will be ready when you are.

The meats purveyor or distributor helps to get the product to the right customers -- chefs, restaurant managers and meat retailers who will present the product to the general public. The relationship

between producer and distributor is mutually beneficial. The key question to ask is the one the best purveyors ask their customers: What do you want that you are unable to find?

Taking an active role in contacting distributors can make a difference in sales volume. Area purveyors and distributors are a good starting point, and are listed in the Yellow Pages under "Meat, Wholesale." Restaurants can also be helpful in furnishing the names of suppliers. After contact is made, a meeting can be arranged with a sales representative or purchasing agent to discuss the products being offered. Questions to ask include: Do they already carry your product? Is it fresh or frozen, and how is it packaged and delivered? Must they import it? Is the pricing competitive? Distributors will be interested in discussing this information because they want to remain competitive in their business.

Be prepared to say what makes goat meat unique, better or different, and to supply supporting information. Discuss the way it needs to be packaged, labeled and delivered, and what kind of shelf-life is expected. Solicit advice from the person who will be selling what you produce, about ways to improve it. Dr. Robert Deegan's book, *How to Succeed in Fallow Deer Farming*, deals with the maxim all specialty and alternative meat producers must live with: "Customers expect a high quality product. They expect the quality to be consistent and uniform. They expect to pay a premium price, but they also expect to get what they pay for" (Deegan, 1991).

## PRESENTATION IS IMPORTANT

Providing good information about goat meat and its attributes will make a difference in sales. An appealing logo, brochure, label and package all help to sell the product. It is not necessary to have a design staff or large advertising budget to achieve good results.

Logos are meant to establish product identity with the customer and to be a form of instant recognition. Ideally, the logo should combine the name or initials of the producer or producer organization with an image. It should not be abstract or obscure. Strong visual images are important. Many times a silhouette or a simple drawing works very effectively. The logo can then be used on business cards, incorporated into a label, or placed on tee-shirts, hats, aprons, and other items to advertise the product.