

Growth and Carcase Characters of Progeny from Caprine Feral Does Mated to Boer or Feral Bucks in Western Queensland

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In recent years significant numbers of Australian goats have been harvested from the feral population to supply a strong demand for export of meat. In addition large numbers of feral does have been domesticated to increase breeding herds in western Queensland. Introduction of the Boer breed to Australia as a specialist meat goat may provide a genetic means for improving the productive performance of the Australian feral. The present paper reports growth and carcase attributes of feral and Boer x feral genotypes born in 1998 and birthweight of those born in 1999.

One hundred and fifty four 1.5-4.5 year old feral does and three 1.5 year-old feral bucks were sourced from south west Queensland, while three 1.5 year-old Boer bucks were purchased from a stud. All animals were assembled at Croxdale Research Station,

Charleville, Queensland by October 1997. Two treatments were imposed with feral does mated to Boer or feral bucks in March–May 1998 and 1999. New feral bucks were mated in the second year. Does from both treatments were grazed together at all times except during the eight week mating period. Immediately before joining, two groups of does were selected at random from within groups stratified on the basis of age and liveweight. Kids born in 1998 were marked and weaned at 1.5 and 4.5 months of age and were grazed together as one herd to slaughter at 16.5 months. Carcase traits were measured on castrated males only, with skin removed. A sample of kids from the 1999 drop was weighed at birth. Data were analysed using the procedure GLM in SAS (1996).

Table 1. Growth and carcase characters of 1998 drop Boer x feral and feral genotypes

Breed	Liveweight (kg) at months of age:						Carcase characters ^A :			
	1.5	4.5	6.5	9.5	13.5	16.5	HCW	LTH ^B	DP	GR ^B
Boer x feral	10.8	18.3	21.7	23.6	27.6	34.7	13.6	67.2	39.0	1.27
	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)
feral	8.2	15.2	18.4	20.3	24.7	29.8	11.8	66.8	39.9	1.25
	(b)	(b)	(b)	(b)	(b)	(b)	(b)	(a)	(a)	(a)

^A WT = Carcase weight (kg); LTH = Carcase length (cm); DP = Dressing Percentage.

^B LTH and GR adjusted for HCW.

Least squares means with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05).

Boer x feral kids born in 1999 were heavier (P<0.01) at birth than feral kids (3.05 vs 2.51 kg). Boer x feral kids born in 1998 were heavier (P<0.05) than feral kids from 1.5 to 16.5 months of age; differences between genotypes varied from 12-32 % (P<0.05; Table1). Carcases of Boer x feral wethers were 15% heavier (P<0.05) and 3.1% longer (P<0.05) compared with those of feral wethers. Variation in carcase length and fatness (GR) due to breed was not significant after adjustment for carcase weight.

These results indicate that incorporation of the Boer breed with the Australian feral improves growth rate in the order of 20-25%, and that there is little breed variation in carcase parameters such as fatness and carcase length when breeds are compared at the same carcase weight.

SAS (1989) SAS User's Guide, Statistics. SAS Institute Incorporated, Cary, North Carolina.

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