

What Are Goats Like These Doing In A Place Like This?

The goats you see here at the Frontier Culture Museum are the world famous South African Boer Boks. They are here doing what they do best: happily munching away on the various invasive species that are taking over the Shenandoah Valley. While doing so, they are converting that high protein forage into one of the healthiest and most delicious meats in the world.

Why are they here?

This is a pilot land reclamation project sponsored by the Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) in partnership with the Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District, and Autumn Olive Farms. Invasive species have taken over part of the Frontier Culture Museum and the goats are here to reclaim the pastures and help restore an ecological balance. This will require browsing the invasive vegetation down several times to kill it.



Why goats not herbicides?

What these goats are doing is called “biological control” of invasive species. Biological control represents a viable alternative to the use of herbicides and their effects on streams and watersheds. While devouring the invasive plants, the goats are building soil with broadly scattered organic pellets and small discharges of urea. This creates a more natural environment for the native grasses and species to regain a foothold on the land.

What are they eating?

At this particular site they are eating Autumn Olive, vine and bush Honeysuckle, Multi-flora Rose, Bittersweet and more. Boer Bok are a different type of goat. They are selective eaters and not the stereotypical trash compactor. They select the most nutritious forages and focus on those at their nutritional peak. What’s bad for the Valley is great for them. Invasive species are a perfect target for the Boer Bok. They are highly nutritious, they thrive in poor soil and dry conditions, and they develop foliage early in the year and hold it until late. As you can see the goats do not need to be taught to eat invasive species, they prefer them over grasses and will reach high to get them!

Double benefit:

The Boer Bok has outstanding forage to meat conversion with the invasive species so we are removing the invasives while creating a super healthy and delicious meat product. During this time the Boer Bok are living a life much like their cousin the deer, eating what they were designed to eat and thriving on it. In the late winter and until April we feed local, high quality alfalfa/orchardgrass hay. No manufactured feed products are necessary in this program. Additionally, in the spring the guard dogs and Boer Bok will shed their fine fleece undercoat which will be utilized by bluebirds and other songbirds to line their nests for years!

Why Boer Bok Goats and what is Boer Bok?

Boer Bok means “Farmer’s Goat” in Dutch. Although large and heavily muscled these goats have a gentle nature. Additionally they are THE premium meat goat, the only purposely bred and developed meat goat in the world with a specific standard developed by Dutch Farmers in South Africa in 1959. The result is a breed that set the standards for all meat goats that come after it.

I can’t imagine goat meat can taste good!

Boer Bok is a delicious meat, prized around the world, and even better on the invasive species forage diet. It is a very healthy meat that is high in protein while very low in fat and cholesterol. Unlike many "natural" or "healthy" food products there is no "Flavor Penalty" with the Boer Bok.



What are those white dogs that are out there with them?

Livestock Guardian dogs live with the goats and protect them from predators. These dogs have been specifically bred as working dogs. They are not pets. One of the dogs is a Komondor x Great Pyrenees. The other ones are Great Pyrenees. They are both caregivers and protectors.

I want to know more. Who can I contact about your goats, dogs and what you are doing?

You can call or email us (Linda and Clay Trainum)

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