



BREEDERS *Spotlight*

WITT'S RIO VISTA

Witt's Rio Vista, owned by Randy and Minda Witt, is located in Lamar, Colo. Extra time and attention devoted to youth involved with show ring projects is a part of Witt's Rio Vista's philosophy. The Witts are truly dedicated to young people and the success of their projects. They work closely with 4-H and FFA market project buyers to ensure they choose the best prospect wether or doe for their project. They also take the time to make sure the exhibitor knows how to feed, fit and show their market or breeding goat to its greatest potential. They answer a few questions about their operation.

by ROBYN SCHERER, M.AGR.

1. HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE BOER GOAT INDUSTRY?

In 2004, when our son decided to show market goats for a 4-H project, we attended our first wether sale and purchased two Boer wethers for him to show that summer. Little did we know that those two little brown headed goats would hook us for life! We continued purchasing does to build his small herd so that he could show both breeding and market goats. One thing lead to another, and soon it was a full-fledged ranch enterprise for our family. We eventually sold our flock of sheep in order to concentrate on raising quality Boer seedstock.

2. HOW MANY GOATS DO YOU HAVE, AND WHAT DO YOU USE THEM FOR?

We now run over 100 head of does, plus replacements, as well as a few milk goats, which mainly help raise the extra Boer babies for us, and will soon be recipient mamas as we continue to expand. We are using bucks from three different bloodlines which are making great wethers for us, and we have recently invested in a double-bred Smokin' Hot Ruger grandson which we

have high hopes for as a solid herdsire to move us to the next level. Our doe base contains a lot of wether lines, but is mostly fullblood, and we have been providing top end market wethers for 4-H and FFA members in the local area, as well as neighboring states. We also strive to produce breeding stock which will work on the ranch as well as in the showing, and we are working to further develop our seedstock operation.

3. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT RAISING BOER GOATS?

Randy's favorite part is all the great people we have met along the way. Kyla says the best part is watching the success of the kids in the showing, and she especially enjoys the breeding shows. Ty manages the feed side of the business, puts up the winter's hay, and loves the bouncy kids when they start to venture out on their own. Minda loves it all: the breeding decisions, the anticipation of even better kids each year, the preparation of our best stock for a show, traveling to all the fairs to watch the young 4-H & FFA members compete with our goats, and being part of the growing Boer goat industry.

4. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU HAVE FACED, AND WHAT DID YOU DO TO OVERCOME THEM?

One of the worst challenges we have faced was the Blizzard of 2007. The storm hit on New Year's Eve, and we had a barn full of very pregnant does. As the wind howled and blew the snow in through the air vents on the buildings, we could do nothing but worry about the girls in the barn. We were greeted the next morning by six foot drifts, and found the barn completely filled with snow. The goats had walked in circles all night, packing the snow down around them to keep from smothering in the drift which filled the barn. Ty dug a small hole through the snow in order to run a water hose to them and push in a little hay. We had to care for them that way for several days while trying to dig out the doors. We lost most of our chickens and barn cats, but those tough little goats had their babies and managed to keep them alive through it all!

A daily challenge is educating people on the value of the Boer goat, and helping to overcome the attitude that "It's just a goat."

The value of these animals to the world population is widely underestimated.

5. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUNG PRODUCERS GETTING INTO THE BOER GOAT INDUSTRY?

We would advise young producers to work with reputable breeders when purchasing their stock, and be willing to listen and learn from those who have been raising Boers for a long time. There is a wealth of knowledge to be gained from listening to experienced breeders who have been there through the growing pains of establishing the Boer goat in this country, and listening to them is an eye-opening experience. Any livestock enterprise takes a strong work ethic and a lot of desire for the pursuit of excellence to balance the ups and downs you are sure to meet. A love of the land and the livestock that make it productive are a must. Decide which side of the industry you want to work in, and set your sights high!

To learn more about Witt's Rio Vista, please visit www.wittsriovista.com.