GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Animal Resources Development Department
LB-2, Sector-III, Salt Lake City, Kolkata – 700 106

No. 1682 **/5P-685/G&SD/2023(P-I)** **Dated:** 26 .06 **.2024**

NOTIFICATION

West Bengal Goat Breeding Policy, 2023

A] Introduction:-

Goat rearing is a traditional activity of the farmers of rural Bengal that has special economic importance for the poorer families having less cultivable land or living on the fringes of the forest. Goat meat is consumed by all sections of society, and goat rearing is mostly done by the women of the household.

Among the different types of goats reared in West Bengal, the Black Bengal Goat is native to the State. It is found throughout the State and in the neighbouring States of Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, Assam,Tripura and in the neighbouring country Bangladesh. This goat is primarily bred for meat rather than milk. Chevon from Black Bengal Goat is highly palatable, juicy and of a superior texture as compared to meat from other breeds of goat. The skin is also of a superior quality (Glace Kid) as compared to other breeds.

The Black Bengal Goat is typically smaller than other goat breeds of the country. It is known for early maturity, high prolificacy, fecundity and fertility, coupled with high percentage of multiple births and shorter kidding interval. The coat colours are black, white, brown, or mixed i.e. black and white, black and brown. Ears are generally erect and horns are curved backward. Most of the adult animals are bearded, sometimes with long hair on their body coat. They are hardy, disease-resistant and efficient converters of sparse vegetation. They thrive even on meagre food and reproduce well in the hot-humid climatic conditions of the State.

According to the 20th Livestock Census, 2019, West Bengal ranks 2nd in goat population in the country, with 16.28 million goats (10.93% of the total goat population). 3.94 million households in West Bengal rear goats. The State produced 429.86 metric tons of chevon in 2022-23.

B] Need for intervention:-

1. Goats are traditionally reared under minimum input and free-range grazing system. They mainly fed on crop residues and forage from common and community-owned spaces. Inputs have a direct impact on weight gain and quality and therefore on the price realised by rearers for meat and skin.

2. Currently, selection of bucks for breeding is not generally being practised. Under field conditions, goats breed throughout the year, with no control over the breeding, as the bucks remain with the flocks. Continuous use of the same breeding males and their progeny in the same locality has led to in-breeding, depression in growth and other performance traits. Change of breeding bucks at regular intervals is, therefore, required.
3. Castration of male kids at a young age to achieve higher growth and to avoid the goaty odour in the meat has resulted in non-availability of sufficient number of superior breeding bucks in rural areas. Due to high demand for meat in eastern India, male goats are castrated at an early age for the purpose of meat. This practice has resulted in acute shortage of superior breeding males. As a consequence, present field level Buck to Doe ratio is 1: 89 against the recommended ratio of 1:20.
4. Farmers are not always able to breed female goats with good quality bucks, leading to poor conception rate and reduced kid production.
5. Characteristic traits of the Black Bengal breed are under threat of dilution due to indiscriminate breeding of Black Bengal does with available bucks of poor genetic merit of the same breed or with bucks of larger breeds like Jamunapari (for higher body size of progeny). Cross-breeding and in-breeding have both emerged as threats, which are diluting the characteristics of Black Bengal Goats in the State.

C] Objectives of breeding policy:-

The West Bengal Goat Breeding Policy, 2023, has been framed with the following objectives -

1. To increase meat production in the State by enhancing the productivity and reproduction potential of goats.
2. To augment the availability of animal protein in human diet.
3. To augment income of farmers dependent on goat rearing.
4. To disseminate scientific knowledge and awareness on best rearing practices among the farmers.
5. To provide vaccination and other healthcare coverage for goats and promote better feeding practices within the available resources.
6. To conserve and further raise the indigenous Black Bengal goats in their home tract and encourage replacement of low quality non-descript goats with pure Black Bengal goat through selective breeding.
7. To put in place an appropriate genetic improvement programme for Black Bengal goat in its native tract and select best quality bucks for semen production and natural service.
8. To make the State an important source of quality goat genetic resources of national importance.
9. To ensure the goat semen doses used in Artificial Insemination are of high quality and disease-free.

D] Policy and its Context:-

The West Bengal Goat Breeding Policy aims to provide long-term benefits to the rural population engaged in goat rearing for livelihood rather than those who are engaged in casual rearing and trading for short-term profits.

Considering the overall merit of the native Black Bengal breed (whether black, white, brown or mixed in colour) over the other breeds including cross-breds which are not native to the region, the current local goat management systems in the State, farmers' preference for the Black Bengal breed, smaller land- holding size among families and lower maintenance cost, it is considered expedient to focus on the local Black Bengal breed of goat in the State.

Exotic goat breeds such as Saanen, Toggenberg and Alpine have been introduced in India at different times to improve productivity of goat meat and milk. Indian breeds like Beetal, Sirohi, Jakhrana and Jamunapari have also been crossbred with the native Black Bengal Goat.

Numerous studies have established that cross-breeding with other larger breeds for gain in meat in first generation (F1) ultimately leads to loss in productivity and loss in overall meat availability after two-three generations. This becomes apparent from F3 and sometimes even from F2 generations.

Cross-breeding of Black Bengal goats which are mainly reared for meat, with milch type breeds as well as dual type breeds such as Jamunapari, Totapuri etc. does not serve the purpose of increasing meat productivity of the progeny in the long run.

Further, exotic and larger Indian breeds of goat have been found to be vulnerable to diseases in West Bengal, unlike the native Black Bengal. Their feed requirement is higher and the progeny of such cross breeds require higher volumes of feed input. This imposes an additional financial burden on the goat farmer.

As goats are reared in this State mainly for meat purposes rather than for milk or dual purposes, increase in meat productivity can be best met in the medium and long terms from the Black Bengal breed. It is not desirable to introduce any other goat breeds or cross-breed the local stocks. Meat production will increase by dint of high reproductive efficiency and multiple births if the Black Bengal breed is improved through selective breeding.

The Policy intends to focus on improving the Black Bengal goat breed of West Bengal through selective breeding, without introducing exotic or other Indian goat breeds.

An Expert Committee was set up for formulation of the 'West Bengal Goat Breeding Policy, 2023' and its recommendation was placed in the public domain for public comments/ suggestions. Now, in the light of the Report of the Expert Committee, the State Govt. formulates the 'West Bengal Goat Breeding Policy, 2023'.

E] Action Plan:-

Goat rearing in West Bengal is constrained by single sire flock, lack of animal identification and inadequate levels of farming literacy of rearers regarding feeding and health care.

Broad action plan for effecting this Policy includes -

1. Selective breeding of high-genetic merit kids by open nucleus breeding system (ONBS) - This system envisages genetic improvement in a small fraction of the population (nucleus) under close supervision, where in-breeding is avoided. Nucleus and multiplier flocks will generate sires for distribution to the farmers.

   A nucleus herd may be established in each agro-climatic zone, comprising 200 Does and 20 Bucks of Black Bengal goat. Male/ female progeny from breeding animals in the nucleus herd may be further bred for propagation, avoiding in-breeding. The best males may be provided to farmers as breeding bucks.

   The breeding animals will be selected on the basis of physical appearance, health condition, prolificacy of dam (i.e. number of siblings of multiple birth), kidding interval of dam, age at first service of dam, weight at first service of dam, body weight of the male kid (future buck) at birth. Restricted breeding at farm level may be promoted by providing for high genetic merit males and castration of non-descript males if required.

2. Regular exchange of bucks among the goat rearers to avoid in-breeding.
3. Extension of Artificial Insemination with high genetic merit Black Bengal Goat semen.
4. Farmers' awareness on good rearing and breeding practices.

F] Monitoring and Planning:-

The Department of Animal Resources Development shall set up a monitoring mechanism for implementation of the Policy. The Policy may be amended as required from time to time.

By Order of the Governor

[VIVEK KUMAR]
Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of West Bengal