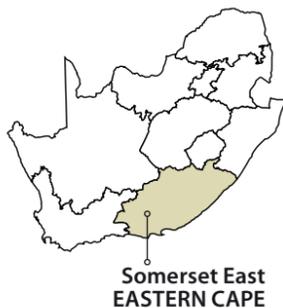


Almost 15 years ago **Tollie Jordaan** from the Swaershoek Valley near Somerset East in the Eastern Cape attempted to breed a red goat with similar physical characteristics as the legendary Boer goat – a breed the Jordaan family helped develop. **Mike Burgess** recently visited the farm Grootvlakte to find out how Tollie continues to help define South Africa's growing Kalahari Red goat breed.



TOLLIE JORDAAN, *a true Kalahari Red pioneer*

“IF YOU WANT TO MAKE MONEY, breed goats that are brown,” was the advice Tollie Jordaan received from an American businessman, Jurgen Schultz, with whom he travelled across South Africa in 1994 to buy Boer goats for export to the US. The Jordaan family were founding breeders of the legendary Boer goat breed, but what the American

A new generation of young Kalahari Red does. They are the product of Tollie's extensive breeding which aims to create beautiful brown goats that blend in well with their surroundings and have long, deep bodies with good meat-producing characteristics.

had said contributed to the breeding of another outstanding African meat-goat breed – the Kalahari Reds.

In search of brown goats

Before there were Kalahari Reds on Grootvlakte, there was only a motley group of brown ancestors – three groups of brown indigenous goats from as far afield as the Etosha Pan in Namibia during the mid 1990s. Amongst these pioneers, there were eight Skilderbok-type goats from the dairy farming area near Alexandria in the Eastern Cape. The next eight came from

the Hoopstad district in the Free State, but Tollie wasn't impressed with them.

“I can't tell you how ugly they were, especially the ram,” he recalls. “I called him Motorbike – he had long horns like a Harley Davidson. He had a short body, no rump, a terribly flat face and spots.”

The group from Namibia was not much better. But despite being thin-boned and inbred, they were incredible mothers and it was indigenous traits like these that Tollie was adamant to breed into a brown goat, along with the ability to produce meat as efficiently as the Boer goat can.

RIGHT: Tollie Jordaan on his farm Grootvlakte. He farms with game, Merino sheep, Boer goats and Kalahari Reds on about 10 000 ha.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The Swaershoek Valley has, for many years, been the place where top Merinos, Boer goats and now Kalahari Reds have been bred by the Jordaan family.

PHOTOS: MIKE BURGESS



His immediate goal was to breed 200 good-looking red does and at the end of 1994, he set about a process of harvesting embryos – bred from Motorbike – from the best two indigenous ewes he had. This enabled him to rear 16 embryo kids. One of them became the first ram of the next generation – the then-impressive Ringo Star – a buck that was a vast improvement on Motorbike. “He was visibly a cut above the rest. I used him extensively,” Tollie says.

Unique traits

Since then, through line-breeding, his flock of red goats has improved radically and Tollie has become passionate about them.

‘If you want to make money breed goats that are brown.’

They are hardy with 100% pigmentation, which helps them to cope better with extreme temperatures, and makes them well-camouflaged, Tollie contends. They handle disease with ease, are fertile with an average weaning percentage of 150% on the Grootvlakte veld, and extremely good mothers.

“South African's are crazy about brown animals. If you put a black one into the ring, they go for the brown one or the red one. Our eyes hone in on an Afrikaner Red; that's what we like.”

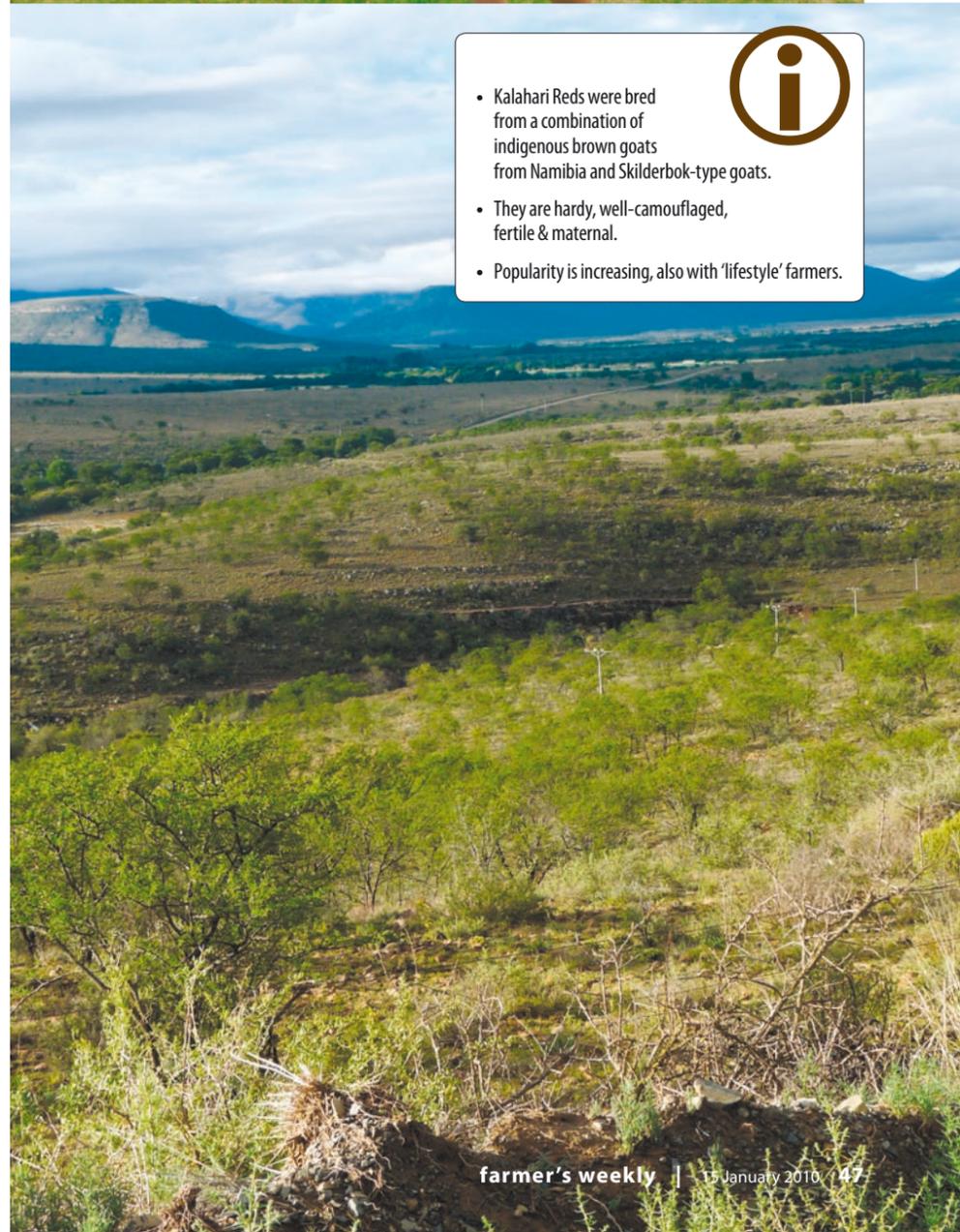
Consolidating the Kalahari Reds

Not surprising, other farmers across the country were doing exactly the same as Tollie and once they combined, a breed was born.

Ben Vorster from the bushveld north of Pretoria had been farming with red goats for almost 40 years, while Louis van Rensburg in Prieska and Albie Horn in De Aar had also been developing their goats from indigenous strains.



- Kalahari Reds were bred from a combination of indigenous brown goats from Namibia and Skilderbok-type goats.
- They are hardy, well-camouflaged, fertile & maternal.
- Popularity is increasing, also with 'lifestyle' farmers.



Superior camouflage makes the difference

The Kalahari Reds' ability to blend into the natural environment has practical advantages in terms of theft and predation says Tollie. He tells of how the theft of Boer goats in a certain camp along a busy road forced him to switch to Kalahari Reds with startling results. "I started introducing Kalahari Reds in the camp and none were stolen."

He explains you can't see them at night or during the day; they blend in. Furthermore, their flock instincts protects them from predators. They either confront predators such as caracal and jackal head-on, or they hide their kids from certain birds of prey and even bush pigs.

"They [the mothers] will take the kids and hide them under the trees. And when they lie in the shade, you simply can't see them," he says.

BOTTOM LEFT: Almost one month old Kalahari Reds kids in the veld on the farm Grootvlokke. Note how well-camouflaged they are in the surrounding arid environment.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The impressive Escavator, the 2008 World Grand Champion Buck that sold for over R48 000 at Tollie's production sale in October 2009.

TOLLIE JORDAAN



By 1998, it was decided that they would join forces, resulting in the 2004 registration of the Kalahari Reds – named after the red dunes of the Kalahari – as a genetically distinct breed from the Savanna goat and the Boer goat.

Tollie, who by this stage had bred 200 impressive does, knew that the next critical step in the development of the breed was to market it. "I had this fantastic goat and I wanted to tell the world I had it," he recalls. So in 2004, a Kalahari Red expo was launched in Bloemfontein, with very pleasing results. "Suddenly people started enquiring about them and I began selling old ewes. I had a market. I didn't have to slaughter them."

By 2005, the marketing strategy had intensified and they held a national show and sale in conjunction with the Boer goat and Savanna goat breeds under the banner of South African Meat Goat in Upington. As some Namibian farmers had also shown their recently acquired Kalahari Reds, the Kalahari Red section of the show was marketed as a world championship and is now an annual event.

Popularity boost

On the sale Tollie began to appreciate the real interest in his Kalahari Reds when he sold a doe for R2 800 and a buck for R16 000. By the next year, he had averaged R10 000 for five does while

selling two bucks for R26 000 and R21 000, respectively. "I came home with R100 000 from 10 goats and that's when the goats started to get more popular," he says.

By 2007, he was hosting his own production sales in Pretoria to support enthusiastic bushveld farmers who had taken to the Kalahari Reds. Just how popular his Elite Kalahari Reds are today is maybe best illustrated by the sale of three of his best bucks – Tenk (2009 World Grand Champion buck), Boetie (World Reserve Grand Champion buck) and Escavator (2008 World Grand Champion buck) for R59 000, R50 000 and R48 000 respectively at his Elite Kalahari Reds production sale in 2009.

Stimulating the growth of Kalahari Reds

"My philosophy is that the breed must grow but it won't if I don't sell my best animals. Because it's a new breed, I try not to hang onto the bucks for too long," Tollie explains. This strategy has clearly paid off.

The market for Kalahari Reds changed recently, he explains, from commercial smallstock farmers to lifestyle farmers. "Our market now also includes businessmen with a 1 000ha game farms who want to add goats," he says. "We South African farmers want to make money, but we also want to farm with an attractive animal, and that's why the Kalahari Reds are popular."

Farmers who have converted to beef farming due to increased theft of sheep, but are looking for alternative smallstock options or browsers to

complement beef farming are increasingly turning to Kalahari Reds, says Tollie. "We get cattle farmers looking for goats. They don't want to farm with sheep because they get stolen, and here's a goat with personality." The goats also feed on a different vegetation spectrum to cattle and farmers like to combine the two.

'I had this fantastic goat and I wanted to tell the world I had it.'

The excellent attributes of the Kalahari Reds allow Tollie to farm extensively with minimal input costs to achieve marketable animals at six months, averaging 30kg and slaughtering out at about 50%.

"I sometimes only see my Kalahari Reds once a month. They live up there in the mountain in between the rooikatte and jakkalse and everything," he says.

Contact Tollie Jordaan on 082 499 6609 / 042 243 2157 or visit www.boergoat-sa.com. |fw



Highly fertile and hardy Kalahari Red does with their kids in the veld on Grootvlokke. About 15 years ago, Tollie began breeding a meat goat from indigenous goats collected from as far as Etosha Pan in Namibia.

Bright international future, especially in Africa

The Kalahari Red has drawn significant international attention. Tollie has exported embryos and semen to several countries including Brazil, Malaysia and Australia.

But it's in Africa where the real future is, he says. Botswana and Namibia are already important markets for Kalahari

Reds and there's increasing interest in Zambia Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Nigeria, to where 50 of Tollie's Kalahari Reds were recently exported.

"We haven't even tapped into the African market, but it's all there and it's huge. In Africa, they don't farm with a white goat, they farm with black or brown," he says.

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