



Original Article



The Sojat Goat: A Jewel of the Indian Livestock Industry

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INTRODUCTION

In the diverse landscape of India's agricultural sector, livestock farming plays a pivotal role in the economy and sustenance of rural livelihoods. In India, the goat population went from 135.17 (2012) up to 148.88 million (2019) showing an increase of 10.14 percent over the previous census and contributing 27.8 percent in total Livestock. Goat farming is a billion-dollar industry in India and provides a livelihood for millions of farmers. Goat milk makes up 3.3% of India's total milk production, while goat meat accounts for 14.47 percent of the nation's total meat production (BAHS, 2022). The popularity of the meat goat farming business is growing day by day and the demand for the meat goat breed is also increasing. There are currently 39 recognized goat breeds in India, while the majority of them are still unidentified (ICAR-NBAGR, 2023).

With 20.84 million goats in the country, Rajasthan has the top goat population (2019). Although they are raised in all of Rajasthan's districts, the Aravali region has a higher population of goats. According to Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics (2023), Rajasthan is the state that produces the most goat milk in India, followed by Uttar Pradesh. Indian goat breeds including Jamunapari, Barbari, Beetle, Surti, and Jhakrana produce milk of high quality (BAHS-2023).

Among the myriad breeds of goats reared across the country, the Sojat goat emerges as a standout example of resilience, adaptability, and economic significance. Native to the arid regions of Rajasthan, the Sojat goat has garnered attention for its superior meat quality, robustness, and reproductive efficiency. The majority of Sojat goat owners (67.50%) belonged to the OBC caste, which was followed by the SC (12.50%), ST (11.25%), and General castes (8.75%) (Bagri *et al.*, 2022).

This article explores the origins, characteristics, economic importance, and challenges faced by the Sojat goat breed within the context of the Indian livestock industry.

Origin and General Characteristics

The Sojat goat derives its name from the town of Sojat in the Pali district of Rajasthan, where it has been bred and raised for generations. The Sojat and Jaitran tehsils of Pali, Bilara, and Pipar tehsils of Jodhpur and Nagaur tehsil of Nagaur districts of Rajasthan make up the majority of the native belt of Sojat goats.

Historically, the breed evolved through selective breeding practices aimed at enhancing meat production and adaptability to the semi-arid and arid regions of western India. The breeders focused on developing animals with sturdy physiques, broad chests, strong legs, and muscular frames, all of which contribute to its meat-producing capabilities. The breed is not suited for producing profitable milk. Their average milk production is 271 kg per lactation period and 991 grams per day. The average fat is 3.29 percent and the average SNF is 8.27 percent (Gurjar *et al.* 2021).

According to Sojat breeds, this type of goat is a hybrid between Jamunapari and other breeds. Sojat goats are known for having white coats, yet there are various varieties with black or brown patches. The ears droop and are flat and quite lengthy. The majority of both sexes have short, thin tails and no horns. Feathers are tiny hair growths that are seen on the body. The breed features round, well-developed udders with large, conical teats. The bucks are gorgeous and bigger than the does. Doe typically gives birth to a single kid 60% of the time and twins 40% of the time over her two 14-month gestations (Gurjar *et al.* 2021).

Male adult goats typically weigh 83 kg at birth, while female goats typically weigh 62 kg. The male goat measures 36 inches in length overall, while the female goat measures 35 inches. Because of their quick market demand, they are regarded as both mobile fertilizer plants and fixed deposits for the poorest people (Gurjar *et al.* 2021).

The Sojat goat is a common breed in India and perhaps one of the most unusual-looking goats in the world. Their persistence and flexibility are highlighted by their capacity to flourish in unforgiving environmental settings, which are marked by high temperatures and a shortage of water and food sources. In addition, Sojat goats are remarkably efficient breeders; they frequently give birth to several babies in a single kidding, providing farmers with a consistent supply of meat and extra breeding stock.

Feeding and Housing Management

Marwar region has a history of erratic and insufficient rainfall, with only one crop and hence people are dependent on livestock for their livelihoods. Feeding of goat therefore, is mainly done by the extensive method of feeding which is found most common. During grazing, leaves of plants like thur, motha, dhaman, dubh, patharchatta, anjan, etc. were normally fed. Top feeding was practiced i.e. looping of tree leaves like babul, neem, kekeer, ber, karanj, khezri, kkra, beri, kair, karunda. A small quantity of grain of barley, maize, bajra etc. was given to pregnant animals and female animals after kidding.

Table:1 Nutrient requirements for maintenance of goat-

Body weight (kg)	D.M. (% B.W.)	TDN (gm)	Total protein (gm)	Ca (gm)	P (gm)	Vit. A (1000 IU)	Vit. D (1000 IU)
10	2.8	159	22	1	0.7	0.4	84
20	2.4	267	38	1	0.7	0.7	144
30	2.2	362	51	2	1.4	0.9	195
40	2.0	448	63	2	1.4	1.2	243
50	1.9	530	75	3	2.1	1.4	285
60	1.8	608	86	3	2.1	1.6	327

Table:2 Nutrient requirements for Pregnancy, growth and lactation of goat-

Particulars	TDN (gm)	Total protein (gm)	Ca (gm)	P (gm)	Vit. A (1000 IU)	Vit. D
Advanced Pregnancy	397	82	2	1.4	1.1	213
100 gm growth per day	200	28	1	0.7	0.5	108
Per kg. milk yield	346	72	3	2.1	3.8	760

Sojat goat particularly young ones are found susceptible to pulmonary infection. Hence, more elite farmers, if not constrained by finance, prefer to provide their animals with special housing during stressful seasons and during parturition. Farmers adopt special housing during parturition for protection of both mother and neonates.

Meat Quality and Economics Significance

The primary reason for the popularity of Sojat goats lies in the exceptional quality of their meat. The meat of Sojat goats is tender, succulent, and low in fat, making it highly sought after in both domestic and international markets. It is favoured by consumers for its delicious taste and nutritional value.

The economic significance of Sojat goats cannot be understated. They serve as a vital source of income for farmers, especially in rural areas where alternative sources of livelihood may be limited. The high demand for Sojat goat meat translates into lucrative opportunities for farmers, providing them with a sustainable source of income throughout the year.

Moreover, the Sojat goat has become increasingly popular in the context of the burgeoning meat industry in India. With growing urbanization and changing dietary preferences, there has been a surge in demand for high-quality meat products, and Sojat goats are well-positioned to meet this demand.

Challenges and Conservation Efforts

Despite its economic importance and resilience, the Sojat goat breed faces several challenges that threaten its sustainability. One of the primary concerns is the lack of organized breeding programs and inadequate veterinary services in rural areas, which hinders efforts to improve the breed's genetic traits and prevent diseases.

Additionally, the indiscriminate crossbreeding of Sojat goats with other breeds poses a risk to the genetic purity and unique characteristics of the breed. There is a pressing need for concerted efforts to preserve and promote the purebred Sojat goat to safeguard its genetic heritage and maintain its economic viability.

Several organizations and government agencies have initiated conservation and breeding programs aimed at preserving the genetic integrity of the Sojat goat breed. These efforts involve selective breeding, health management, and community education to raise awareness about the importance of maintaining purebred Sojat goats and sustainable farming practices.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Sojat goat stands as a testament to India's rich agricultural heritage and the resilience of its rural communities. With its superior meat quality, adaptability, and economic significance, the Sojat goat continues to make invaluable contributions to the livelihoods of farmers and the prosperity of the nation's livestock industry.

By addressing the challenges faced by the breed and investing in research, breeding, and infrastructure development, policymakers and stakeholders can harness the full potential of the Sojat goat and ensure its sustainable growth and prosperity for generations to come. As a jewel of the Indian livestock industry, the Sojat goat exemplifies the resilience, adaptability, and economic potential inherent in indigenous livestock breeds.

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