

SOME FACTS ABOUT FAINTING GOATS



Fainting Goats are also known by several other descriptive names such as Nervous Goats, Stiff-Legged Goats, Wooden Legged Goats, and Myotonic Goats.

Fainting goats can be traced to the early 1880's when a farm worker appeared in Marshall County, Tennessee with three does and a buck that each displayed the myotonia that is characteristic of the breed. His accent and his clothes suggested that he came from Nova Scotia, but he was not talkative so his origin and the source of the four goats has remained a mystery. He sold his goats to Dr. H. H. Mayberry, who fortunately propagated them and tried his best to research their origin. He could find no evidence of a similar breed anywhere else in the world. He was convinced they were a unique breed because their distinct traits passed on intact from generation to generation.

Myotonia congenita is the medical term for the condition that causes these goats to appear to faint. When the goats move quickly after being startled or excited, or even after stepping over a low barrier, their muscles stiffen and cannot relax as quickly as those of other goats. If they are off balance when this occurs they will frequently fall over, leading to the name "fainting." The condition is painless, and the goat remains fully conscious and alert, regaining their mobility in a few seconds. The myotonia of the breed is directly linked to the heavy muscling of these goats.



Today's Fainting Goats have distinctive conformations such as protruding eyes (sometimes called "pop eyes" or "bug eyes"), and a long and wide muzzle that is neither dished nor Roman. The ears are medium and stand out to the side of the head with a slight twist at the base making them somewhat forward facing. They are neither erect like Swiss breeds nor lopped like the Nubian or Boer. Kids can be born with ears that are either erect or droopy, but these nearly all stand out to the side as the kid matures.



Over the consistent conformational traits are a wide variety of colors including solids, bi-colors, and a number of flashy spotting patterns. Hair ranges from short and sleek to very long and shaggy, and many of these goats grow a winter coat of long and fine cashmere. Some have blue eyes. Many are horned, although several are also polled (naturally hornless) and several breeders disbud horned kids to prevent horns from growing. No single color, hair type, or horn character is preferred over another. The goats are typically thick and muscular.



Fainting Goats are renowned for their kind and calm temperaments. They are much quieter than most other goats. They appreciate routine, consistent care and respond to kindness and attention with affection and devotion.

Many Fainting Goats can breed year round, making two kiddings possible in one year. Some, however, will only produce kids in the spring of the year. The gestation is about five months, as with all goats. They usually kid without any difficulty, and are devoted mothers that raise their kids well.



Fainting Goats are easy to raise, and require less "goat proof" facilities than other breeds because their myotonia prevents them from climbing as well as other goats. They are safe for neighbors and family members, and are unique enough to be a conversation piece. They can be profitable to raise, and fit well on small acreages. They are a joy to own and raise.