

News from Rare Breeds Canada
Do you know your goat history? Part 3: Toggenburgs

Toggenburgs or Toggs as they are affectionately called by their admirers were without doubt the most popular breed of registered goat in Canada; at the turn of the 20th Century. Between 1917 and 1922 entries for the breed in the first CGS (Canadian Goat Society) Herd Book, almost outnumbered the Angora, Nubian and Saanen breeds combined - 405 Toggs entered the record; whilst all other recordings totalled 415.

A tentative breed standard for the Toggenburg stated that bucks should range from 130 to 180 pounds in weight and does from 100 to 130 pounds once mature. Bucks were expected to be masculine and heavy set, whilst females were regarded as feminine but not fine. Colouring from light fawn to dark brown was acceptable. White striping on either side of the face, white along the side under the tail and body and on the legs between the thighs and down to the hooves passed inspection. Of course, wattles on either side of the neck for both sexes completed the standard for Toggenburgs. Toggs were highly regarded at the time because of their capacity to milk - "high grade" first freshening does could milk on average a gallon a day. A record lactation at the time referred to as "splendid" by a BC Agricultural Goat Bulletin, gave a figure of 2,941 pounds of milk in 365 days.

Kittie, a female inspected Togg, was the first ever entry in CGS records for the breed. Kittie, born on April 5th 1916 was owned by John M. Spowart of Central Park, BC. Admiral Dewey B 1928A, the first male, owned by D Mowat of McKay, BC, came from Pacific Grove, California and had a birth date of March 16th 1917. Dewey B, was reported to be hornless and have brown, true markings. However, he was not the most influential buck of his time, credit there must be given to Don Hermes de Las Cabritas (number 28 in the CGS Herd Book). Don Hermes sired both the first male and female Canadian bred, pure Toggenburgs - Ilkey Judy (female) bred by George Jeffery of Central Park, BC was born on April 29th 1918. Lilac Lodge Alexander was born just under a year later, on March 18th 1919, his colouring indicated him as chocolate with correct white markings and as being hornless. Norley F. Tunbridge also retained his full sister (Lilac Lodge Pauline) in her herd, located in Penticton, BC.

Although there was a heavy concentration of Toggs in BC, they could also be found in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Ontario. The most notable breeders - those who had the most influence on the breed; were the owners of El Bar Ranch, in New Westminster, BC. Alongside others they imported goats from Montana, Washington, Pennsylvania and California. Don Hermes, came from "The Little Goat Ranch" in Montara, California, home to the herd of Richards and Wagner.

Richards and Wagner

The *Daly City Record*, based in Half Moon Bay, California reported in their District News in 1914, that "The Richard Toggenburg farm at Montara has several new kids and they are beauties. Latin and Greek Dictionaries are being searched for suitable names." Although quoted as being the Richard Toggenburg farm, the farm was a partnership between Morris Wagner (the daughter of an artist, who built a retreat style colony in Montara) and Irmagarda Richards (a scholar who also authored "The Modern Milch Goat" and helped to establish a dairy goat association in California - amongst many other accomplishments). The "Little Goat Farm" nestled in Montara, south of San Francisco began when Wagner (by then the Postmaster) purchased some Toggenburg goats. After meeting Richards, who helped her to improve the overall husbandry and health of her animals, the farm blossomed to at one point having 200 goats. An outlet was found for all the milk from the does' by selling it to hospices in the area. Doctor's believed that the goats' milk was beneficial particularly to sick children, with tuberculosis. For the partnership it was not about the money they earned, but the fact they could use their goats to help society in general, that was most important to the ladies. Their enterprise thrived for many years until unfortunately with the advent of modern baby formula, the need for a constant supply of raw goat milk came to an end and "The Little Goat Farm" ceased to exist. However, it's effects could be felt throughout the early development of the Toggenburg breed in Canada.

Today, Rare Breeds Canada lists the Toggenburg, as it has done for many years as "endangered", despite

it's promising beginnings, the trend did not continue into the later half of the 20th century - certainly in terms of those registering their Toggenburgs.

AUTHORS NOTE: The original Post Office where Morris Wagner worked is still open, as a Bed and Breakfast, if you fancy a break and want to go on a Togg history tour - the Goose and Turret Bed And Breakfast is open for business, goose.montara.com. Also, if anyone has any information available regarding the El Bar Ranch, I'd really appreciate hearing about it - to complete this fascinating history would be wonderful! Contact me at goatpackgetaways@yahoo.ca

With thanks to Sharon Hunt, General Manager of the Canadian Goat Society for the use of the original CGS Herd Record Book, which was invaluable in writing these accounts.