

Giving Hope for Bigger and Better Goat Herd Production

Rural farmers in KwaZulu Natal (KZN) struggle with productivity in their indigenous goat herds. With production so low, the demand greatly supersedes the supply. Many farmers see 60% mortality in their goat kids. Because farmers don't see their herds growing year by year, they are hesitant to sell. This creates an even bigger gap in supply and demand with buyers turning to goats coming in from other provinces and countries.

Heifer Project South Africa (HPSA) is working with farmers in KZN, through the Jozini Agricultural Model project, to increase productivity with their livestock. This project, funded by the European Union and Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, started in May 2015 and aims to support 2100 farmers over three years.

With kid mortality in indigenous herds being way above the average 5-10% in a commercial herd, most farmers don't even consider goat kids as part of the herd until they are several months old. The majority of goat kid mortality, according to farmers, is from disease, not getting enough nutrition through milk from their mothers in drought or stressed conditions and predators.

Thembeni Myeni, from the Jozini project, had this to say about predators and her goat kids. "Every second month I sell a goat to cover expenses and make ends meet. I had cattle but they all died. They went to drink water from the dam that was poisoned. My goat herd initially grew fast but it is diminishing now. The animals are taking my goats and eating them at night and during the day – last week it was a kid again – January to now is nine killed. It is hyena and leopard. Some say it's also eagles that farmers have seen but I haven't – the predators are taking young, newborn – the leopards and hyena do a lot of damage."



Thembeni Myeni from the HPSA Jozini Agricultural Model project

Mrs Myeni and other farmers in the Jozini Agricultural Model Project, as a way to reduce kid mortality in their herds, are building enclosures. These enclosures, originally developed by Mdukatshani Rural Development Programme, are being piloted and rolled out across Jozini and other HPSA project sites. Together with Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs), farmers build these for their goat kids to ensure they get enough nutrition and are kept from predators, such as hyena. Kids can start eating at about two weeks. Farmers put in protein blocks bought from the HPSA CAHWs and processed stover. Ideally, at about two months, kids should start going out with their mothers as they are old enough and need to start building up immunity to disease.



Ms Myeni letting her kids out to go to their enclosure

Ms Myeni went on to say “Animals eating the kids- that’s the biggest problem. There are 10 kids now but normally all would get eaten. With the current enclosure, I believe I can prevent this and sell more. Speculators can come buy in large numbers – last year June I sold 8 goats. Females at R950. Young rams at R800 and castrates at R1000. The enclosure outside is for kids- to stop them from going into the wild and long distances and rather eat closer and turn back for the food. Even now they don’t follow their mothers. They stay close and thus don’t get eaten by the wild animals. HPSA helped with the enclosure – they helped fund it. I see a huge change already – this is helping me pull up my socks -before HPSA came my kids would be tied up by the necks in a row and if I went to clinic or the like they would tangle up and get into all sorts of knots or otherwise they end up going into the wild with their moms. I have started believing in production again and the next set of kids will be bigger and better. Once I reach the number of 40 goats then I believe I am flying.”



Ms Myeni's kids, when let out, run to their enclosure