

The origin and history of the Kalahari Red

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It is such a pleasure knowing the history of our breed! It is enriching to share the ups and downs of the history of our attractive breed, the Kalahari Red with our fellow breeders, as narrated by the founders themselves.



Ben Vorster



About the first Kalahari Reds in the late Eighties

In the Seventies the farmers first started collecting these red goats, now known as Kalahari Reds, from the four corners of South Africa and Namibia. **Mr Ben Vorster**, of Tshipese in the Limpopo Province, farmed north of the Soutpansberg. His lands consisted mainly of Mopanie trees with many other indigenous trees and shrubs. He had a Boer goat stud of 200 ewes. One ewe in his Boer goat stud gave birth to one red lamb and one Boer goat lamb every year. On their reaching maturity, he noticed the unique properties of the red lambs and he immediately started contacting other farmers and collecting all the red and red-dappled lambs. This collection process took him as far afield as Namibia where he came across more red goats. He ended up with thirty red goats that he started breeding with.

In 1994 an American who visited **Tollie Jordaan**, renowned Boer goat farmer of the farm Grootvlakte in the Somerset East district, convinced him to farm with brown goats. After the American had left, Tollie bought 8 brown goats, but he was unsatisfied with the goats' heads and conformation. Yet he soon realised that there was nothing wrong with the fecundity, mothering traits and adaptability of the brown goats. At that stage good rams were in short supply. His search also took him to Namibia to get hold of genetic material. In later years Tollie excelled in his breeding and for the past six years he has been the Breeder of Champions at the World Shows.



Tollie Jordaan (centre)



Kalahari Red ewes on the farm Grootvlakte

In 1991 **Albie Horn** of the farm Hartebeeshoek in De Aar spotted the remarkable properties of the brown goats and he built up his flock from brown, as well as brown and white, indigenous goats from the former Bophuthatswana, the Eastern Cape, the Karoo and Namibia. From the early years he took the lead with his excellent marketing techniques and set his sights on promoting the brown goat and to have it registered as a breed. He greatly emphasised the mothering traits of the brown goat, as well as its hardiness and adaptability to the Kalahari desert area where he farmed. At the same time he realised that the brown goats could improve our indigenous goats and the indigenous goats of Australia and that the brown goat could provide them with a uniform colouring. Albie was the first president of the Kalahari Red Breeders' Association from 1999 to 2004.



During a visit to America, **Louis van Rensburg**, a recognised and experienced farmer of many small stock breeds, of the farm Wonderpan in Prieska in the Northern Cape, saw many brown goats, or Solid Reds as the Americans called them. Like Tollie, he too was convinced by the Americans to start farming with brown goats. On his return to South Africa he used a brown Boer goat ram from his own Boer goat stud to service ten Boer goat ewes. Not one lamb was brown or even dappled. He decided to put the lambs back with their sire. In that mating season all the lambs were brown or dappled. In a few years Louis had 120 brown lambs in his kraal. Louis contributed very much to performance testing in the Kalahari Reds and the registration of Kalahari Red breeders with Studbook SA. He succeeded Albie Horn as president in 2004 and served in this office up to 2010.

Chris Strauss and Johnny Markram also collected brown lambs on their farms. Chris and Johnny who were both livestock agents used the opportunity to purchase brown ewes from the farmers whose goats they marketed.

On 28 June 1996 Louw Pretorius of *Landbouweekblad* heard about Ben Vorster's ewes and decided to write an article on them. After this article had been published, farmers became aware of one another and began communicating.



Louis van Rensburg showing the first goats



Louis v Rensburg

In 1998 the goats were shown with the Savannas in Bloemfontein, under the name of Brown Savanna. The aspiration to have an own breed was a great driving force. This required DNA tests being conducted to determine whether there was sufficient genetic separation between the Boer goats, Savannas and Kalahari Reds. Tail samples were taken from goats of Albie Horn, Koenie Kotzé, Louis van Rensburg, Koert Loots, Ben Vorster and Christie van der Merwe and sent to the ARC for analysis.

The tests were conducted by Dr Marida Roets who also helped get international funding from the FOA for the tests.

Breeders such as Louis van Rensburg and Ben Vorster were concerned about their breeding stemming from the Boer goats, but the results of all the tests showed that the difference between the brown goats and the Boer goats was greater than between the Boer goats and the Savannas. On 5 July 1999 the Kalahari Red Club was founded in Kimberley.

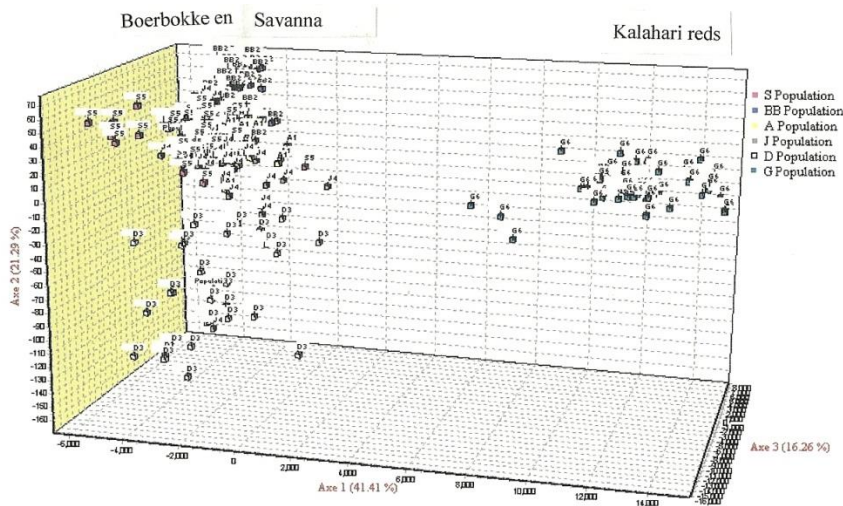


Figure 1 Factorial correspondence analysis of all the individuals in the study

The results of the DNA tests as published

Albie suggested at a Kalahari red club meeting that the name Kalahari Red be used. Kalahari was an internationally known name and referred to South Africa. Red refers to the colour of the sand in the Kalahari where the goats were grazing.

He visited Australia where he met Wallace Kier. According to an article in *Landline*, Wallace turned his farming about and implanted Kalahari Red embryos on his farm on 9 July 1999. He was well supported by the father of SA Boer goats in Australia, Geoff Burnett Smith.

The Club was managed by its members until 19 October 2004, where, during an Annual General Meeting at Kuruman, it was decided to engage with the SA Boer Goat Breeders' Association. Louis van Rensburg, the president of the Kalahari Reds at that stage, in collaboration with Tolle Jordaan and Albie Horn, were instrumental in the signing of the collaboration agreement.

On close examination, all the meat goats in the country stem from indigenous goats. However, selection and breeding resulted in the various meat goat breeds in the country today.

In the collaboration agreement with the respective associations it was decided to emphasise the strong features of every breed and not to concentrate on their differences.

Today, 13 years later in 2012, the Kalahari Reds have 79 registered stud breeders and many commercial breeders who form the backbone of our industry. With the infrastructure established in the collaboration agreement, I believe that the Kalahari Red breeders contribute annually ever more to the meat goat industry. With our participation in shows, sales and our involvement in the activities of the seven clubs in the country, it has become possible to provide an extra pillar to this meat goat structure. The Kalahari Reds have a study group in every club region of the SA Boer Goat Breeders' Association with the exclusive purpose of marketing and growing the breed, which would otherwise have been difficult to achieve. My wish is that the Kalahari Red breeders will strive toward expanding the breed and its members, as the pioneers envisioned it, with the focus on fecundity, mothering traits, adaptability and conformation.

I would like to conclude with the words of one of the pioneers, "Keep it pure, keep it natural, keep it Kalahari Red".

