

Another Conservation Success Story...

Ben Hill County, Georgia

March 2008

Native American Culture and Conservation Honored at G&L Boer Goat Farm in Ben Hill County

Ben Hill County farmer Lynn Burkes' goat operation is more than a business - it's an educational facility. In 1999, while Lynn and her husband George were out for a drive in their hometown of Fitzgerald, they spotted a herd of goats.

This sparked Lynn's imagination and soon the Burkes had purchased a farm, 20 does and a Boer buck. G & L Quality Boer Goat Farm was established. Despite health issues that nearly threatened the future of their operation, Lynn actively sought out proper nutritional plans for the goats which included high protein feed, vitamins and minerals.

To complete the process, they went to NRCS Soil Conservation Technician Charlene Lankford for a conservation plan for their farm.

Through the 319 Clean Water Grant from Seven Rivers RC&D, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and a Georgia Grazing Land Coalition Grant, the Burkes planted Alicia Bermuda grass for grazing, fenced the entire property, installed crossfencing and installed a well for fresh water. They erected a pole barn store for hay and a metal building for a sick bay, kidding pens, isolation and a wash facility.

Lynn, who is part Cherokee and Creek Indian, provides animal hides from their market animals to a Native American company that makes drums for Native American ceremonies. "My heritage is my heart," said Burke. "My grandparents never talked much about their culture, so when they passed away, I said it's not fair to hide it. I'll make sure my children will know their heritage."

Based on her experiences over the past 8 years, Lynn has begun a crusade of sorts. The objective that she wishes to achieve with the goats is not only optimal health, but longevity. She wants to ensure that the goats live a long time and continue to produce kids that will showcase the genetics they have on G & L Quality Boer Goat Farm.

Several times a year, the Burkes host field days for preschoolers and kindergarteners from Ben Hill County Schools to introduce them to goats. Students learn the difference between dairy and meat goats, they bottle feed baby goats and they receive worksheets and coloring books on goats, provided by Georgia NRCS.

Eventually, Lynn plans to build a training facility on site, where students and youth agriculture organizations can learn about Boer goats.

"I'm here to do what I can for the people," said Burke. "If I can start them at a young age learning the importance of livestock, it's worth it."



The Burkes fenced off the entire boundary of their property, as well as wetland areas to exclude the goats from the wetland areas.



George and Lynn Burke proudly display the 2005 Conservation of the Year Award received for their conservation work at the G&L Quality Boer Goat Farm in Ben Hill.



Goats enjoy the new watering trough installed on a heavy use-area. These troughs are made of disease and mold resistant-plastic that can easily be cleaned and allow for addition of medication for the entire herd.



This new well provides fresh clean water for livestock at G&L Boer Goat Farm.

 **NRCS** Natural Resources Conservation Service

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**Middle South Georgia
Soil And Water
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