

# The Myotonic Head

## *A Key Characteristic in Judging the Breed*

Prepared by Sue Johnson

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In preparation for attending MGR's Myotonic judging school on November 9, 2012 in Henderson, Texas, I did some research on breed characteristics. Although I have raised this breed for 10 years now, I found it difficult to visualize its ideal appearance by simply reading breed descriptions.

Myotonics are a landrace breed which means that they have developed largely by natural processes and by adaptation to the natural environment in which they live. Therefore, they differ from formal breeds that have been selectively bred to conform to an established, purebred standard. Landraces are usually more genetically and physically diverse than formal breeds.

As judges, we encourage breeders to improve the structural correctness of the breed, but without altering its historical essence. I found that I could more easily visualize the Myotonic's unique head shape by studying some facial and cranial photos. By comparing skull photos of other breeds, I could look below the surface and get a real picture of what the head of a Myotonic goat looks like. This allowed me to focus on specific points that make the Myotonic head different and sets it apart from other purebred goats, such as the prominent eye sockets, the stop between the muzzle and frontal bones, the relatively straight facial profile and the unique ear conformation.

## Myotonic Skull Characteristics

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The shape of the skull is particularly important, as this shape affects the set of the ears, the prominent eyes, the stop, and the straight profile of the face -- all traits unique to this breed.

# Comparison of Skull Characteristics

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## Head

The Myotonic skull is wide between the eye orbitals giving the Myotonic a broad head of medium length, and is broad across the muzzle. The jaws are full and well formed. The profile of the facial region is usually straight, or rarely slightly convex, with a profound 'stop' between the muzzle and frontal bones which surround the eyes.



*Myotonic's facial profile is usually straight*



3=-0

*Boer goat's facial profile has a slight convex nose*



*This Dairy cross has a straight maybe slightly dished facial profile*



*Nubian's facial profile between the eyes and the muzzle is strongly convex (Roman nose)*

## Eye Structure

The photos below show that the angle of where the orbit meets the skull is: a) more acute (less than 90 degrees), b) more square than rounded, and c) more obtuse than the orbit of the dairy cross. The Myotonic orbit bone is slightly wider, adding to the protruding appearance.



*Myotonic*



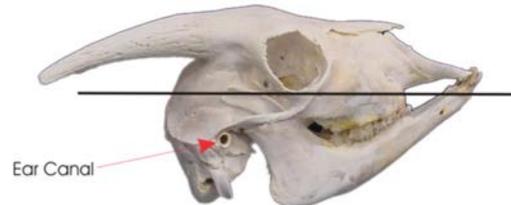
*Dairy cross*

## Ear Structure

The ears are moderately sized, and most are held horizontally or somewhat forward toward the face. It is currently acceptable for the ears to have a wave or ripple halfway down the length along the front edge of the ear. The ears of the Myotonic differ from the Boer whose ears are broad, smooth and hanging downwards from the head. As you can see from the skull photo the ear canal is set a lot lower on the Boer head than on the Myotonic. Also when studying the photos of the various breeds you can see how the ear would come out of the head at different angles.



*Myotonic's ear canal is set just below the eye orbit.*



*Ear canal is set a lower on the Boer, there also is a further distance between the orbit and the ear canal.*

## Horns

It is acceptable for Myotonic goats to be shown horned, polled or disbudded. Since the Myotonics are a *landrace* breed, they have a great variance in horn conformation and horn color. Their horns should be set wide apart at the base where the horns attach to the skull, and can be flat or round. The tips of the horns are not allowed to tip forward. Any color is acceptable. This is in contrast to horns of the Boer goat which must be round and of solid color. Boer goat horns are typically strong, of moderate length and placed moderately apart with a gradual backward curve.

## Conclusion

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An understanding of these skeletal structures can provide a foundation for evaluating breed conformation and breed character. That is why it is so important to recognize that the Myotonic head is a critical key in recognizing the distinct characteristics of this breed. By combining our structural understanding with our visual observations of each goat's facial features, we will have a more complete basis for scoring.

### Photos courtesy of:

Gene McNutt, 7 Fainting Acres

Lisa Ohling, Ahart Acres

Karin Christensen <http://www.goatbiology.com>

Will Higgs <http://www.skullsite.co.uk>

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