

STATUS REPORT 4 – AZAGRA FARM – GOATS

The day after I made my third report about changing the timetable, the bamboo gu-od was delivered, so all the major materials for the goat house was ready and on hand. On with the goat house construction.



What gu-od looks like, short and thick, versus regular bamboo above, and finally coco (coconut) lumber.



No need for gu-od footings, then with the coco floor joists, and bamboo roof framing, it takes shape.



Nipa for roofing.

Tractor plows much faster than a carabao. Above, after 6 hours work. About one hectare of plowed field will be planted for special grass.



Goat house when we came back 20 days later. It will be subdivided into about 9 sections to corral the goats at night and inclement weather. Center photo shows trough below for supplemental feed, while angled brackets above hold the harvested Napier grass. The grazing area will be corralled into about 8 sectors using the hog wire shown above right, so the goats will be rotated, and will allow the grass to grow back and the parasites in the goat droppings (if any) to die out, and prevent possible parasite reinfection.

What I find challenging is the stocking up on the livestock. Even while we were in Manila, Sandra called that there were 2 native goats for quick sale by a neighbor at the Malubog farm, and one goat was pregnant, so we got them. That neighbor also offered a hybrid boar, which we also got to eventually impregnate our two native piglets (we had originally intended to fatten them up for lechon when we come back in November, but that equation will have to change). The pedicab carrier hired to transport the animals refused to negotiate the last 400 meter stretch of dirt road to the farm, so I could just imagine how the 2 goats (one heavy with kid) and 1 boar was coached to walk the rest of the way. Then a nephew who raises a goat or two in his backyard in town provided an excess baby goat.

We aim to have at least 15 goats as a starter for the goat house. William, the agri-vet consultant suggests against sourcing them at the market. All these goats are to be female native breeds, to be serviced by one hybrid male buck, so to improve the offspring. Goats multiply fast; gestation period is about 4 months. But the gov't agri-vet office didn't have any impregnating male bucks to loan out (unlike the loaner hybrid rooster in the chicken house), so we decided to buy one. The big-time sugar Hacienda Montenegro (300 hectares – they even once had an airfield) in nearby Bais has a goat farm, and according to William, they were willing to part with one Anglo-Boer buck for 6 grand. Fair price, it seems, for the 42 kg critter. Market price for local meat is about 140 per kilo, but this was a breeder, still having the potential to gain more weight, so after we'd have sold it in a year or so, we'd get our money back and more. It can't stay on as a breeder because it would eventually crossbreed its progeny. As for the chickens, the roosters are targets for my dinner plate. We have no male cows, the females are AI'd (artificial insemination).



Getting the buck was a hilarious episode. Here, the pictures show the hacienda's goatherd chasing up and trying to corner the target, using a nylon rope like a lasso reminiscent of western cowboy lore, while trying to avoid the horns. Lisa observed that nylon does not behave like hemp rope. Anyway, with the eventual help of William, they got the buck bundled into the back of my van. I felt like a rodeo champ when I grabbed the buck by the horns while Nitoy helped me unload it from the van, but I am really just exaggerating.

Until next time when we're back in November, I'm filing this report.

Danny, 28 Jun 2008