



# The 4-H Meat Goat Project: AN INTRODUCTION

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Prepared by:

**Stephen R. Schafer**

4-H and Youth Specialist  
Livestock, Equine, Poultry, and Rabbit Programs  
University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service

***Reviewers***

<b>Sarah Cary</b>	4-H Program Associate, Converse County University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service
<b>Stephanie Cummings</b>	4-H Program Associate, Albany County University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service
<b>Ron Kaufman</b>	4-H Program Associate, Goshen County University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service
<b>Brett Moline</b>	County Coordinator, Albany County University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service
<b>Phil Rosenlund</b>	County Coordinator, Laramie County University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service
<b>Jim Waggoner</b>	Livestock Range, Nutrition, and Management Specialist University of Wyoming College of Agriculture

***Editor***

<b>Karol Griffin</b>	College of Agriculture Office of Communications and Technology
----------------------	---

***Graphic Designer***

<b>Tana Stith</b>	College of Agriculture Office of Communications and Technology
-------------------	---

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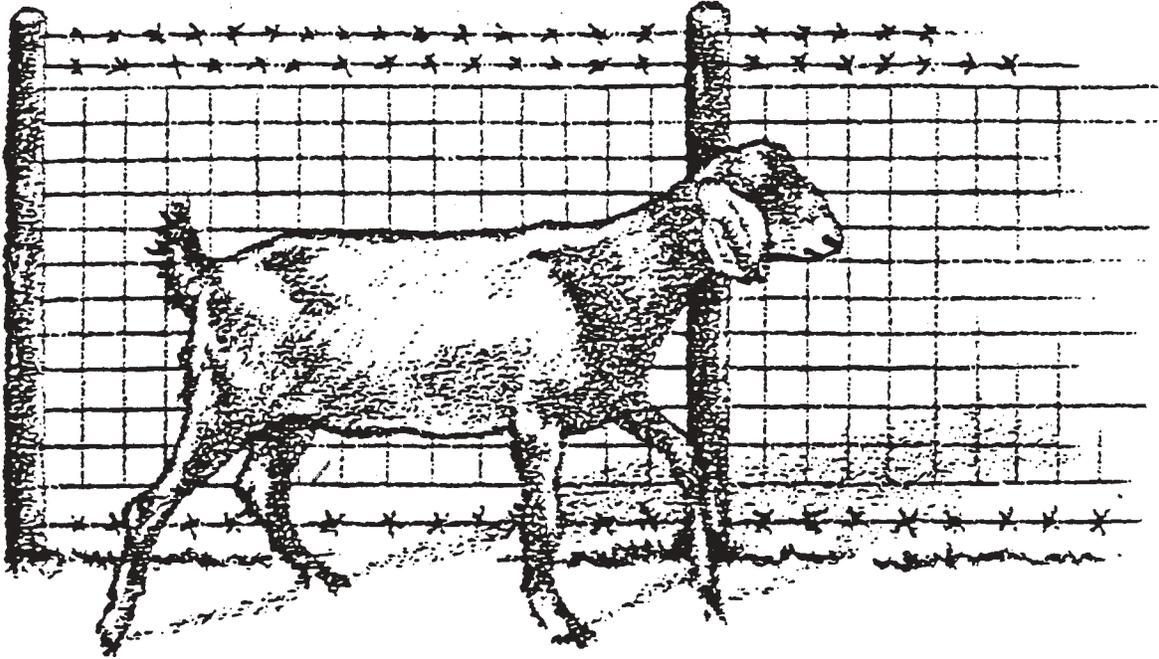
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## **Introduction**

The 4-H meat goat project is an exciting and educational opportunity for 4-H members. It requires very little room, expense, or daily chore time. It is also a short-term project, especially when compared to the horse, beef cattle, or dairy cattle projects. Goats are also much smaller and easier to control and handle.

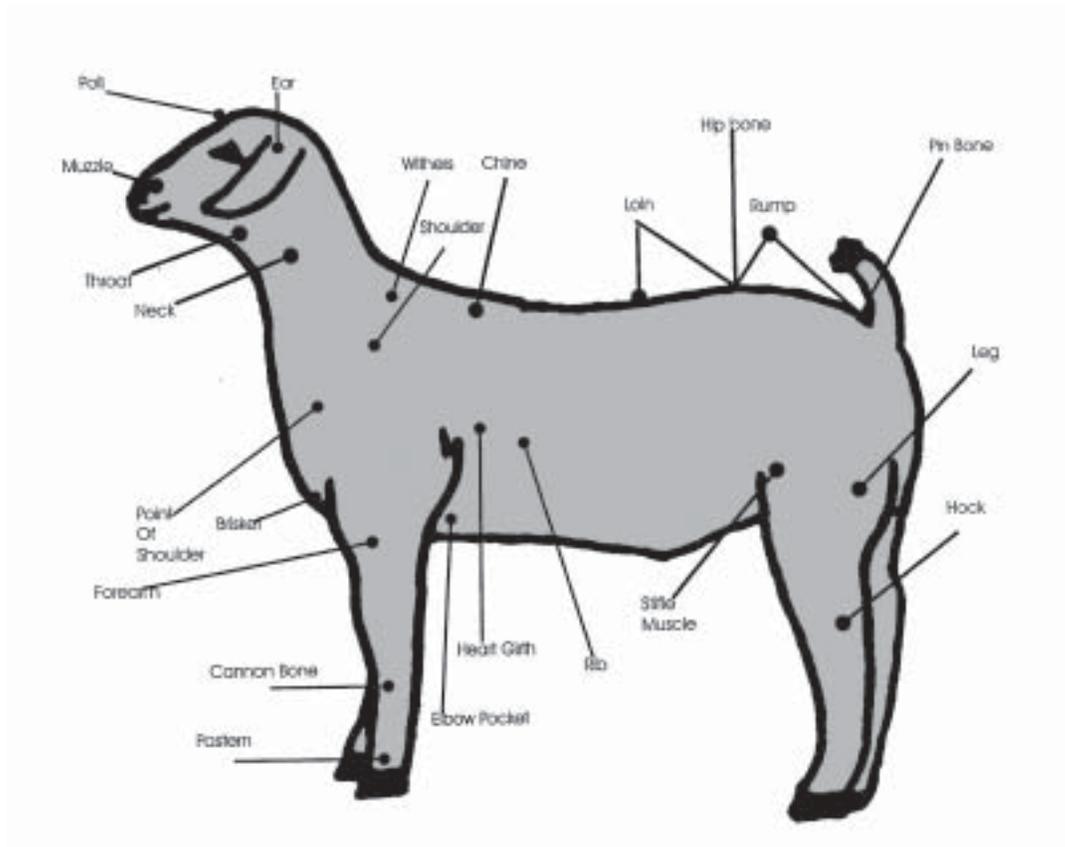
## **Selecting a meat goat project**

There are three main types of goat projects: (1) fiber goats, (2) dairy goats, and (3) market goats. The fiber goat project is simply raising the goat for its hair, which is known as mohair or cashmere. This project is very minor in 4-H and thus will not be discussed in further detail. The dairy goat project is designed for 4-H members with an avid interest in the production and reproduction of goats. The market goat project (also known as meat goat project) is designed for club members interested in goats, but to a lesser

degree. In keeping with the name of the project, the market goat project participant purchases a young kid, feeds and cares for it, fits and grooms it, shows it, and finally sells the goat.

The club member who chooses the dairy goat project also feeds, cares for, fits, grooms, and shows the goat. However, in contrast to the market goat project participants, dairy goat project participants exhibit breeding goats (bucks and does), which are not sold at the county fair youth sale. The club member is able to return home with these goats and continues to care for them in order to produce milk and kids. These kids are then kept to show, sell to market, and/or sell to other club members for their project. The milk produced by the does is sold.

This project manual discusses and explains the meat goat project. If you are interested in the dairy goat project, it is explained in a separate manual.



The meat goat project is gaining popularity among 4-H members in the United States. Kids grow fast and cost less to raise than most other types of livestock and a goat project can be quite profitable. A goat project requires less room, less daily chore time, less expense (for both feeding and housing), and is a short term project (for market goats).

### Parts of the meat goat

Selecting a goat to show is as important as the feed and care that you give the goat once you bring it home. The meat goat project should begin with a healthy and high quality goat.

Before you can identify and select a high quality meat goat, you must know what one looks like. The first step in this process is to learn the important parts of a meat goat. The drawing illustrates the most important parts of a meat goat.

### Goat terms

Understanding the vocabulary used by goat producers, exhibitors, and judges is also a necessary step in learning about goat selection and production. Knowing the terms listed below will greatly assist you when communicating with people in the goat business.

**breed:** a group of animals with common ancestry and with similar characteristics that are passed on from generation to generation

**breeder:** owner of the parents of the goats when they were mated

**buck:** an uncastrated male goat, sometimes referred to as a "billy"

**cashmere:** a description of all goats that produce cashmere, which is a very fine fiber in this type of coat

**castrate:** to remove the testicles

**crossbred:** an animal with parents of different breeds

**dam:** the mother of a particular animal

**doe:** a female goat, of any age

**disbud:** removal of horn buds, before one week of age

**elf ear:** LaMancha ear, up to two inches long

**kid:** a newborn, infant, or young goat

**market goat:** a goat that is raised for meat and weighs within the market weight parameters – it must also still have its baby (milk) teeth

**mohair:** goat wool

**kidding:** the process of giving birth

**purebred:** an animal with same-breed parents and that could be recorded in an association registry

**sire:** the father of a particular animal

**wether:** a goat that has been castrated

**yearling:** an animal between one and two years old

### Meat goat breeds

The goat is probably the oldest domesticated animal, other than the dog, and today there are over 200 breeds and varieties. Through evolution, selection practices, and genetics; goats have developed and evolved to possess similar characteristics that include color, color pattern, size, and purpose (meat, milk, fiber, or a combination of these traits).

The major breeds of meat goats raised in the United States are Boer, Kiko, Myo-

tonic, Nubian, and Spanish. Many of the dairy breeds such as Alpine, LaMancha, Oberhasli, Saanen, and Toggenburg have also found their way into the meat chain. However, they are not sought by packers or by breeders for use in production programs such as cross breeding. Pygmy goats are considered a meat goat in their native West Africa, but are considered as a pet or novelty in the United States. Also, meat processors in the United States discriminate against them because of their small size.

**Boer.** This breed is also known as Afri-cander or South African Common Goat. The Boer originated in South Africa as the result of uncontrolled cross breeding between the native goat and the Angora, European, and Indian goats that explorers brought. The name comes from the Dutch word “boer” which means farm and it was probably used to distinguish the native goats from those that were imported.



The Boer is primarily a meat goat with several adaptations to the region in which it was developed. It is a horned breed with lop ears. It has a variety of color patterns and is a very large breed. A mature buck weighs 250 to 300 pounds and a mature doe weighs 200 to 225 pounds. Performance records show that they have a kidding rate of 200%, a weaning rate of 160%, and have an average daily gain of 0.3 to 0.4 pounds per day—with exceptional individuals having an average daily gain approaching 0.5 pounds per day.

**Kiko.** Some sources indicate that this breed originated in New Zealand, but other sources state that it originated in



Australia. However, all sources relate that the breed was developed by crossing native flocks with imported dairy breeds. They were selected and developed based on twinning ability, growth rate, and survivability under extensive range conditions. It is very similar in size and meat quality to the Spanish breed. It has a white to cream color and has the reputation of being parasite resistant. It is relatively large breed. A mature buck weighs 175 to 225 pounds and a mature doe weighs 100 to 150 pounds.



**Myotonic.** This breed is known by several different names: Wooden Leg, Stiff Leg, Fainting Goat, Nervous Goat, Scare Goat, Fall-Down Goat, Tennessee Fainting Goat, and Tennessee Meat Goat. They are known as fainting goats because of a muscular condition (Myotonic, hence their name) that causes temporary muscle stiffness of the hind legs and neck (fainting) when they are startled. This stiffness or fainting causes them to fall over and lie very still for 10 to 20 seconds. Little is known about the history of Myotonic goats except that in the early 1880s a man came to Marshall County, Tennessee with

three does and a buck. These four goats suffered from fainting fits and would faint when they were startled or frightened. The four goats were bought by a local doctor who was curious about their fainting habit. He propagated the breed and the original owner disappeared. Their origin remains a mystery.

Myotonics which have been selected for meat production are heavy rumped and deep chested animals. It has been discovered that they are excellent crossbreeding stock for Boer goats. The resulting kids possess superior meat quality. The loin-eye tends to be bigger around, but it also tends to be somewhat shorter. The fainting gene is recessive, therefore it is not expressed in the crossbred kids. Myotonics are easy kidders and have good milk production. The breed is usually black and white, but multiple colors are not uncommon. Compared to other goats, they are not good climbers or jumpers, making them somewhat easier to keep than other goats. They are a small to medium size breed, with a mature buck weighing 100 to 175 pounds and a mature doe weighing 75 to 125 pounds. Production traits included a kidding rate of 190% and an average daily gain of 0.25 to 0.35 pounds.

**Nubian.** Some people refer to this breed as Anglo-Nubian. The Nubian was developed in England as a dual purpose breed for milk and meat from African, European, and Indian breeds. It has been in the United States since the late 1890s or early 1900s and has become the most popular breed in the U.S.



The Nubian has an aristocratic appearance. It has a Roman Nose and very long ears that hang close to the head. The hair is always short and any solid or parti-colored coat is permitted. However; black, red, and tan are the most common colors and any of these may be carried in combination with white. It is a very large breed, with a mature buck weighing 175 to 275 pounds (sometimes as high as 300 pounds) and a mature doe weighing 135 to 170 pounds (sometimes as high as 200 pounds). Production traits include a kidding rate of 165% to 190% and an average daily gain of 0.16 to 0.26 pounds.



**Spanish.** When Coronado, DeSoto, and other Spanish explorers came to America, they brought goats as a meat source. Some of these goats escaped

and some were released as other meat sources were discovered. This means that goats were in Oklahoma and Texas as early as the 1540s. Although not of a specific breed ancestry they developed through natural selection and became known as Spanish Goats or Brush Goats.

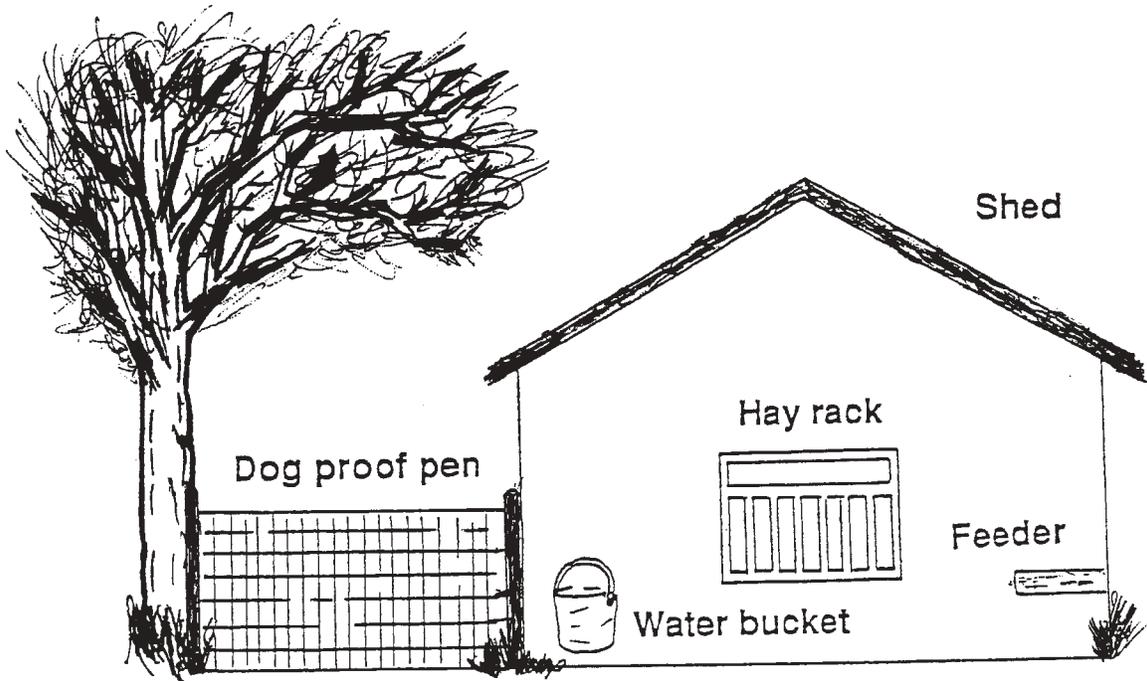
There is no consistent color or color pattern within the breed. It is a medium to small framed breed, with a mature buck weighing 120 to 180 pounds (sometimes as high as 220 pounds) and a mature doe weighing only 65 to 100 pounds. The average daily gain is 0.2 to 0.3 pounds and the kidding rate is 150% to 170%.

## Housing, care, and feeding

Successful goat producers have to take care of many details to ensure that their animals are comfortable. After all, a comfortable goat is more likely to be healthy and grow efficiently. There are five main items that influence and affect the comfort level of the goat: (1) high quality housing, (2) environmental control, (3) clean feed, (4) fresh water, and (5) the company of its owner because of the tender loving care (TLC) provided.

The housing for goats may be simple and inexpensive, or it may be as elaborate and as expensive as you want to make it. Either way it must be functional – both for you and for the goat. The housing must provide protection from the heat and sun, as well as protection from the wind, rain, and cold. It should also be large enough to accommodate both the goat and the people who need to enter the pen to care for it. Some key items to remember when building the shed and pen are:

- The shed should provide both ventilation in the summer and protection from the cold winds and drafts of winter. It should also be well drained. If these conditions are not met, the goat will not be as comfortable, not eat properly, and not as grow quickly or efficiently.
- Dirt floors that are well bedded and dry are preferred for goats. Wood and other materials are also acceptable, but make sure that plenty of bedding is provided. Regardless of the floor you choose, or already have, change the bedding at least once a week.
- The shed, pen, and exercise area should be dog-proof.



- Design the feeding area so that you can easily re-arrange the feeding pens and/or divide them into larger or smaller units.
- Design the shed to allow for easy feeding and watering and to keep the area as clean and dry as possible. This helps lessen the chance of bacteria buildup, resulting in a healthier goat.
- The shed should be built tall enough to accommodate both you and your parents. Also, put the latches and locks where you can reach them, but not where the goats can get to them.

No matter how old or how healthy the goat is, it will not do very well without a proper place to live. A goat needs a proper home as well as proper care, feeding, and watering.

As previously discussed, environmental control tends to go along with housing. Since goats prefer temperatures of 50 to

60 degrees, there are two areas of concern when discussing environmental comfort: (1) cold and/or wet weather and (2) hot and/or dry weather. In cold and/or wet weather, a place to get out of the weather (the shed) must be supplied. In extremely cold weather, a source of heat may also be required. Perhaps the easiest and most effective way to do this is with additional bedding and the use of heat lamps.

*Safety note: To avoid a possible fire hazard, an adult should set up the heat lamps.*

In hot and/or dry weather, a source of shade (the shed) must be provided. Also, double-check to make sure that the drinking water is cool, clean, and fresh. If the shade and drinking water are not providing enough relief, additional cooling must be provided. Usually an electric fan is all that is needed. However, if this is insufficient, a sprinkler or mister system used in conjunction with the fan should provide enough cooling.

*Safety note: Water and electricity are not a good mix. Therefore, an adult should set up the fan and sprinkler or mister system.*

Cool, clean, and fresh drinking water must be available at all times. If you use an automatic watering system, check the system daily. After all, if it isn't working, it isn't automatic. As a result, the goats would not be getting the water they need. If you use a bucket, pan, or tank; make sure that you change the water several times each day. The drinking water should never be allowed to get hot.

In the winter, make sure that the water does not freeze. This is important because goats, like other animals, will not grow properly without sufficient water. Regardless of the season, all watering equipment should be checked and cleaned on a regular basis to ensure that it is providing plenty of cool, clean, and fresh water.

Proper nutrition and feeding of the goat are the primary areas of concern for most 4-H members. However, with the commercial feeds that are available today, nutrition is not as much of a concern as it used to be. The biggest issues with feeding are making sure that the feed is clean and fresh, as well as making sure that the feed pans and feeders are clean.

To evaluate rations, you must first understand a few simple concepts and terms about feeds and rations. Ration is the total combination of foods that the animal is consuming. Feed is a mixture of feedstuffs. Feedstuffs are classified as either a concentrate or a roughage. Roughages are forages such as clover, alfalfa, and other grasses. Concentrates are grains such as corn, oats, wheat, and etc., and they have more en-

ergy or calories when compared to roughages, which are higher in fiber.

The Crude Protein (CP) content of goat rations is the most practical and common measurement available to evaluate and compare the quality of goat feed. The amount of protein in goat rations is much more important than protein quality. Regardless of the quality of protein fed, it is changed into a useable nutrient by the bacterial action in the rumen of the goat stomach. For this reason, goats can effectively utilize lower quality feeds and rations.

Properly harvested legume hays (clovers and alfalfa) have a protein content of 12 to 20% and, when used as a complete ration, will provide adequate to surplus protein for goats. However, CP is not the only factor that must be considered when evaluating and comparing goat rations, Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN) must also be consid-



**Table 1. Goat feeding guidelines**

<b>Age of goat</b>	<b>Feed/Ration</b>	<b>Amount to feed each day</b>
Birth to three days	Colostrum (replacer or milk)	Provide all the kid wants
Three days to three weeks old	Whole milk (cow or goat)	Two to three pints
	Water and salt	Provide all the kid wants
Three weeks to four months	Whole milk (cow or goat)	Two to three pints
	Creep feed <sup>a d</sup>	All the kid wants, up to one pound
	Alfalfa/high quality grass hay	Provide all the kid will eat
	Water and salt	Provide all the kid wants
Four months to market	Growing/finishing ration <sup>d</sup>	Provide via a self-feeder or a feed schedule, but reduce the amount being fed if the goat starts to get fat
	Alfalfa/high quality grass hay or pasture	Provide all the kid will eat, but monitor intake if the goat starts to get fat
	Water and salt	Provide all the goat wants
Four months to freshening	Grain mixture <sup>b d</sup>	Up to one pound of a high protein feed
	Alfalfa/high quality grass hay or pasture	Provide all the doe will eat
	Water and salt	Provide all the doe wants
Dry but pregnant doe	Grain mixture <sup>b d</sup>	Up to one pound
	Alfalfa/high quality grass hay or pasture	Provide all the doe will eat
	Water and salt	Provide all the doe wants
Milking doe	Grain mixture <sup>c d</sup>	Minimum of one pound for up to two quarts of milk per day -- add one pound of grain mixture for each additional two quarts of milk produced per day
	Alfalfa/high quality grass hay or pasture	Provide all the doe will eat
	Water and salt	Provide all the doe wants

(a) The creep feed may be a commercially mixed milk supplement or calf starter.

(b) A possible grain mixture for growing or dry does is: 15 pounds of beet pulp; 15 pounds of wheat; 20 pounds of linseed, cottonseed, or soybean oil meal; and 50 pounds of oats or barley.

(c) A possible grain mixture for milking does is: 10 pounds of linseed, cottonseed, or soybean oil meal; 15 pounds of beet pulp; 20 pounds of wheat; and 55 pounds of oats or barley.

(d) If you use a commercially produced feed, use it according to your goat's stage of growth.

ered. TDN is a measure of energy or calories in the feed. TDN is a more accurate measurement of the concentrates or grains in the ration because these feedstuffs are relatively low in CP (8 to 11%), but are relatively high in TDN (70 to 90%).

Therefore, in order for a goat ration to provide a complete diet, it must have the correct balance of crude protein and total digestible nutrients. Thus, both roughages (hay and/or pasture) and concentrates (grains) must be provided to ensure proper nutrition. Most goat producers also provide a mineral block as a safe-guard against possible nutritional deficiencies.

The goal of the market goat project is to obtain a goat that is properly finished and ready to sell. Unfortunately, there are no specific measurements (weight, height, age, etc) that automatically informs the producer that the goat is ready. Some goats such as those of smaller frame size may be correctly finished and ready for market at 80 pounds, while larger frame goats may not be ready until they reach weights of 120 to 140 pounds. Therefore, specific recommendations for feeding are not possible. However, the following general conditions apply:

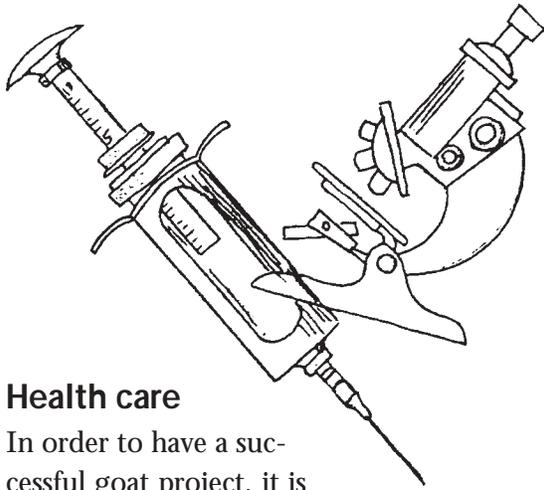
- Market goats must have their milk (baby) teeth when they are exhibited. Goats usually retain these teeth until they are 10 to 13 months of age.
- The length of neck and length of cannon bone are indicators of frame size. Longer usually indicates a larger framed goat.
- Frame size is only an indicator of the finishing weight of the goat. It does not indicate quality. There are good small goats and good big goats.

- Under normal (and healthy) conditions, most goats will gain approximately 2 to 3 pounds per week.
- Since goats do not deposit external fat as quickly as other animals, a self-feeding program can be used. Whether using a feeding schedule or a self-feeding program, Table 1 provides valuable feeding guidelines.

As stated earlier, goats can be placed on a self-feeder and will usually perform quite well, which is a plus because this also allows timid eaters time to eat. However, it is important to realize that goats, like other animals, vary in their ability to digest food. Some will get fat on a smaller amount of feed, while some will stay thin on a larger amount of feed. Therefore, the goat must be monitored on a regular basis and any adjustments in feed, feeding, or exercise should be made according to these observations. Whether on a self-feeder or on a feed schedule, feeding is a daily responsibility and must never be overlooked.

*Feeding note: Regardless of the condition of the goat, hay and/or pasture should never be completely removed from the diet because digestive problems may result. Also, changes in feed or feeding should be made on a gradual basis.*

If you feed according to these guidelines and recommendations shown in Table 1 and watch the goat's health and body condition, you should have very few feeding problems and a more successful and enjoyable goat project. If you have questions or concerns regarding the care or feeding of the goat, contact your County Extension Office for assistance and advice.



## Health care

In order to have a successful goat project, it is extremely important to start with a healthy goat and to maintain the health of the goat throughout the project. Therefore, you must be able to identify the difference between a healthy goat and an unhealthy goat.

A healthy goat will be alert, frisky, playful, bright-eyed, and happy to see you. A healthy goat will drink plenty of water and eat with eagerness. The stool (manure) will be pelleted, firm, and moist. The breathing will not be loud or labored and the rate will be 20 to 30 breaths per minute. The normal body temperature of a goat is approximately 103 degrees and the pulse rate is 60 to 80 beats per minute.

An unhealthy goat will have a decreased appetite. It will not drink as much, and will not be frisky or happy to see you. It will also appear dull-eyed, listless, depressed, shrunken, and have a dull coat. It may also have a hump or arch to its back and will most likely be standing away from the rest of the herd. The stool may be very dry and hard (constipated) or just the opposite – very watery and loose (scours). The breathing may be hard, fast, and labored; and the body temperature may be higher than nor-

mal (any temperature higher than 104 degrees is considered a fever).

If you think the goat is sick, there are two very important steps to follow: (1) tell your parents and (2) separate the sick animal from the other goats. After getting advice from a veterinarian or other professional, follow that advice very carefully. Following the schedule shown in Table 2 will also greatly enhance the chances of having a healthy goat project.

Many diseases and health problems may affect the goat. Most of these are fairly easy to control, once you know what the problem is and provide the proper treatment. Also, most health problems can be

**Table 2. Care schedule for kids**

Age of kid	Activity to perform or accomplish
Three days	Begin feeding alfalfa, grain, and water
One week	Disbud and tattoo ID in ears; castrate bucks
One month	Immunize with Enterotoxemia C&D and Tetanus Toxoid; trim hooves
Two months	Second immunization; trim hooves
Three months	Wean and deworm; trim hooves
Four months	Trim hooves
Five months	Begin monitoring for the amount of fat that the goat is carrying and based on this assessment, make adjustments in the amount of feed that is being provided to the goat.

avoided or kept to a minimum by following these seven steps:

- Buy only healthy goats from healthy herds.
- Keep all vaccinations up-to-date.
- Maintain a de-worming program.
- Clean the shed and pen at least once a week.
- Clean the waterers and feeders at least once a week – twice a week is much better.
- Watch the goat closely and on a daily basis for signs of sickness and ill-health.
- Inform your parents if you think the goat is sick.

### **Fitting and grooming**

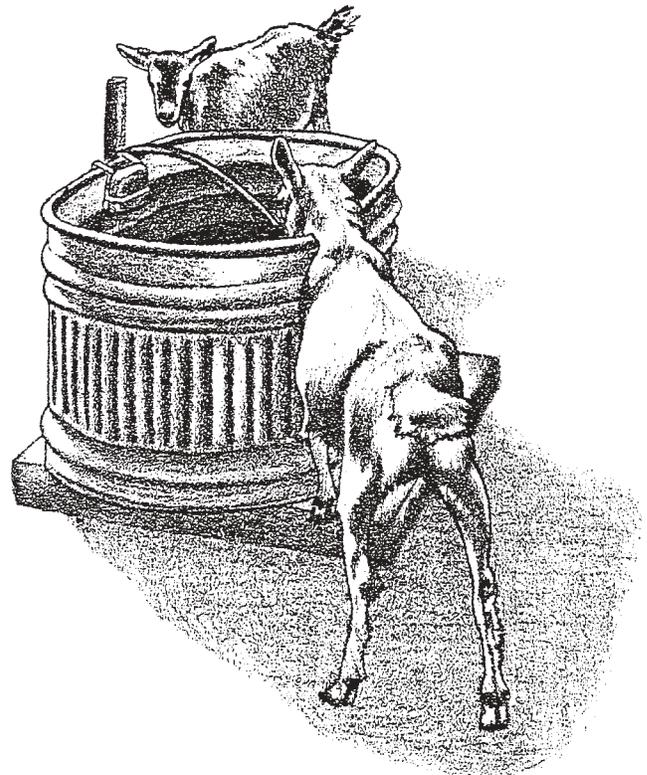
Fitting and grooming does not start at the show or even during the week of the show; it starts the day you bring the goat home. Fitting the goat means feeding, watering, and otherwise caring for the goat so that it achieves and maintains proper condition.

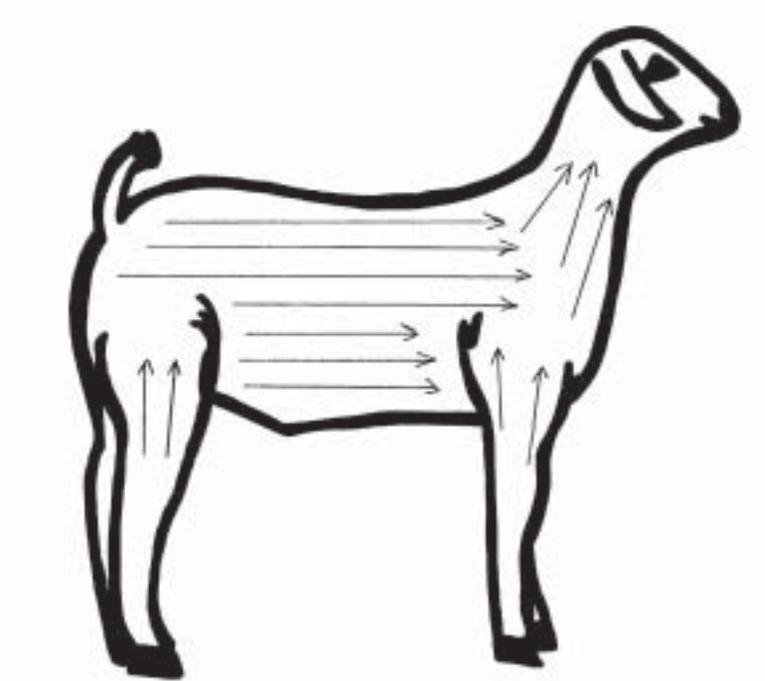
Proper condition means the goat is neither too fat nor too thin. Proper condition has the same meaning for all meat goats. Through experience you can learn what varying degrees of fat look and feel like. Fat feels soft and loose. Muscle or meat feels hard and firm. Bone feels very hard and concrete. Fat, also known as cover or finish, gets deposited on the goat in specific areas.

By knowing these areas, it is possible to estimate how fat the goat is or is not getting. The areas to check for fat deposit are the ribs, backbone, tailhead, fore flank, and rear flank. To ensure that proper condition is achieved and maintained, it is important

that you learn this before adjustments are made to the goat's feed, feeding, or exercise routine.

Even though proper condition has the same meaning for all market goats, they do not all achieve proper condition at the same time or in the same manner. Some goats will start to get fat at a young age and others remain lean all the way to market weight. Goats that start to get fat at a young age must be removed from full feed and put on a restricted diet (less feed per day). These goats should also be exercised at least 10 to 15 minutes each day in addition to the 15 to 20 minutes that they were receiving to achieve and maintain show condition. Goats that naturally stay lean can be left on full feed throughout the whole project, but they should also receive the normal 15 to 20 minutes of exercise needed per day to achieve and maintain show condition.





Regardless of the condition of the goat, limit hay for the last thirty (30) days before the show. The reason for this is that hay causes the goat to appear wasty in the middle, because of the gases created in the rumen of their stomach. Do not reduce the hay before this time, because if hay is removed from the diet for more than thirty (30) days, digestive problems may occur – especially if the goats are confined to a small area.

Grooming a meat goat for show is a fairly simple and easy process. Grooming, like fitting, does not start at the show or even during the week of the show; it starts the day that you bring the goat home. Grooming consists mostly of washing and then brushing the hair, both of which should be done on a regular basis from the first day you get the goat home.

Goat grooming can be divided into three categories: washing, clipping, and foot care. Equipment and items needed for washing are a halter (for leading and tying the goat), hose and/or pail, scrub brush,

mild soap or detergent, and some way to dry the goat—a couple of towels will work just fine. Livestock blow dryers are also available, but they are expensive.

Items needed for foot care are foot trimmers and foot care medication for after the trimming. Trimming the feet, like fitting and grooming, is a fairly simple process. The feet should be trimmed a time or two before the final foot trimming is undertaken. This allows both you and the goat to learn what is happening and what to expect. The final trimming for the show should be done approximately 14 to 21 days before the day of the show. This allows time for healing.

Items recommended for clipping include livestock clippers and/or sheep shears (use 20 to 22 tooth combs in the sheep shears), small animal clippers (for use on the ears and face), oil for the clippers, scissors or small 6 to 8 inch hand shears (for hard-to-reach places), a sharpening stone (for keeping the hand shears sharp), a spray bottle (for wetting the hair), a clipping or

trimming table (for holding and controlling the goat while it is being clipped and groomed), and an extension cord.

*Safety note: Livestock clippers (not sheep shearers) are recommended for use by younger exhibitors because they are less likely to cut themselves or cut the goat.*

After completing the clipping and other grooming, protect the work with a goat blanket. Goat blankets are commercially available, but can be expensive. Pillow cases and burlap sacks can be used by cutting a hole for the head in one of the corners, slitting the bottom seam, and adding tie straps. Old sheets, left-over sewing fabric, and spandex can be easily made into blankets.

If you have clipped the goat a time or two before the final clipping, both of you will have a better idea of what to do and how to do it. As a result, the goat will not be as scared, nervous, and jumpy. Also, this gives the exhibitor an idea of how fast the goat's hair grows and this is important knowledge because the final clipping can be made at the correct time to ensure that the goat will look its best on the day of the show. (As a general guideline, 10 to 20 days before the day of the show is usually the recommended).

The first step in clipping a goat is to wash it. Washing involves wetting the goat, soaping and scrubbing (gently, but firmly), and thoroughly rinsing the goat.

*Washing note: The cleaner the goat, the easier it will be to clip and the longer the clipper blades will stay sharp (because they are not getting dulled by dirt particles). Therefore, make sure that the goat is extra clean.*

After washing the goat, place it on the clipping stand and prepare it for clipping by calming it down and drying it (damp dry). The goat should remain damp because it is much easier to clip when damp.

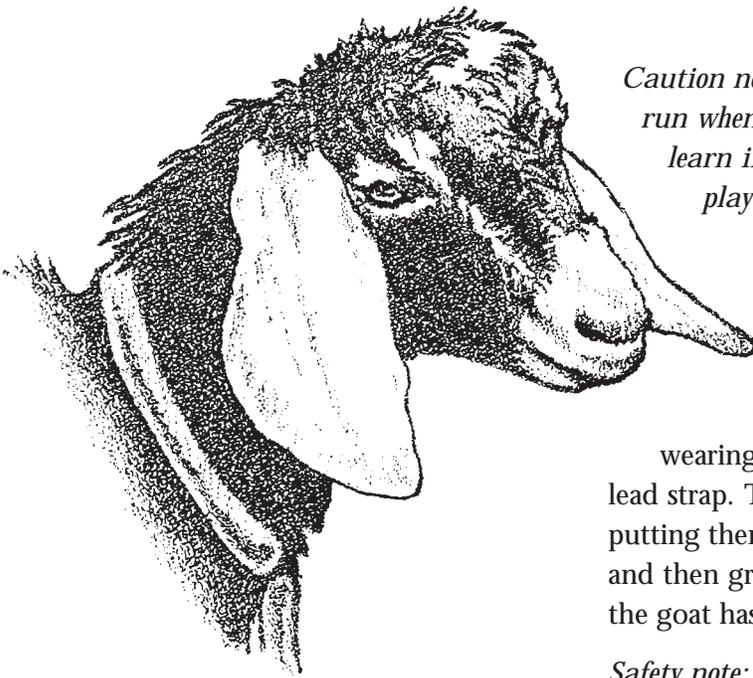
When clipping the goat, start at its rear and clip off the hair in long, smooth, and even strokes. Use vertical strokes on the legs and horizontal strokes on the body and flank areas (see the drawing). Clip all of the hair on the body except for the tail.

When grooming the tail, remove only about the top one-third of the hair on the tail. The remaining hair on the tail should be blended into the clipped part. The hair at the end of the tail should be cut to a length of about one-half of an inch. The last step for the tail is to clip the hair completely off the underside of the tail and blend this into the remaining tail hair.

Some shows allow (and some exhibitors prefer) to keep the hair below the knees and hocks. These are called britches. If you prefer this, the leg hair should be smoothed by clipping the long hairs and the hair around the hoof. It is recommended that this clipping be done by using a downward stroke. This results in a smoother and more even appearance.

The final grooming step is to use the small animal clippers to remove the hair from around the goat's ears, eyes, and face. Also, use the hand shears or scissors to touch-up any hard-to-reach places, to blend in areas, or to smooth out any rough spots. Following these guidelines will result in the goat having a more uniform appearance.

*Grooming note: No amount of grooming can correct or make up for a poor job of feeding, care, and management of the goat.*



*Caution note: Goats will almost always run when you enter the pen, you need to learn if they are running in fear or in play and excitement.*

The first step is to catch the goat. Since goats are shown with a choke chain or collar and lead strap, the second step is to get them used to wearing the choke chain or collar and lead strap. This is usually accomplished by putting them on for short periods of time and then gradually increasing the time that the goat has them on.

*Safety note: During these sessions, the goat should never be left unattended.*

When the first two steps are achieved, they should be followed by gently talking to the goat, petting it, and rubbing or touching it. Touch and rub down the back, sides, neck, and legs to get the goat accustomed to you and to being touched. The fourth step is walking with the goat. When walking the goat, teach it to lead with its front shoulder even with your leg. The goat's head should be in front of the your leg.

*Leading note: This is very similar to how dogs are led when they are being exhibited.*

After the goat has become accustomed to being caught, collared, touched, and walked; the next step is to teach it to set-up. Setting-up means getting each leg to come straight down from the body. Many new exhibitors get this only half right. Remember, straight not only means straight when the goat is viewed from the side, but also when it is viewed from the front and the rear. When this is performed correctly it is referred to as having the feet and legs squarely under the body or standing square.

## **Showing the meat goat**

Showing the goat, like fitting and grooming, does not start at the show; it also starts at home. It begins with the feeding, exercising, washing, brushing, clipping, and other tasks that you should be doing from the very first day that the goat arrives at its new home.

Proper feeding gets the goat to the desired show weight. Exercising the goat gets it in show condition (lean, not fat) and in show ring shape (able to walk and be in the ring for a long period of time without tiring). Washing, brushing, clipping, trimming, and other grooming techniques make the goat neat, clean, and otherwise presentable to the judge.

Training the goat to work with you begins by earning its trust and confidence, and by making friends with it. This is accomplished by playing with it, brushing it, and otherwise spending time with it. When the goat stops running from you when you enter the pen, it is ready to start the exercise and training routine.

It does not matter if you set the front legs first and then the back legs, or the other way around; either method is acceptable.

When placing or setting the front feet and legs, raise or lift the goat's head and neck (very slightly) by lifting on the lead strap (this is to cue the goat so that it knows the front feet are being set). When the feet and legs are set, return the head and neck to their normal position.

To set the rear feet and legs, push down on the goat's head and neck (very slightly) to cue the goat. When the back feet and legs are set, return the head and neck to their normal position.

Now that the goat has all four feet and legs in the desired position (this is fairly easy, if it was practiced at home), they must be kept in the proper position. This is done by standing on the left side of the goat and keeping it relaxed (but alert) by talking to it (very softly) or by wiggling the lead strap, or by some other subtle method. Using the lead strap or leash, either by pushing or pulling on it, also allows you to keep the back, neck, and head of the goat in a straight line.

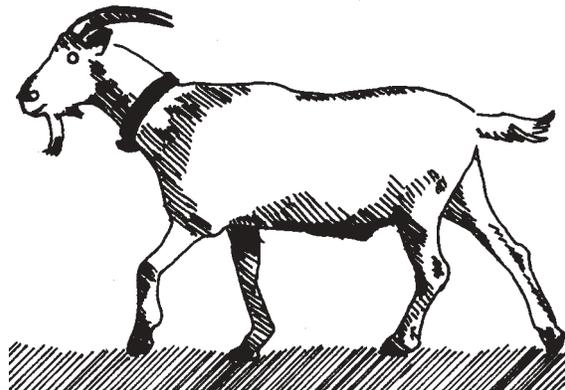
Since the choke chain or collar and lead strap are controlled by your right hand, your left hand is free to do whatever else might need to be done – re-setting a foot, rubbing the goat's head or neck to keep it calm, wiping off dirt that may have gotten on the goat, or other things that might need to be done to keep the goat calm and presentable. However, do not place either of your hands on top of the goat's back or neck when the judge is looking at it. You should stand so that the judge can see the goat (not you) – keep the goat between you and the judge.

The only exception to this is when the judge crosses in front of the goat. At that moment, for a split second, you will be between the judge and the goat because the exhibitor always shows from the left side of the goat. This split second is impossible to avoid.

*Showing note: While you are setting up the goat, keep an eye on the judge. You must try to keep the goat between you and the judge. Also, it is important to listen to the judge's instructions.*

The exhibitor should wear clean, neat, and appropriate clothing, as well as boots or hard shoes. The exhibitor should stand on the left side of the goat, because goats are exhibited in a clock-wise direction and this will keep the goat between the exhibitor and the judge.

Exhibitors must keep a distance of approximately 12 to 18 inches between themselves and their goats, and keep the proper distance between their goat and the other goats in the show ring. Also, as the judge handles the goat, keep its head up while keeping the head, neck, and back in a straight line. When the judge handles the goat, move to the front of the goat and place your knee in its chest to keep it from moving. However, do not brace the goat.



As you practice each of these steps, you and your goat will become a team. Market goats must have their milk teeth (baby) teeth in order to show and they do not lose these until about a year of age, so you will have many months to bond with and train the goat. When you feel confident and comfortable, ask someone to act as the judge. Have him or her walk around the goat, handle it, and do anything else that you think might benefit you and/or the goat.

*Showing tip: Attending showmanship clinics and workshops is a good way to learn more about recommendations and techniques. However, do not just attend – go home and practice what you have learned.*

Training and practicing for showmanship involves preparing yourself as well as teaching the goat. You must know what to do and how to do it. You must also mentally prepare yourself. If you lack poise and self-confidence in the show ring, the goat will sense that something isn't right and will become confused and uncomfortable. Consequently, the goat will not respond to your cues. This will lead to further frustration on your part and the result is a cycle of confusion and frustration between you and the goat.

*Showing hint: Remember, showing involves the appearance and attitude of the exhibitor, the appearance of the goat, and the showing or showmanship of the goat. Also, be on time for your class and be courteous – not only to the judge and ringmaster, but also to your fellow exhibitors.*

**Preparing for the show ring includes:**

- Wear clean, neat, and appropriate clothing.
- Wear boots or hard shoes, not soft shoes.

- Carry a small brush or rag in your pocket
- Arrive on time for your class.
- Know the goat's tag number, weight, breed, and date of birth (kidding date).
- Know other relevant information such as the average daily gain, ideal body temperature, protein percentage of the feed, etc.
- Know what the judge looks like and/or is wearing.
- Know what the ringmaster looks like and/or is wearing.

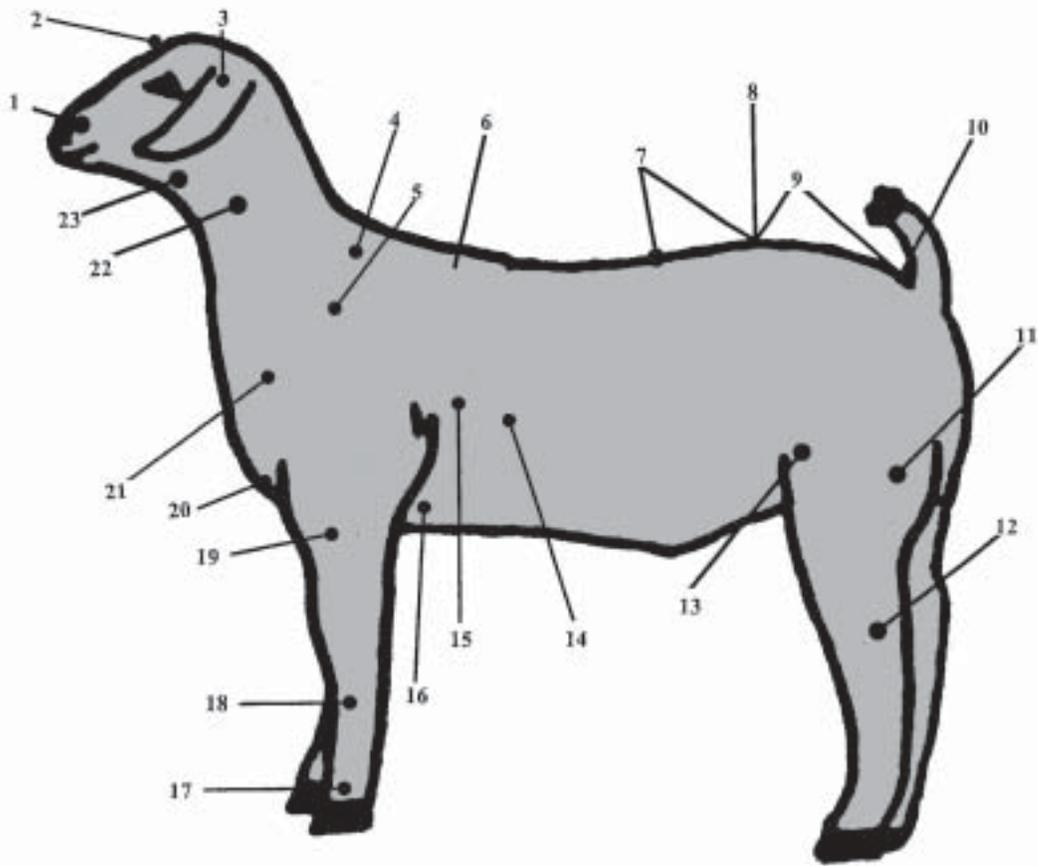
**Preparing the goat for the show ring includes:**

- Wash the goat, either the night before the show or the morning of the show.
- On show day, feed the goat at least two hours before show time, but only feed approximately half of the usual amount. This keeps the goat attentive and alert.
- On show day, give about half the amount of water usually provided. This prevents the goat from having a large girth and helps keep it active and alert.
- Groom and brush the goat at least twice before show time. This brings out the natural oils and removes dust and dirt, resulting in a cleaner hair coat.
- Before leaving the pen for the show ring, give the goat a drink of water and a final brushing.
- Be calm and gentle with the goat while on the way to the show ring and while in the show ring.

**Working as a team in the show ring includes:**

- Be aware of the location of both the judge and the ringmaster, as well as any instructions they may give.
- Be courteous to the judge, ringmaster, and other exhibitors. Be sure to say “yes sir” or “no sir,” “excuse me,” and “thank you.”
- Know the goat’s location at all times, especially in relation to yourself and to the judge.
- Keep the goat between you and the judge.
- Keep the proper distance (about a goat length) between your goat and the other goats.
- When leading the goat, walk slowly, with you walking by the left side of the goat’s neck.
- When setting-up the goat, do it quickly, confidently, and smoothly.
- If the judge touches your goat or if your goat rubs against another goat, use the brush or rag to re-smooth the hair and to wipe off any dirt.
- Maintain eye contact with the judge.
- Smile, relax, and enjoy what you are doing.
- Keep yourself cool, calm, and collected; this helps keep the goat under control.
- Be humble when you win and gracious when you lose.
- Remember to thank the judge and congratulate the winners after the final placing.





**Identify the meat goat parts**

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 9. _____  | 17. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 10. _____ | 18. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 11. _____ | 19. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 12. _____ | 20. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 13. _____ | 21. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 14. _____ | 22. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 15. _____ | 23. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 16. _____ |           |

## Notes

