

Fitting and Grooming Market Goats

As with training, fitting and grooming begins months before the show. Fitting your goat, Means making sure the goat is healthy, properly cared for and in desired condition. Good condition means that the goat has good muscle tone and is not too thin or too fat. Through practice you will learn to evaluate the different degrees of fat cover and muscle tone. Fat feels soft and loose. Muscle feels shapely and firm. Both fat cover and muscle are monitored and changed through diet and exercise. As discussed earlier, a balanced ration is important. However, as each goat is different it may be necessary to adjust the amount of feed the goat receives. Exercise may be a more effective and healthier method of keeping your goat in good shape. The purpose of these goats is to produce meat, meat is muscle, and therefore a goat has to build muscle tone. Just like humans, goats build muscle through exercise. If a pen is big enough, a goat can get plenty of exercise on its own. However, it never hurts to provide additional exercise for your animals. Some facilities have the feed trough on one end of the pen and the water source on the other in order to ensure the goat must walk from one end of the pen to the other. Other people build circular tracks and exercise their goats around it. There is no fool proof plan for an exercise program. It is important to develop a program that fits your situation. The main requirement for an exercise program is safety. It is most effective to exercise the goat intensely for a short amount of time. Therefore, whatever setup you choose to use, make sure that the obstacles are free of harmful edges and wires. It is helpful to make rounded corners in any tracks and to make the sides solid so the animals can only see forward. This will help keep them from trying to jump out and possibly hurting themselves.

Grooming

Goat grooming can be divided into three different tasks: washing, clipping, and foot care. Each of these tasks need to be done close to show time. However, by brushing your goat's hair on a regular basis in the month prior to the show, you will keep the hair coat healthier. To wash your goat, you will need:

- A collar for leading and tying the goat.
- A hose and a bucket
- Mild soap
- A scrub brush
- A couple of towels or some other way to dry the goat.

Wash your goat similar to how you wash any animal. Tie the goat to a post or fence. Make sure the goat will not be standing in a puddle and will stay clean while washing. Do not put the soap directly on the goat. Instead mix soapy water in the bucket and pour it on the wet goat. Once the goat is clean, finish your job by drying the animal. To clip your goat, you will need:

- Large Livestock clippers and/or sheep shears
- Small Clippers for head and ears
- Oil for clippers
- Scissors (for hard-to-reach places)
- A spray bottle (for wetting the hair)
- A trimming table
- An extension cord

Wash your goat immediately before clipping. After washing the goat, put it on the trimming table and towel dry. It is best to clip the goat while it is clean and slightly damp. Dirty hair is tough on your clippers. Damp hair is easier to clip smoothly. Clip all of the hair on the body except for the tail and below the hocks and knees. Use

long, smooth strokes to clip your goat. Use vertical strokes on the legs and horizontal strokes on the body (see Figure 5).

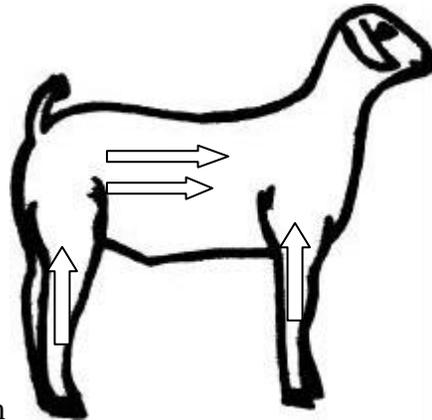


Figure 5: Goat Shearing Diagram

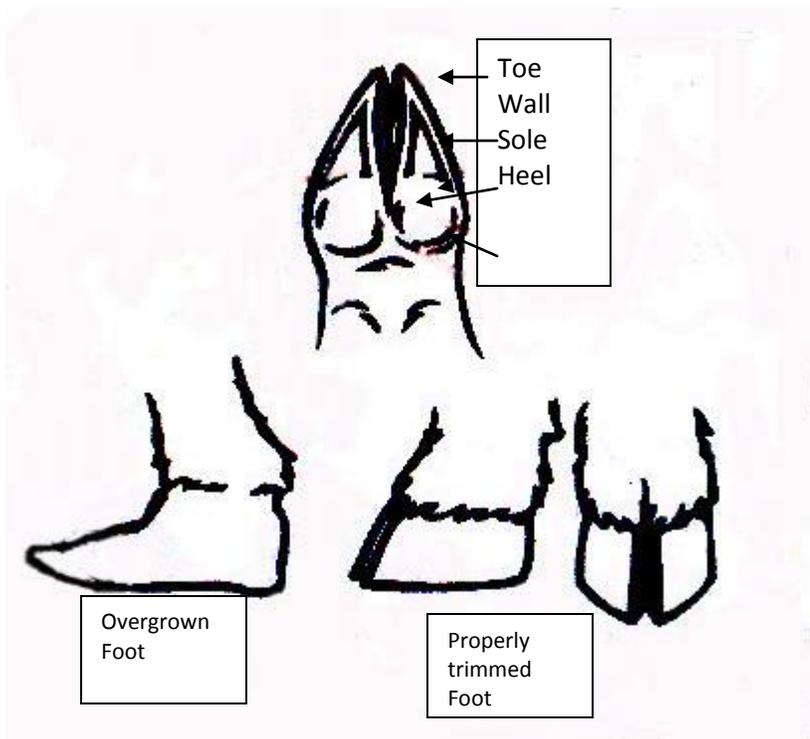
Only the top one third of the hair on the tail should be removed. The remaining hair should be blended into the clipped part and cut to about $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The hair on the underside to the tail should then be clipped and blended with the rest. The hair on the knees and hocks should also be blended with the clipped part of the goat's body. Use the scissors to trim long hairs and make the legs look smooth and well fit. Use your clippers or small animal clippers to remove the hair from around the goat's eyes, ears and face. You can also use the scissors to get hard to reach places and smooth out rough spots.

To trim your goat's feet you will need:

- Foot trimmers
- Foot care medication
- A collar
- Someone to help hold the goat

The wall of the foot should be trimmed so that it is level with the sole of the foot. See figure 6. The feet should be trimmed a couple of times before the final trimming. This is to give both you and the goat practice. The final trimming should be done at least 14 to 21 days before the show. This allows time for any healing.

Figure 6: Diagram for trimming goat's feet



Showmanship

After you have trained your goat, fit and groomed your goat, and collected the proper paperwork, it is time to go to the show! Most market shows include market classes which are separated by weight and showmanship classes. These classes are separated by the age of exhibitors showing the animals. Showmanship is the true test of a show person's knowledge of his or her project. Some believe that this is a competition that is limited just to the showmanship class. However, showmanship skills are something that should be used throughout the show. Good showmanship can either make or break an animal in a competition. The purpose of showmanship is not to showcase the exhibitor. It is to help showcase the animal to its best ability. A good showman can evaluate his/her animal to determine its weaknesses. Once the weaknesses and strengths are determined, the showman can decide the best way to deal with each. For example, if your goat has too much slope to its hip, it may be helpful to set his rear legs further back in order to raise the hook bones. In order to present your animal during its class at the show, you must know some basic guidelines.

1. It is important to dress appropriately. A neat, unwrinkled shirt, usually with a collar and pants are acceptable with clean and shined leather shoes.
2. Always keep an eye on the judge. This is very important in order to keep track of what is going on in the ring. The judge will be moving around to get a better view of the animals. The showman must know where the judge is at all times in order to be in the correct position.
3. Make sure your animal is always between the showman and the judge. This ensures that the judge always has the best view of the animal.
4. At all times, keep your movements at the front of the animal. When the judge switches sides, the showman should move around the front of the animal to the correct position.
5. Keep your movement slow and controlled. Your animal can sense your tension and stress. Therefore, if you are upset the animal will react in the same manner. This causes a lot of frustration which can be avoided by remaining calm.
6. Keep your goats head straight and upright. This helps make the animal more eye appealing to the judge and can also make your animal appear longer bodied.

7. Set the legs of your goat squarely underneath the body. This will help to show off body confirmation and muscling.
8. Make sure that your goat is trained to stand still when the judge handles your animal.
9. Most importantly, SMILE AND HAVE FUN!

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