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### Contents

- Hoof Care Is Essential for Sheep and Goat Welfare
- Native Warm-Season Grasses: Drought Proof or Drought Tolerant?
- Standing Room Only at Replacement Goat and Sheep Sale
- Calendar of Events

## Hoof Care Is Essential for Sheep and Goat Welfare

*Steven M. Jones, Associate Professor - Animal Science*

Regular hoof trimming is an essential part of raising small ruminants. Flocks should be checked on a regular basis for hoof growth. Overgrown hooves may inhibit the animals' desire to travel due to discomfort, predispose the animal to other foot and leg problems and limit competing for feed sources. Animals with overgrown hooves are also very susceptible to joint and tendon problems and arthritis. Also, breeding animals use their hind legs during mating; mating and reproductive performance of a flock may seriously be affected if hooves of breeding males are not trimmed.

The number of hoof trimmings per year will be dependent on environmental conditions and management. A minimum of two to three times a year is essential for almost

all animals, no matter their diet or environment. Animals that are fed a high energy and protein diet tend to have hooves that grow more rapidly. Animals that have access to hard surfaces and play areas will naturally wear down the hoof and require less frequent trimmings. Sheep and goats that are kept in damp, muddy environments and do not have their feet trimmed regularly are very prone to foot problems, such as footrot and footscald. If the foot is left neglected for extended periods of time, permanent damage can result. Care should be taken to avoid trimming feet of ewes/does during late gestation.

### Hoof Trimming Basics

The sheep or goat should be properly restrained. The most common method of restraining sheep is to place them on their rumps and hold them in the shearing position. This procedure can be accomplished by standing on the sheep's left side, holding the jaw with the left hand and placing the right hand on the animal's hip. Hold the jaw tightly and bend the sheep's head sharply over its right shoulder. At the same time, press down on the animal's right hip. As the sheep falls to the

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**Recommended  
types of hoof  
trimmers**

Photo source: <http://www.extension.org/pages/31069/goat-hoof-care-and-foot-rot-prevention>

ground, raise the front feet and head so the sheep rests on its rump and leans off center of the tail bone and against the person doing the trimming.

Goats, however, should be trimmed while in a standing position. Goats should have their heads tied to a secure place, preferably on a wall or fence. This allows the person doing the trimming to stand to the outside of the goat and gently push the goat up against the fence or wall for extra control when needed. The feet of a goat can be picked up from many different positions. Commonly, the person doing

the trimming will stand on the same side as the foot they are trimming. The hind legs are often brought back straight behind the goat.

Another method of restraint acceptable for all species is to use a tilting squeeze table. The animal is rotated on its side while being restrained. This equipment requires added expense, but offers easy access to the animal's feet. Care must be observed, however, to avoid being kicked.

The overall goal of the trimming process should be to make the foot flat on the ground.

Toes should be short enough to support the animal's weight across all the surface area of the hoof. This also quickens "breakover" and allows the animal to stride naturally. A pair of hoof trimmers or a sharp pair of ornamental shears should be used. The toe region should be examined while removing any excess debris.

When learning how to trim, begin by taking very small amounts of hoof wall and toe off at a time. If the trimming goes too deep, the sensitive structures of the foot can be injured. This can lead to excessive bleeding, pain, lameness and infections. If the



1. This picture shows the various parts of the hoof on the bottom of the foot. A identifies the heel regions of the foot. B shows the toe region on a claw that has not been trimmed. C identifies the outside hoof wall, and D indicates fresh sole after being trimmed.



2. Often the first place to start is the dewclaws. The tips of the dewclaws should be removed. These structures will bleed if cut too short, so it is important to remove small amounts on a frequent basis.



3. This shows the bottom of a foot that is in desperate need of a trim. Notice how hoof wall has overgrown between the two claws allowing dirt and potential infection to be trapped in the interdigital cleft (identified by the white arrows).



4. The goal of trimming the foot should be to get the bottom of the foot to match the angle of the coronary band (identified by the white line). In this picture, the excess toe is being removed to a level where the bottom of the foot will be parallel to the coronary band. The intended bottom of the foot is indicated by the black line. Notice how the white and the black line will be parallel once the foot is properly trimmed.



5. This picture compares the untrimmed claw on the left to a trimmed claw on the right. Notice how much shorter the toe region on the trimmed side is in comparison to the untrimmed side.



6. This is a picture of a fully trimmed foot. The bottom of the foot has also been leveled with a plane.

Photo source: <http://www.infovets.com/healthysmrm/C322.htm>

foot is trimmed too deep, the bleeding can be stopped by holding the foot and applying some blood-stop powder. The foot should be kept clean and free of debris for the next few days. This will help prevent infections and possible problems with tetanus. A tetanus booster should also be given if the bleeding is significant.

The inside wall of the foot can also be trimmed. It should be trimmed a little bit lower than the outside wall. This allows most of the animal's weight to be on the outside hoof wall where it should

be placed naturally. The heel regions can also be trimmed when needed.

Once the entire process is finished, the foot should be released and examined for proper balance while the foot is bearing weight. The toes should not be left too long; if left too long, the animal will rock backwards on the foot and cause unnecessary stress on the flexor tendons. If the toes are trimmed too short, the fetlock may "break forward" in an abnormal position.

## References

*Footrot in Sheep and Goats*, Lynn Pezzanite, Animal Sciences Student; Dr. Mike Neary, Small Ruminant Extension Specialist, Purdue University; Terry Hutchens, Extension Goat Specialist, University of Kentucky; AS-596-W; Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service, West Lafayette, IN 47907

*Small Ruminant Manual*, InfoVets.com



## Native Warm-Season Grasses: Drought Proof or Drought Tolerant?

*John Jennings, Professor, Extension Forages*

An article in a recent agriculture magazine had a quote claiming that native warm-season grass pastures are drought proof, and producers are excited at that possibility. Native warm-season grasses (for forage) in this case are defined as switchgrass, big bluestem, little bluestem and indiagrass.

Drought proof and drought tolerant are not the same thing. Many warm-season forages are drought tolerant. No forage is drought proof. Drought tolerance implies that a forage can tolerate effects of drought and survive. It doesn't mean that the grass will thrive during drought. All forages need water and an optimum temperature range to grow well. Drought proof means the grass suffers no ill effect of drought and keeps on growing as if weather conditions were normal. Native grasses can be part of a forage program and can be cost effective, BUT they must be managed differently and they are NOT drought proof.

Drought tolerance implies that a forage can tolerate effects of drought and survive. It doesn't mean that the grass will thrive during drought.

The University of Tennessee has done work recently with native warm-season grasses through their biofuels program. Dr. Gary Bates leads the forage management effort. Gary provided several points at the recent Forage and Legume Management Conference in Harrison. (To see the presentation, go to <http://vimeo.com/61109401>.)

He pointed out that native grasses require less fertilizer for good hay yield than bermudagrass. Hay quality is moderate and can be very poor if allowed to get mature before harvest. Yield can be 4 to 6 tons per

acre with fertilization and proper harvest. Under grazing, these grasses can be stocked at a high rate during the first 6 weeks of the growing season, but the stocking rate must be reduced later in summer to avoid stand damage. Stocker calf gains can be quite good, exceeding 2 lb/hd/day, under good management.

Two big factors that must be accounted for in managing these grasses is that they should never be cut or grazed shorter than 8 to 12 inches and the grazing or hay season is about only 100 days at most. Native grasses should not be harvested or grazed past mid-August at all. Any late-season growth must be left to allow the plants to store root reserves for winter.

Grazing too late, grazing during winter and grazing too early in spring will damage stands. Winter annuals like wheat or ryegrass should not be overseeded into native grasses or the competition and grazing can damage stands.

Under hay management, these grasses should not be cut more than twice in a year. To avoid weakening stands, hay should only be cut once the year following a two-harvest year.

Establishment is slow and requires patience. Native grasses are notorious for poor seedling vigor. Very little topgrowth is produced the seeding year. Most growth is directed toward root growth. That means weed control is critical during the seeding year.

With good weed control, native grass yield the second year will be about half to two-thirds of a fully

established stand, with top yields not occurring until the third year after planting. Herbicide options are available but differ for the different species. Seeding rates are generally 5 to 6 pounds of Pure Live Seed (PLS) per acre as pure stands. This rate can be adjusted in mixtures so the total seeding rate of mixtures is 10 pounds PLS/acre. The PLS of many natives may only be 30 percent, so it may take 3 pounds bulk seed to get 1 pound PLS. Switchgrass is usually planted alone because it can dominate in mixtures. Big bluestem is a good choice for hay or grazing and has good wildlife benefit under deferred forage harvest management. Big bluestem and indiangrass mixtures are commonly recommended, although big bluestem alone is easier to manage and maintain stands.

Natives are promoted heavily for their benefit to wildlife, especially quail and rabbits. However, optimizing forage production from native grasses will not optimize wildlife habitat. Hay harvest or grazing must be deferred until forage is poor quality to protect the major quail nesting period of mid-summer. These grasses can be effective additions to a forage program but in no way are replacements for all other forages. Planting these grasses without realistic expectations will lead to disappointment and stand failures.

Native grasses have been around since before settlers. Overgrazing took them out before. Good management must be part of a program to make them work now. 

## Standing Room Only at Replacement Goat and Sheep Sale

*Jesse Duckett, Duckett Farms*

The first replacement goat and sheep production auction was held at Goat and Sheep Buying Station, Duckett Farms, Hope, on May 26, 2013.

The day kicked off with a buyer and consignors enjoying chili, hot dogs and all the trimmings.

Consignors came from Arkansas and Louisiana, The sale started off strong. Competitive bidding continued throughout the sale. We had just fewer than 500 head of animals to sell.

- The high-selling ram was sold by USDA Dale Bumpers Research Center, Booneville. He was purchased by Ware Lynn Farms, Camden.
- The high-selling ewe was sold by Teddy Hill, Percy. She was purchased by Mark Lambert, Emmett.
- The high-selling buck was sold by Darla Hunter, New Hope. He was purchased by Frank Sheet, Prescott.

- The high-selling doe was sold by Dr. Scott Hoyle, DVM, of Taylor. She was purchased by Gary Tabler, Lockeburg.
- The volume buyer was Mark Lambert, Emmett.
- The high-selling show animal was sold by Ron Bigham, Mayflower, and purchased by Joe Bob Lamb, Nashville.

Special thanks to all consignors. Big special thanks to the buyers.

The Buying Station will be open the second Saturday of September, October, November and December of 2013 and January, February, March, April and May of 2014. The next replacement goat and sheep auction will be the second Saturday in April 2014. 

## Calendar of Events

**July 21, 2013:** North Arkansas Meat Goat Association meeting, 2:00 p.m., Farm Bureau Building, 110 Industrial Park Road, Harrison, Arkansas, <http://www.arkansasmeatgoat.com>.

**Late July through Early August, 2013:** Ozark Empire Fair, 3001 North Grant, Springfield, Missouri, show dates and judges TBA, <http://www.ozarkempirefair.com>.

**August 13, 2013:** Missouri State Fair, Missouri State Fairgrounds, 2503 West 16th Street, Sedalia, Missouri 65301. Entry fee \$8.00 due by July 1, late entry fee \$16.00 due by August 1. No pen fee. Arrival date August 11. ABGA judge Jeremy Church. Contact person: Edna Vollmer, (660) 530-5616, <http://www.mostatefair.com>.

**August 31, 2013:** North Missouri Meat Goat Producers, 2 ABGA Shows, Litton AG Center, 10856 Liv 235, Chillcothe, Missouri 64601. Entry fee \$10 due by August 24. Late entry fee \$20. No pen fee. ABGA judges Jesse Kimmel and Josh Taylor. Contact person: Tisha Diefenbach, (816) 519-1668, [tisha\\_diefenbach@hotmail.com](mailto:tisha_diefenbach@hotmail.com).

**September 7 and 8, 2013:** Southwest Missouri Boer Goat Classic, Vernon County Fair Grounds, 500 North Centennial Blvd., Nevada, Missouri. Shows at 10 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on Saturday and 9 a.m. on Sunday. Entry fee \$20 by August 28, pen fee \$5. Judges TBA. Contact person: Marla Sneed, (417) 448-9615, [showgoats@sofnet.com](mailto:showgoats@sofnet.com).

**September 19 and 20, 2013:** Northwest Arkansas District Fair, Northwest Arkansas District Fairgrounds, 1400 Fair Grounds Road, Harrison, Arkansas 72601, Junior market meat goats and junior Boer goats. Contact person: Robert McMahan, (870) 577-1759, [robert@northarkboers.com](mailto:robert@northarkboers.com), <http://www.northarkboers.com>.

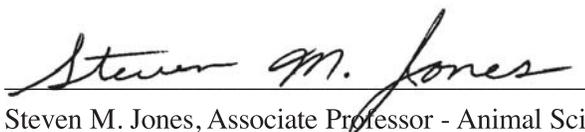
**September 21 and 22, 2013:** North Arkansas Meat Goat Association Fall Classic, Northwest Arkansas District Fair Grounds, 1400 Fair Grounds Road, Harrison, Arkansas 72601. Two ABGA-sanctioned open shows on Saturday, one on Sunday. Early entry fee \$15.00, early entry deadline September 15, late entry fee \$20. Check-in time 3-7 p.m. September 20. ABGA judges TBA. Contact person: Robert McMahan, (870) 557-1759, [robert@northarkboers.com](mailto:robert@northarkboers.com), <http://www.northarkboers.com>.

**October 11 and 12, 2013:** Arkansas State Fair, 2600 Howard Street, Little Rock, Arkansas 72206. Two ABGA-sanctioned open Boer goat shows at 9 a.m. on Friday and on Saturday after junior Boer goat show. One junior boer goat show at 8 a.m. on Saturday. Entry fee \$12 due by September 1. ABGA judges TBA. Contact person: Scott and Jennifer Hawthorn, (870) 246-6353, [jendh34@yahoo.com](mailto:jendh34@yahoo.com), <http://www.arkansasstatefair.com>.

**October 13 and 14, 2013:** Arkansas State Fair, 2600 Howard Street, Little Rock, Arkansas 72206. Junior market meat goat show. Judge TBA. <http://www.arkansasstatefair.com>.

**October 2013:** North Arkansas Meat Goat Association meeting and pasture walk. Details TBA. <http://www.arkansasmeatgoat.com>.

The Hope Buying Station will be **OPEN 2nd Saturday of September, October, November and December, 2013, and January, February, March, April and May, 2014.**



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