

Managing and Showing Market Goats

Steven M. Jones
Associate Professor -
Animal Science

Introduction

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information to leaders, parents and club goat feeders for the development of successful youth goat projects. Youth goat projects for youngsters are growing in popularity every year; consequently, the competition is becoming greater every year. Since goats are small, easy to work with, relatively safer for smaller youth than larger animals and demand a relatively small amount of space, many 4-H and FFA members have discovered that goats are an excellent choice as a project. Goats provide a meaningful livestock experience in a relatively short time.

General

Once a 4-H member has decided to have a goat project, there are several questions that must be answered before he/she begins. It is the responsibility of each exhibitor to read the general rules and regulations as well as special rules governing the shows to be attended. This will tell the number of goats you can enter, weight limits, ownership dates and entry deadlines.

The date of the show is extremely important because this determines the age and size or weight of the goats and at what time of year they should be purchased. Most shows require that goats have their milk or baby teeth at show time. Goats will usually hold their milk teeth until they are 10 to 12 months of age, but this time can vary. After this time, you are risking that a goat will lose its baby teeth, thus making it ineligible.

Under normal conditions, goats will gain approximately 2 to 2.5 pounds per week. Feed conversion with goats varies greatly, but it usually ranges from 4 to 6 pounds of grain for a pound of gain. There are differences in frame size, and not all goats can be fed to the same final weight. Large-frame goats may be correctly finished at 120 pounds, while small-frame goats may be correctly finished at 80 pounds. Learn to look at indicators of frame size and growth (length of head, neck and cannon bone) to determine at what weight a goat will be correctly finished. If you know at the time of purchase approximately what your goat weighs and how long it is until show time, you can calculate if a goat will have to be fed at a light, moderate or heavy rate to meet the weight limit requirements of the show you want to enter. Remember that size does not make a good goat. There are good small goats and good big goats. Your management program is the key. Larger goats are going to be more competitive for grand champions if properly finished.

Facilities and Equipment

One of the major advantages of a goat project is that young people can feed goats without having expensive facilities and, with proper precautions, have little danger of getting severely injured. A barn or shed where goats can retreat from cold, wet conditions and outside exposure is all that is necessary. Following is a discussion of the facilities and equipment needed for a goat project. It should be understood that a young person with a couple of goats for a local or county show would not necessarily need all of the equipment listed.

*Arkansas Is
Our Campus*

Visit our web site at:
<http://www.uaex.edu>

Barns and/or Sheds

Goats need a combination arrangement: access to a shed and an area where they can get away from or stand in the sunshine. The shed area should have at least 15 square feet of space for each goat. Generally, the pen should be at least 4 feet by 6 feet. The outside pen needs to be as big as possible to allow the goat to exercise. Some youth have a jump between the feed and water to develop muscle in the goats. The shed should be well-drained so water does not accumulate underneath. Sheds or barns normally, but not always, should open to the east or south. Barn temperature is critical. Structures should be well-ventilated so goats will remain cool and continue to grow during the summer months.

Pen Fences

Fence height should be at least 42 inches tall, preferably 48 inches tall, to keep goats from attempting to jump and should be predator-proof. If you are using net wire fences, use 12-inch mesh rather than 6-inch mesh to keep goats from getting their heads hung. However, the most desirable pens are constructed from galvanized livestock panels that are 52 inches tall with 4-inch squares.

Feeders

Self-feeders are often used in the feeding of goats. Self-feeders for market goats of more than 30 pounds should be blocked up at least 16 inches off the ground, preferably higher, to keep feces out of the trough. Hand feeding of goats should be done in movable troughs that hang on the fence at the appropriate height. Troughs should be hung at the same height as the top of the shoulder of the goats being fed. These movable troughs need to be taken down and cleaned regularly. Leads with a snap can be used to separate goats wearing halters. Likewise, hay and mineral feeders need to be raised off the ground. This will help reduce the spread of disease, especially internal parasites. It is also important to make sure goats are unable to stand in their feed trough, as they will urinate or defecate on the feed.

Water Containers

Clean water is the most important ingredient for feeding goats. Goats should not be allowed to defecate in the water, and the water should not be a source of disease. Water troughs should be small so they can be drained and cleaned on a regular basis. Remember that water troughs should be checked on a daily basis. Water troughs should be located in the shade to keep water cool. However, in the hot summer months, some goats tend to drink too much water and appear "full." Water should never be totally removed for the goat, but rationing water prior to a show will help remove the belly from the goat and increase the goat's chances in the show ring. Remember, do not dehydrate your goat. The proper amount of fluids is vital to the feel and condition of your goat.

Necessary Equipment

The following list of equipment is considered necessary for feeding and exhibiting goats. You may share some of the equipment with other members of your club, chapter or team. In most cases, it is better to share equipment to see how you like it before investing in equipment.

- Shovel or rake to clean pens occasionally
- Scales to weigh goats (bath scales work.)
- Trimming table with the following dimensions: 45 inches × 20 inches × 18 inches tall
- Hoof trimmers
- Electric clippers are necessary but can vary. Options include: 1) classic sheep and goat clippers with 20- and 23-tooth combs and 4-point cutters, an all-purpose blade (close to the skin) and plucking blade (leaves 3/8 inch), 2) small animal grooming clippers with detachable blades for varying lengths of hair, 3) newer model lightweight clippers with blades for both fine and medium cuts and/or 4) classic cattle clippers with surgical and medium blades. Many exhibitors elect to spend more money for the newer lightweight clippers that have less vibration and closer teeth so youth can use the clippers more easily and with greater safety.
- Syringes and needles for injections
- Goat blankets and/or socks
- Halters, collars and/or show chains
- Some medical supplies

Optional Equipment

The following additional equipment is often acquired by families who feed several goats and exhibit goats at several major shows. The equipment might be shared by a group of 4-H or FFA members.

- Showbox to hold equipment
- Hot air blower or dryer
- Portable livestock scales
- Extension cords
- Electric fans

Selection

The selection of a goat for a project is one of the most important decisions made by a feeder. The type of goat you select at the beginning of the project will have a major influence on the results at the end of the project. However, you must remember that a winning goat is a combination of good selection, good nutritional management, proper grooming and outstanding showmanship.

People differ in their ability to select prospective animals (Figure 1). Some have a natural eye for selecting young animals, while others never develop this ability. Do not hesitate to take advantage of a person with these skills. It may be your county Extension agent, FFA instructor, parents or another leader in the county. Also, many breeders are willing to assist you in your selection program. Judges also differ slightly in the type of goat they prefer. In more competitive shows, more stylish goats and goats that are the best prepared and presented will place higher when all have the same amount of muscle.



Figure 1. Young goats are often selected to show. Compare one goat to another to determine its good characteristics.

When selecting young goats, be conscious of age and fat thickness. Young goats that are bloomy and fat always look good, while young goats that are thin do not look as good. Learn to look past fat and recognize muscle so you can pick goats that are genetically superior.

It is important to know a little about the producers you are buying from any time you purchase goats. Do not hesitate to ask questions about their goats' bloodlines and the age of the goats in question.

When selecting goats, there are five major areas of emphasis that need to be considered: **structural correctness, muscle, volume and capacity, style and balance** and **growth potential** (Figure 2).



Figure 2. When selecting a market goat to show, work with someone who has had success selecting goats. Look at different views of the goat to determine its structural correctness, muscle, volume and capacity, style and balance and growth potential.

Structural Correctness

Structural correctness refers to the skeletal system or bone structure of an animal. Goats should be up-headed, with the neck extending out of the top of the shoulders. Goats should travel and stand wide and straight on both their front and rear legs, and their legs should be placed squarely under the body. They should have a strong level top and a long rump with a slight slope from their hooks to their pins. Goats should be heavy-boned and be strong on their pasterns. Open-shouldered, weak-pasterned or steep-rumped goats should be avoided.

Muscle

Generally, goats that walk and stand wide are going to be heavier muscled. Goats should have a deep, heavily muscled leg and rump, with the widest part of the leg being the stifle area, when viewed from behind. They should have a broad, thick back and loin that are naturally firm and hard handling. Goats should be wide through their chest floor, with bold shoulders and a prominent forearm muscle. The chest and forearm of a goat are the best indicators of muscling in thin goats.

Volume and Capacity

Volume and capacity refer to the relationship of length of body with depth of body and width of body. Goats should be long-bodied with adequate depth and spring of rib. Try to avoid selecting goats that are short-bodied, narrow and flat-ribbed.

Style and Balance

Style and balance refers to the way all body parts blend together, how the shoulder blends into the rib cage, the rib cage to the loin, the loin to the rump and how smooth-blending a goat is. When viewed from the side, a goat should be smooth-shouldered, level-topped, trim in the middle and straight-legged. A goat that is balanced, pretty and holds his head up is the first one you notice when you walk in the pen.

Growth Potential

The ability of an animal to grow rapidly is very important. Generally, the larger-framed goats – as

indicated by a long head, neck, cannon bone and body – will grow faster, be larger and be more competitive in the show ring.

Nutrition

A good feeding program uses all of the current information on nutritional requirements yet allows the feeder to make judgments when changes should be made as to the amounts to feed. Since most goats do not deposit external fat as quickly as other species of livestock, a self-feeding program can be used effectively. However, some goats will become too fat during the feeding period. These goats need to be hand-fed twice a day to control the amount of feed consumed.

You may elect to hand-feed your goat for the entire project.

There are six basic nutrients required by all livestock – **water, protein, carbohydrates, fats, minerals** and **vitamins**.

Water. Water is one of the most critical nutrients in a feeding program, as it regulates the amount of feed a goat will consume. Clean, fresh water is necessary on a daily basis. Water is an important component of the body, as lean tissue consists of nearly 70 percent water, and all body fluids depend on water from the system.

Protein. The primary constituent of the animal body is protein. Dietary protein serves to maintain or replace protein in body tissues and is a major component of various products such as meat, milk and fiber. Protein requirements for goats vary according to their size, age and maturity. Fast-growing goats need higher protein diets (18 to 22 percent) to allow them to grow and develop their muscle potential. Rations that contain 16 to 18 percent protein are useful during many phases of the goat feeding program, but rations lower than 16 percent tend to lead to fat deposition too quickly and should be avoided.

(**Note:** Some data indicate that goats, even when being shown, do not need protein levels this high. In commercial situations, lower levels of protein would be more economical.) Feeders need to remember that goats have a daily requirement for protein. If more protein is fed than the goat requires, the excess protein is used for energy. Using protein as an energy source is very expensive, but much better than diets deficient in protein. During periods when total feed intake is greatly reduced, protein supplementation with a high-quality top-dress may be necessary to provide adequate daily requirements for your goat.

Energy. The most common limiting factor in goat rations is energy, primarily from carbohydrates and fats but also from protein. Inadequate energy intake will result in a slowing of growth and loss of weight. An adequate supply of energy is necessary for efficient utilization of nutrients. Grain and protein supplements are high in energy. However, in goat rations, too much energy intake can be just as detrimental as

not enough. Monitoring the body condition of your goat will assure proper energy levels are being fed. For beginning exhibitors, it is important to periodically have the condition of your goat monitored by an experienced showperson so you learn how to check for fat on the goat.

Minerals. Salt, calcium and phosphorus are the minerals of major concern in goat rations. Calcium and phosphorus are necessary for proper growth and development. They are of concern if the ratio or proportion of these two minerals in the ration becomes out of balance. The ratio in the ration should be at least two parts calcium to one part phosphorus. Rations that contain high levels of phosphorus in relation to calcium may cause urinary calculi, sometimes called kidney stones. The addition of ammonium chloride at the rate of 10 to 15 pounds per ton of feed will help prevent urinary calculi. Ammonium chloride is not very palatable, and some goats may not eat it well. Legume roughages generally have greater than a 2:1 ratio of calcium and phosphorus, while grass forages will have slightly less than a 2:1 ratio. Grains are generally low in calcium and intermediate in phosphorus. Most protein supplements are high in phosphorus and intermediate in calcium. Check with your feed dealer if you have questions about mineral levels in your feed.

Vitamins. Vitamins are essential for proper body function and are required by goats in very small amounts. Of all vitamins, only vitamin A is likely to ever be deficient. If goats are receiving a high-quality show ration, then vitamin levels should be adequate. Some exhibitors will supplement with B vitamins and probiotics to ensure that the goat has adequate vitamins and minerals, but these supplements add to the costs of the feed. These supplements may aid in keeping the goats on feed.

Health

A healthy goat is important to the success of a youth goat project. Sick goats are slow-growing and never reach their genetic potential. The key to a healthy goat is the development of a preventative health program. Goats purchased for a youth goat project should have been on some type of health program and have had a variety of vaccinations. Generally, all goats should be vaccinated for overeating disease – types C and D. Some diseases of importance are listed below. However, other diseases may be a problem; if so, contact your veterinarian or a qualified mentor immediately.

Enterotoxemia or Overeating Disease

A major cause of death in show goats is from enterotoxemia or overeating disease. Enterotoxemia generally results in death, and goats seldom exhibit symptoms. This disease is caused by a clostridial organism normally present in the intestine of most goats. Goats that have abrupt feeding schedule

changes or consume large amounts of grain are subject to enterotoxemia. There are two types of enterotoxemia – type C and type D. Most often type D causes the disease. There are vaccines available for type D and for combination of the types C and D. All goats should be vaccinated with the combination (C and D) vaccine. At least two booster vaccinations are recommended following the first vaccination. The first vaccination should be given immediately after purchase or just prior to purchase by the breeder. A good vaccination program should eliminate losses from overeating.

Internal Parasites

Internal parasites are a continuous problem in goats. Newly purchased goats should be dewormed immediately for internal parasites, and a second deworming should follow about three weeks later. There are few dewormers approved for internal parasites in goats. Local veterinarians have the best information on what dewormer will be most effective in your area. Internal parasites build a resistance to a dewormer if it is used over a long period of time.

Coccidia may also be a problem. It is usually characterized by diarrhea, possibly bloody diarrhea, depressed appetite and poor growth rate. If coccidiosis is a problem, then it is important to treat immediately with a coccidiostat and have a coccidiostat in the feed.

Below is a deworming program applicable to a single goat or for a herd of goats. Since a male market goat will be going to slaughter at an early age, there is less concern with resistance to a dewormer than in a herd where the goats may live for several years.

- Set up a deworming program and adhere to it. Worms not only kill both young and old goats, they contribute to poor growth rates, an unthrifty appearance, coughing, diarrhea and other digestive problems. To minimize contamination of uninfected goats, maintain a dry, clean environment with a sound manure management plan. Depending on location and density, deworming may have to be repeated at different times during the year.
- Have your veterinarian (or you) conduct fecal examinations as needed for worm eggs.
- Kids should be dewormed at weaning and treated for coccidia. Repeat as necessary. Preferably kids should be provided a feed with coccidiostat to minimize effects of coccidiosis.
- Adult goats should be dewormed as often as needed to control the various types of worms. Care should be taken to avoid goats developing a resistance to dewormers.
- Strategies for deworming the meat goat herd may vary from farm to farm and with the

observation skills of the caretaker. Some experienced caretakers may be able to deworm only 20 to 30 percent of the herd by routinely watching goats for signs of abnormal appearance and/or behavior plus monitoring levels of anemia in the mucous membrane of the eyelids, gums or vulva. This approach, called the FAMACHA system, can be used for monitoring anemia levels in the herd by looking at the eyelids. It works well with a knowledgeable caretaker and when *Haemonchus contortis*, or the barber pole worm, is the primary internal parasite. *H. contortis* is a bloodsucker, and heavy infestation results in anemia. However, if tapeworms, *Triostrogylus*, or other worms are the primary worm infecting the herd, monitoring anemia levels may not adequately diagnose the problem, since these worms are not primarily bloodsuckers.

Egg counts should be used to monitor the level of infection and the effectiveness of the dewormers. Many producers now use a dewormer until it no longer displays apparent effectiveness before switching to another dewormer. This technique allows resistance to build against the current product in use while saving effective products of unrelated compounds for future use in the parasite control program. For beginning goat owners, it is best to work with your veterinarian or an experienced goat owner on internal parasite control in the herd. Lack of control of worms can destroy a herd.

- General control recommendations for internal parasites in goats include sound manure management by frequent removal of manure and cleanliness to minimize potential contamination. Rotate pastures to break the life cycle of the worms if possible. Decrease the stocking rate if the stock density is too high. Taller pastures for goats will minimize exposure to larva of internal parasites. Feed goats in troughs or racks that are sufficiently high above the ground to prevent manure contamination. Watering troughs should be constructed to prevent manure contamination, perhaps with a concrete pad around the base of the trough so goats cannot defecate in the water. Utilize high, well-drained pastures, especially when the ground is wet, and avoid low, wet pastures when rains are frequent. Depending on the type of forage, goats should graze 4 to 6 inches above the ground to minimize exposure to larva of internal parasites.

Urinary Calculi

Urinary calculi is a metabolic disease of male goats and is characterized by the formation of calculi (stones) within the urinary tract. The first sign of calculi is the goat's inability to pass urine without

great discomfort. The goat will exhibit signs of restlessness, kicking at the belly, stretching and attempting to urinate. The most common cause for calculi formation is whether the goat's rations have high phosphorus levels. Grains are high in phosphorus and low in calcium; therefore, high concentrate rations, unless properly balanced, tend to cause urinary calculi. The most successful form of prevention is to provide at least 2:1 calcium-to-phosphorus ratio in the total ration. As a preventative measure, adding 10 to 15 pounds of ammonium chloride per ton of feed is very successful. Clean, fresh water will increase consumption and help prevent urinary calculi.

Soremouth

Soremouth is a contagious disease that causes the formation of scabs on the lips and around the mouth of the goat. This is a virus that can affect humans, so care should be exercised when handling goats with soremouth. Iodine can be rubbed into lesions after the scabs are removed. This will help dry up the area and reduce the infection. There is a vaccine that contains many strains of the organism and will help prevent goats from having soremouth. As this is a live virus vaccine, extreme caution should be taken when administering the vaccine.

Ringworm/Skin Infections

Skin problems resulting from ringworm and other types of skin infections have increased in severity with exhibitors showing at prospect shows over the past few years. Contagious animals spread the skin infections to other animals through contact. Once the animals have become contaminated, extended treatment is needed to clear up the skin. I recommend that you seek advice from your local veterinarian for treatment.

The best policy in dealing with these skin irritations is to establish a preventative program. This involves treating the animals and all equipment with disinfectants and fungicides after each show.

Skin infections have become a major issue with show goats over recent years. It might be wise to stop showing at prospect shows early enough to allow time to overcome these issues, should they occur, prior to your county or state show.

Pinkeye

Pinkeye is a contagious disease characterized by excessive watering and a clouding over of the pupil. Goats are very susceptible to pinkeye, especially after being transported and moved to a new location. Dry, dusty pens and constant exposure to sunlight can be contributing factors. There are several medications on the market for pinkeye. Some vaccines may be effective, but check with your local veterinarian before using. If improvement is not seen within a few days after treatment, contact your local veterinarian.

Hoof Trimming

When goats stay in small pens with no rocks, their hooves grow long and need to be trimmed. Hooves should be trimmed about every six weeks. Always trim hooves one or two weeks before a show in case you accidentally trim too short and temporarily lame the goat. This will allow time for the goat to get well before the show. If foot rot becomes a problem, it can be treated by placing your goat's foot in a zinc sulfate foot bath (10 percent solution) with or without antibiotics.

Dehorning or Tipping

Some shows demand that your goat be dehorned in order to be eligible to show. If you plan to dehorn, it is preferred to "disbud" goats at 10 to 14 days of age. The older the goat is and the larger the horn, the more stressful it will be on the goat. Other shows simply imply that the goat's horns be tipped in order to be eligible to show. This can be easily done without causing much stress to your goat. However, do not wait until the week before the show to tip your goat's horns. The horns should be tipped four to six weeks prior to the show to allow the horns to heal properly. The main reason these rules are in place is for the safety of the exhibitor.

Management and Feeding

In feeding goats, you have a choice of feeding a specifically prepared ration for show goats, mixing your own or feeding a ration that has been mixed by the local feed store. Goats are picky eaters and may prefer a pelleted ration over a textured or loose ration. The most important thing to remember is that there is no such thing as a "magic" ration. Find a balanced ration, learn how to feed it and learn how your goats respond to it.

Many goats will not know how to eat the feed you have purchased. These goats should be started on good, leafy alfalfa hay that is top-dressed with the purchased feed. After three or four days, you can slowly change these goats to the ration you have chosen to feed in your program by decreasing the hay. Hay can be fed during the first part of the feeding program but should be minimized or eliminated during the later stages to prevent goats from getting a large stomach.

Some goats can be self-fed for the entire feeding period. However, some goats will become fat and need to be hand-fed. Fat deposition must be closely monitored throughout the feeding program. The feeding schedule can be adjusted to modify gain and body composition, but the feeder must continually watch the goats and check their progress so changes can be made. Rations that are not producing enough finish or goats that are not putting on enough finish can be bolstered by the addition of high-energy feed, such as corn, during the late stages of the feeding program.

Remember, never make abrupt changes in your feeding program. Gradual changes are more desirable so your goat will stay on feed and continue to develop.

The feeding program for your show goats will dictate how they develop and mature. A good feeding program cannot make up for a lack of superior genetics, but it will allow your goats to reach their genetic potential. Feeding is a daily responsibility and one which can be continually changed to maximize your results. To best monitor your results, goats should be weighed on a regular basis. Know whether your goats are gaining or losing and how much.

Exercising your goats can be very beneficial to your success in the show ring. Goats are very active animals and, if given enough room, will exercise themselves. Having objects in your pen for your goats to jump and play on (i.e., big rocks, wooden spools, etc.) will provide your goats with an excellent opportunity to exercise themselves. Goats that have been exercised will handle harder and firmer, which will give you an advantage in the show ring since some judges do not want the exhibitors to brace their goats.

Fitting

Many major shows have a clipping rule for club goats. However, there are some differences in the hair length that is allowable at the time of show. Therefore, it is very important to read the show rules prior to clipping your goat for a particular show.

Washing your goat is not always necessary, but it is usually beneficial. If washing is done, use a mild soap sparingly, rinse the animal thoroughly and dry the goat completely. Brushing with a stiff brush on a regular basis is usually all that is needed on clean goats. The brushing action removes all of the dead hair and dirt. Goats should be washed before clipping to minimize wear on the blades.

Once the goat is clean, it is time to clip your goat. Techniques for clipping can vary, but clipping should improve the appearance of the goat. Clipping must be done to match show rules and should be done periodically during the growing phase to see how the goat looks the best. Clipping a week to ten days prior to the show allows clipper tracks to even out and the pink skin to become less apparent. With practice and experience, clipping a day or two before the show may give the goat a fresher feel. A pair of electric clippers equipped with a close-toothed comb should be used. There are many different combs and cutters available; however, it is felt that the finer-toothed equipment provides a smoother, more attractive goat. Run the clippers parallel to the length of the body rather than making vertical motions. Hair below the knees and hocks should not be clipped, and the hair on the end of the tail should be bobbed. Small animal clippers or clippers with fine blades may be needed to clip closely around the eyes, ears, pasterns or delicate areas on the goat.

If you are clipping in the colder months, you should cover your goat with a lamb sock or blanket immediately after shearing. A clean, well-bedded pen should be provided to keep the goat clean and dry.

Showing

Like any other activity, some people are natural showmen. All exhibitors can learn techniques and improve their showmanship skills. Showmanship can be broken down into two parts: **pre-show preparation** and **show ring**.

Pre-Show Preparation

The amount of time required to train a goat to show depends on several things: the goat, physical size and experience and the intensity of training. Some goats are easy to gentle and teach to show, while other goats are more difficult and nearly impossible to train. However, most goats can be trained provided enough time and effort is spent. Unlike lambs, goats are shown with a halter or some type of collar. It is the authors' opinion that a collar works best.

Halter breaking is an excellent way to start the gentling process, especially if an exhibitor has several goats. Collars or inexpensive rope halters can be made or purchased from certain feed and livestock supply stores. Goats should be caught, haltered or collared and tied to the fence. If using a collar, you can snap the goat's collar to the fence. Care should be taken not to tie the goat where it can be hurt. **It is very important that tied goats not be left unattended until they get used to being tied.** After the goat becomes gentle, the exhibitor can start teaching it to lead. Use the collar or halter to keep the goat's head up while you teach it to lead. It is important that you have someone to assist you by pushing the goat from behind whenever it stops. Teach the goat to lead with its front shoulder even with your leg. The goat's head should be out in front of your body.

The next step in the training process is for the exhibitor to lead the goat and properly set it up. Always set the legs closest to the judge first. As a general rule, set the front legs up first then place the hind legs, keeping the body and neck straight and the head in a high, proud position by using the halter or collar. With younger youth, the goat can sometimes be trained to properly place its front or back feet so that only one set of feet have to be moved. The exhibitor should remain standing at all times. Do not squat or kneel.

After the training is complete, the exhibitor may wish to practice showing his/her goat, usually for 15 to 30 minutes. The exhibitor can set up his/her goat and show it while someone else handles the goat, making sure the goat continues to be well-presented. If the goat responds properly, return the goat to the pen and do not overwork it. Exhibitors may have only

15 to 20 seconds to actually show their goats in a show. If the goat does not show properly when handled by the judge, you may get overlooked.

Show Ring

Assuming that prior planning, selecting, feeding, fitting, training and grooming have been done, showing is one of the most important ingredients. Showmanship can't be emphasized too strongly. It is often the difference between placing in the top three or in the middle of a class of ten goats.

The exhibitor should be mentally and physically ready to enter the show ring for competition. By completing the pre-show activities, exhibitors should have confidence they can do an effective job showing their goats. They should be neat in appearance but not overdressed. Exhibitors should not wear hats or caps in the show ring.

Before the show begins, exhibitors should look at the show ring and become familiar with it. If allowed, take the goat into the ring so that it is used to the footing in the ring, especially if the footing is different from anything it has experienced. Once the judge begins, if the exhibitor is not in the first class, he/she should watch and see how the judge works the goats in the show ring.

When the appropriate class is called, exhibitors should take their goats to the show ring. They should be courteous to fellow exhibitors at all times. If the ring stewards do not line up the goats, the exhibitors should find a good place where their goats will look their best. Avoid corners of the ring, and **leave plenty of space between your goat and others, usually 2 to 4 feet depending on the size of the ring and the number in the class.** Set your goat up, making sure the legs are set properly, and keep the body, neck and head in a straight line with the goat's head up and alert. Always show with both hands. Do not put your free hand behind your back; use your free hand to keep the goat's head and body straight. It is a good plan to have a parent videotape you with the goat so you can see how you look in the show ring.

A good showman must be alert and know where the judge is at all times. He/she also knows how the goat looks. **Always remember to keep one eye on the judge and one on the goat is a classic saying.** You

must know how your goat looks, where the judge is and also where others are in the ring. Remain calm and concentrate on showing. It is not necessary to fix your eyes on the judge; just be aware of where the judge is. In large classes, it may be 10 minutes or longer before the judge handles your goat, so you must be patient and let your goat relax. Practice, practice, practice is also a good rule.

Set your goat up and be ready before the judge gets to you. Be careful not to cover your goat with your body so the judge's view is blocked. **Always keep your goat between you and the judge.** When moving, always go in front of the goat and not over or behind the goat.

After the judge handles your goat, he will usually step back and look at it. Be sure to keep the goat's head up and body, neck and head in a straight line. Keep one eye on the judge and one eye on the goat. It is your responsibility to watch the judge and not miss a decision. If your goat does not get pulled near the top of the class, don't give up. Continue to keep the goat set up, remain alert and keep one eye on the judge (be aware of what the judge is doing). If your goat gets pulled, circle out of the line and follow the directions of the ring steward, making sure to continue to keep an eye on the judge. Move your goat with style and at a steady, moderate pace.

Remember to keep showing at all times. The class is not over until the ribbons are passed out. Always be a good sport and congratulate the class winner, especially in a small class. (It may not be practical in a large class to congratulate the winner, and it is not necessary to thank the judge or shake the judge's hand, especially in a large class.) Hopefully, the winner will be you. Be a humble winner and a graceful loser.

Summary

The market goat project can be an excellent project for both beginning and experienced showmen. It can provide you with experiences, memories and life skills that will benefit you throughout life. It is a combination of facilities, selection, feeding, management, health and showing that allows you to be successful with the project.

This publication was adapted from *4-H Meat Goat Guide*, AS 3-4.060 (10/98), of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System, College Station, Texas, and *Feeding and Showing Meat Goats* by Jerry Woodard, PAS, Livestock Feeding Specialist, Premier Feeds.

Printed by University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Printing Services.

STEVEN M. JONES is associate professor - animal science, Department of Animal Science, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Little Rock.

FSA3121-PD-1-14RV

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas. The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.