Goat Information

**Goat Selection**

When selecting, you must know the animal’s age. Remember that most shows require that goats have their milk teeth; therefore you need to know how old your goat is. It also is important to be aware of fat thickness. Young goats that are bloomy and fat always look good, while young, thin goats do not look as nice. Learn to look past fat and recognize muscle so that you can pick a genetically superior goat.

When purchasing a goat, it is important to know some information about the producer. Do not hesitate to ask questions about the goat’s bloodline and age.

**Structural Correctness**

Structural correctness refers to the skeletal system or bone structure of an animal. A goat should hold its head erect and the neck should extend out of the top of the shoulders. A goat should travel and stand wide and straight on both front and rear legs, and the legs should be placed squarely under the body. A goat should have a strong level top, and a long rump with a slight slope from hooks to pins. Your goat should be heavy boned and be strong on its pasterns. Open-shouldered, weak-topped, weak-pasterned, steep-rumped goats should be avoided.

**Muscle**

Generally, a goat that walks and stands wide is going to be heavier muscled. The goat should have a deep, heavily muscled leg and rump. When viewed from behind, the widest part of the leg should be the stifle area. The goat should have a broad, thick back and loin that is naturally firm and hard handling. A good goat should be wide through its chest floor, with bold shoulders and a prominent forearm muscle. The chest and forearm are the best indicators of muscling in thin goats.

**Volume and Capacity**

This refers to the relationship of body length to body depth and body width. Goats should be long bodied, with adequate depth and spring of rib. Avoid selecting goats that are short bodied, shallow bodied, narrow based, and flat ribbed.

**Style and Balance**

Style and balance refer to the way all body parts blend together, how the neck blends into the shoulder, the shoulder into the rib cage, the rib cage into the loin, the loin into the rump, and how “eye-appealing” a goat is. When viewed from the side, a goat should have a smooth shoulder, level top, trim middle and straight legs, A goat that is balanced, pretty and holds up its head 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, a larger framed goat that shows a long head, neck, cannon bone and body, will grow faster, be larger and be more competitive in the show ring.

**Goat Nutrition**

Contrary to popular belief, there is no such thing as a “magic” ration that will make your goat a champion. To implement a good feeding program, study the goat and use all available information to make judgments on when feed changes should be made. Since most goats do not deposit external fat as rapidly as other species of livestock, a self-feeding program can be effective. However, some goats will become too fat during the feeding period and should be hand fed twice daily to control the amount of feed consumed.

All livestock require five basic nutrients: Water, protein, fats and carbohydrates (or energy), minerals and vitamins.

**Water**

Clean, fresh water is a daily necessity because water composes more than 70 percent of lean tissue and all body fluids must be replenished regularly. Never deprive your goat of water because water regulates the amount of feed a goat will consume. However, reduced water intake at certain periods during the program can reduce feed intake and reduce the size of the rumen for improved appearance.

**Internal parasites**

Internal parasites are a continual problem. Newly purchased goats should be drenched immediately for internal parasites and a second drenching should follow about 3 weeks later. Few drenches are approved for treating goats for internal parasites. Your veterinarian will have the best information on the most effective drenches. Because internal parasites develop resistance to drench over time, it may be effective to rotate the use of products.

**Ringworm**

Ringworm has become a serious problem in the lamb industry. Because most club goats are shown in the same barns and show rings as lambs, it is probable that ringworm will become a problem in goats as well. Ringworm is contagious and can be transmitted from goat to goat, from goat to human, or from infected equipment to goat. A good prevention program is necessary. The following products have been used with varying results:

* Fulvicin- Powder given as a bolus or used a top dress feed.
* Novasan- 3 ounces per gallon of water sprayed on goats, equipment, and premises.
* Bleach- 10 percent solution sprayed on goats, equipment, and premises.

**Dehorning or Tipping**

Some shows require that goats be dehorned. If you plan to dehorn, it is preferred to “disbud” goats at 14 to 28 days of age. The older the goat is and the larger the horn, the more stressful it will be on the goat. Other shows request only that goat horns be tipped for show. Tipping can be done easily without causing much stress to the goat. Horns should be tipped 4 to 6 weeks prior to the show to allow the horns to heal properly. Dehorning or tipping rules are made for the safety of the exhibitors.

**Facilities and Equipment**

One of the major advantages of a club goat project is that expensive facilities are not needed. A barn or shed where goats can retreat from cold, wet conditions and a pen with outside exposure are essential. Adequate fencing, a feeder, and a water container are required, yet other equipment may be considered optional.

**Barns/sheds**

Goats need a living arrangement that combines access to a shed or barn and an area where they can get outside in the sunshine. The shed area should have at least 15 square feet of space for each goat. The outside pen needs to be as large as possible to permit the goats to exercise. The shed should be well drained and 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. However, when club goats are slick shorn for shows, barns should be altered during the winter to keep goats as warm as possible. This can be done by closing the front with a tarp or plastic sheet and by using heat lamps. The illustration shows the recommended dimensions and layout for a goat feeding facility.

**Fences**

Fence height should be at least 42 inches to keep goats from attempting to jump. Fences should be predator proof. If using net wire fences, 12-inch mesh should be used rather than 6-inch mesh to keep goats from hanging their heads in the wire. The most desirable pens are constructed from galvanized livestock panels that are 5 feet tall with 4-inch squares.

**Feeders**

If goats are hand fed, use movable trough 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 goat being fed. These movable troughs need to be taken down and cleaned regularly. Likewise, hay and mineral feeders need to be raised off the ground. This will help reduce the spread of disease. It also is important to make sure that goats are unable to stand in their feed troughs because they will urinate of defecate on the feed.

**Water Containers**

Fresh water is the most important ingredient in feeding club goats. Water should be checked daily. Water troughs should be small in size so they can be drained and cleaned on a regular basis. Troughs should be located in the shade to keep water cool. In the hot summer months, some goats tend to drink too much water and appear “full”. Water should never be totally removed from the goat. However, rationing water prior to a show will help.

**Management and Feeding**

You have a choice of feeding a commercially prepared ration, missing your own, or feeding a county ration that has been missed and is sold by the local feed store. There are many complete commercial rations available. Goats are picky eaters, therefore, a pelleted ration is recommended over a textured or loose ration. Select a balanced ration, learn how to feed it and learn how your goat responds to it.

The feeding program will dictate how your goat develops and matures. A good program cannot make up for a lack of superior genetics. But it will allow your goat to reach its genetic potential. Feeding is a daily responsibility and the program should be changed as needed to maximize your results. To best monitor your results, weigh your goat on a regular basis. Know wither your goat is gaining or losing weight and know how much weight. Exercise can be very beneficial to your goat and to your success in the show ring. Goats are very active animals and, if given enough room, they will exercise themselves. Have objects like big rocks or wooden spools in your pen for climbing and jumping. This will provide your goat with an excellent opportunity to exercise itself. A goat that exercises will handle harder and firmer, and will give you an advantage in the show ring.

**Fitting**

Most of the major shows in Texas enforce the shearing rule for goats. Because some differences in hair length are allowed at the time of show, it is important to read the show rules prior to clipping your goat for a particular show.

It is not always necessary to wash your goat, but it can be beneficial. Use a mild soap sparingly, rinse the animal thoroughly and dry the goat completely. Then, brush your goat with a stiff brush on a regular basis. Brushing removes all of the dead hair and dirt.

Shear your goat according to show rules at least 2 to 7 days before the show. This will allow clipper tracks to even out and the pink skin to become less apparent. A pair of electric clippers equipped with either a 20- or 23- tooth comb should be used to ensure a smoother, more attractive goat. While shearing, the clippers should run parallel to the length of the body rather than vertically. Hair below the knees and hocks should not be shorn, and the hair on the end of the tail should be bobbed. Small animal clippers may be needed to clip closely around the eyes, ears, pasterns or delicate areas on the goat.

If shearing in cold weather, cover your goat with a lamb sock and/or blanket immediately after shearing. A clean, well-bedded pen should be provided to keep the goat clean and dry.

**Showing**

Some people are natural showmen, but all exhibitors can learn techniques to improve their showmanship skills.

**Preshow Preparation**

The amount of time required to train a goat for show depends on the goat, the physical size and experience of the exhibitor, and the intensity of training. Some goats are easy to gentle and train for show, while other goats are difficult and nearly impossible to train. Most goats can be trained if enough time and effort are spent. Unlike lambs, goats are shown with a collar or chain.

Halter breaking is an excellent way to start the gentling process, especially if you have several goats. Collars, chains or inexpensive rope halters can be mode or purchased from feed and livestock supply stores. Goats should be caught, haltered, chained or collared and tied to a fence. If using the collar or chain, snap them to the fence. Do not tie the goats where they can hurt themselves and do not leave tied goats unattended.

After your goat begins to gentle, you can start teaching it to lead. Use the collar, chain or halter to keep the goat’s head up while you teach it to lead. Have someone 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 in front of your body.

The next stop in the training process is to lead the goat and properly set it up. Set the front and hind legs squarely under the body, keeping the body and neck straight and the head in a high, proud position by using the chain or collar. Halters should never be used in the show ring; use only chains or collars. You should remain standing at all times. Do not squat or kneel.

After the training is complete, you may wish to practice showing. Set up your goat and show it while someone else handles it. You must make sure the goat looks good at all times. If the goat responds properly, return it to the pen and do not overwork it. Remember, in a major show, you may have only 5 seconds to actually show your goat. If the goad does not show properly when the judge handles it, you may get overlooked.

**Show ring**

Your planning, selection, feeding, fitting, training and grooming have brought you and your goat this far- to the show ring. Now, your skill in exhibiting your goat- showmanship- cannot be emphasized too strongly! It is often the difference between winning and losing.

You should be mentally and physically ready to enter the show ring for competition. By completing the preshow activities, you should have confidence that you can do an effective job showing your goat. You should be neat in appearance, but not overdressed. Do not wear a hat or cap in the show ring.

Before the show begins, become familiar with the show ring. When the judging begins, watch the judge if possible and see how he works the goats. You will feel more comfortable and confident if you know what the judge will want you to do.

When the appropriate class is called, take your goat to the show ring. If the ring stewards do not line up the goats, find a place where your goat will look its best. Avoid corners of the ring and leave plenty of space between your goat and others. 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 it to keep the gat’s head and body straight.

A good showman must be alert and always know where the judge is at all times. Remember to keep your eye on the judge! Remain calm and concentrate on showing. Set up your goat and be ready before the judge gets to you Be careful not to cover your goat with your body and block the judge’s view. Always keep your goat between you and the judge. In large classes, it may take 20 minutes before the judge handles your goat. Be patient and let your goat relax.

After handling your goat, the judge usually will 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 your goat. It is your responsibility to watch the judge and not miss a decision.

If your goat in not pulled the first time, keep trying. Continue to keep it set up, remain alert and watch the judge. If your goat is pulled, circle it out of the line and follow the directions of the ring steward while continuing 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, because a class is not over until the ribbons are distributed. Be courteous to fellow exhibitors. A good showman will emphasize strong points and minimize weak points of a goat. Remain standing at all times and always display a pleasant facial expression. Be a good sport, a graceful loser and a humble winner.

**Equipment**

To properly feed and exhibit a club goat, it is necessary to have the following additional equipment:

* Stiff brush to clean water troughs
* Shovel to clean pens
* Scale to weigh goats
* Trimming table
* Electric clippers with 20 and 23 tooth combs and cutters
* Small animal grooming clippers
* Syringes and needles
* Goat blankets and/or socks
* Halters , collars and/ or show chains
* Hoof trimmers
* Drench gun
* Small portable feed troughs
* Soft brush for grooming
* Water bucket

You may want the following optional equipment if you are exhibiting several goats at major shows:

* Show box to hold equipment
* Hot air flower or dryer
* Portable livestock scales
* Extension cords
* Muzzles
* Electric fans