

Dairy Goat Handbook

Training and Fitting

The purpose of proper fitting and showmanship is to present your animal to its best advantage for evaluation by the judge. It is the combination of many preparations that produces the best and final picture.

The preparation of a dairy goat for exhibition is really a year long job. Whether it is young dairy goats such as kids or dry yearlings, which should be well-grown, though neither too fat nor too thin, or milking does, which should be at their optimum stage of lactation and condition, competent breeder-exhibitors will have used great skill all year in their feeding and management. No dairy goat can be neglected for a year and then in a week or two of extensive care become an outstanding show individual. Only stock that has continuous proper feeding and care can produce superior show animals.

Selection of Show Dairy Goats

Select individuals that will be competitive in their classes because of size and scale, or, if milking does, because they are producing a competitive amount of milk. Note that we did not say that they must be the largest in the class nor must they give the most milk - only that they should be competitive. They should be of such size that they will look like a senior kid in a senior kid class, for example, or with an udder of proper capacity for a three-year-old if that is the class she is competing in. This is not to say that smaller dairy goats or those with less capacity should be discarded, but only to point out that most judges prefer a dairy goat with proper size and productive capacity when faced with a decision between two animals of apparently equal merit, one of which is a bit small for that class.

Be sure to examine the dairy goat you select for easily detected faults, such as naval hernia, signs of teat problems or hermaphroditism young stock. A dairy goat that has an extra teat or a double orifice should be replaced in the show string with a sounder animal. This is a good time to look for any horn scurs which can be removed easily if done in time. Also check the tattoos for legibility; it may be necessary to redo part or all of them. Next learn the health requirements for the show or shows you plan to attend and conduct the necessary tests. Be sure your dairy goats are healthy, with no draining wounds, active mastitis, ringworm, lice, or other ailments.

Fitting

Fitting is the action of conditioning an animal for a show. Continually exercising good management practices will keep the fitting program to a minimum.

Evaluate and Examine your show prospect at least two months before the show.

1. Any unhealthy conditions found are best corrected with the help of your county extension agent or local veterinarian.
2. A sound deworming program is advisable under most conditions. Parasites are a problem, especially in young stock.
3. All shows have health regulations that must be followed. Be aware of the health requirements and allow yourself plenty of time to get the necessary health papers.
4. Check the ear or tail tattoos to see that they are clear and readable. Retattoo the animal if necessary. Also, be sure that the registration papers are in order.

Feeding

Under proper management, the Change in the feeding program will be slight. The object is to put a "bloom" on the animal without causing her to get fat. She should carry medium flesh and have a smooth glossy coat. This is done by feeding her roughage more frequently and by increasing the amount of grain slightly. Watch her carefully and adjust the amount of grain when necessary, as excessively fat or thin animals are discriminated against by the judges in the show ring. The amount of flesh will depend on the type and age of the animal. A heavy boned and coarse shouldered yearling should carry less flesh than an angular mature milking doe.

Training

It is important to handle the dairy goats more than you ordinarily would. This includes training them to be led, so that they will respond obediently to a light pull on the collar. Accustom them to a hand moving over their neck, withers, back and ribs and to such judging maneuvers as feeling the skin texture or checking udder attachments. Train them to walk slowly so they will appear more graceful in the show-ring.

Practicing with your goats at home can result in better behaving animals in the ring and increased confidence on your part. Animals should be accustomed to being handled by strangers, especially having someone else's hand move over their neck, withers, back and sides, and udder so that they will stand still when being examined by the judge.

A show animal should be trained to lead easily and stand quietly while being handled and "set up." This will be easier if you start while she is at a young age. The training sessions are most productive if they are no more than five minutes long and are held daily after feeding time, because dairy goats have a limited attention span.

1. Place the collar on the kid and allow her to get used to it for several days.
2. Begin teaching her to lead by holding the collar in one hand and gently pushing on her rear end with the other hand. This will give you more control over her and keep her moving in the right direction. Once she understands what is expected of her, continued practice will make her more responsive.
3. When she leads obediently, teach her how to stand still. Stop briefly at first then gradually increase the length of standing time. Praise her while she is still.
4. Start "setting up" the doe when she will stand quietly. Practice different methods of "setting up" to find out which way works better for you.

Method 1- Gently grasp the leg with your hand and place in the square stance desired.

Method 2- Walk the doe into position and then adjust the leg position by pushing at the point of shoulder to cause the opposite hind leg to move into place. This takes a little more time to work out the code with your animal, but it is a less conspicuous way of setting up your doe. This method works well with a touchy or sensitive doe.

A stubborn adult doe can be more easily taught to lead by gently holding her tail and urging her to move forward. Be careful not to do this too hard or too often, as it could cause her to be "tail shy" and not allow the judge to examine her.

Grooming

Complete grooming includes tattooing, dehorning, clipping, washing, brushing and trimming hooves.

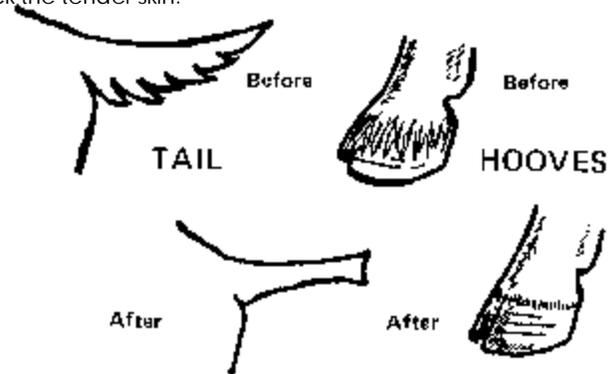
Tattooing and Dehorning - This should be done when the kids are three days to one week old, If an adult has horns, it would be advisable to have a veterinarian dehorn her, since horns can be dangerous and are discriminated against in the show ring.

Clipping - This is done to give your dairy goat a sharp, attractive appearance. There are two methods of clipping your animal, depending on the season of the year. The summer or complete clip can be done two ways:

1) Clip with a fine blade over the entire body two or three weeks before the show and reclip the head, tail, belly, lower legs and udder just before the show.

2) Use two different blades just before the show. The "plucking" blade is used on the large body area and a fine blade is used on the head, tail, belly, lower legs and udder. Care must be taken to blend the two areas where they meet, so that it looks natural. The winter clip is done by clipping the head, tail, belly, lower legs and udder. The rest of the coat is left uncapped to protect the animal from cold, damp weather. Blending of the clipped and uncapped areas is necessary to give a smooth appearance.

Use a standard Sunbeam clipping blade to remove all the hair from the body, clipping evenly against the hair. (This is good herdsmanship for the dairy goat's health in warm weather, for lice control or for sanitation in the milking parlor.) Then, with a fine blade (Oyster #10 or the like), clip all the hair on the head, ears, tail, forelegs below the knees and rear legs below the hocks. Finally, use an extra fine blade (Oyster #30 or equivalent) to clip the udder. It is easier to clip the udder when it has about 12 hours of milk in it, but be careful not to nick the tender skin.



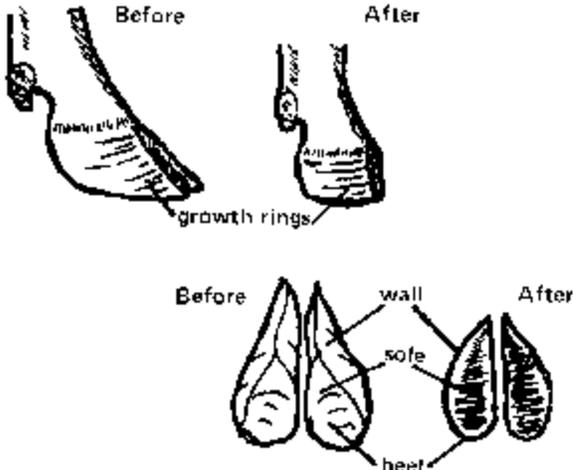
If you do not have access to clippers you can still trim your animal by using scissors and a dog trimmer, although it will take more time to produce the smoothness desired. The trimmer is available in grocery or drug stores and is made of hard plastic, which holds one or two razor blades with teeth guards. It is correctly used by going with the hair in long, smooth strokes over the entire body. The back, hips and legs must be done carefully, as the bones are more prominent and they tend to interfere with the long, smooth strokes. The scissors are used to trim the long hairs on the chin, ears, hooves and tail.

Hoof Trimming - Assuming that the hoofs have been kept in reasonably good shape throughout the year, trimming should be left until a week or two before the show. They should be evenly trimmed and shaped, using care to accentuate a deep heel with the toes pared down quite closely, but not closely enough to cause sore feet and lameness. If necessary, the dewclaws should be trimmed to look neat.

Do not trim the hooves less than three days before the show to allow for healing if they are trimmed too short.

Pruning shears, pocket knives or files can be used for trimming. The hooves should be trimmed parallel to the "growth rings," so that the hooves are level and square. This will help the dairy goat to walk straightly and correctly. Cleaning and scrubbing the hooves before trimming will soften them and allow you to see the growth rings more clearly. The following steps are suggested:

- Step 1. Cut off the overgrown hoof wall level to the sole.
- Step 2. Pare off the sole until a slight pink ness can be seen keeping the sole parallel to the growth rings.
- Step 3. If the heel has grown larger on the inside causing the toes to separate, carefully trim this out. Sometimes the dewclaws also need a little trimming.
- Step 4. Use a file to smooth down the sole. Continually check to see that it is level from both the front and the side.



Uniform of Showman

Each showman should wear a neat, clean uniform; since this is a show of dairy animals, white is best. Some shows even have rules that uniforms must be white. Certainly at least a clean white shirt should be worn. It makes no sense to have beautifully prepared dairy goats and an unkempt showman.

Washing

Bathing goats with a mild shampoo before clipping them helps keep clipper blades sharp. Goats should be rebathed and rinsed well after clipping to remove loose hair and dandruff. Newly clipped goats, especially those with light skin, are apt to sunburn and should be provided with shade or a lightweight coat until the hair grows out a little and the skin becomes less sensitive. Newly clipped goats are also sensitive to draft and chills and need to be covered while not in the show ring.

Either the day before, or the morning of the show, wash the entire body of the dairy goat, if the weather is warm enough. (If not, clean soiled areas with a damp rag or sponge and thoroughly brush the coat.) Use lukewarm water and very mild soap; rinse thoroughly with lukewarm water to avoid chilling, and either towel dry, use a hair dryer, or place the animal in the sun until dry. Be sure to clean the nose, ears, knees, and under the tail. If the hooves are dirty, scrape and wash them.

Neck Chain

Finally, provide a properly fitted neck chain or collar to lead the dairy goat. It should be loose enough to be comfortably fit the dairy goat but tight enough so that it will not slip off over the head. Chains have the advantage of being relatively resistant to chewing destruction by other dairy goats, but since they come in many sizes, select the proper link size to complement the size of the animal. No refined junior kid can look her best while wearing a neck chain that is heavy enough to control a 250-pound buck. Leather collars are easy on the hands, but tend to detract from the appearance of a long, lean neck, especially if they are too wide. When using a collar, the buckle should be kept in the showman's hand on the side of the neck away from the judge.

Collars should fit correctly, so that you can control your animal's movements in the ring. It is ideal to work with your animals ahead of time until they lead readily and respond quickly to signals. They should move forward with a slight pull on the collar and stop when you pull slightly up and back. Getting your animals used to wearing a collar and teaching them to lead and be tolerant of strangers is important with young stock, because they can often be stubborn about learning show manners.

Preparation for Showing

Where possible, try to have about 12 hours of milk in the udder at the time of showing. Most dairy goats look their best after a 12-14 hour time lapse from the last milking. A few heavy milkers may look better in less time, and a few with exceptionally strong medial suspensory ligaments could go a bit longer. Most of the timing is done by regulated pre-show milkouts, when all does in milk, of a certain breed, must be milked dry at a specified time before the show, usually the evening before. This is a sensible procedure, since some inexperienced or over-zealous showmen might otherwise try to impress a judge with a seemingly huge udder capacity by not milking a doe for 24 hours or more.

Such over distended udders are destructive to the doe, weakening her udder attachments and severely straining the delicate milk secreting tissues. They are also an insult to a responsible judge, who isn't fooled because s/he sees that udder texture is lacking. Wise breeders and showmen should make their voices heard to show committees and fair boards when pre-show milkout times are being established. We want

dairy goats to look their impressive best, but we also want them to be comfortable at a normal milking time capacity or slightly more.

When the show starts, make a point of being on time for each class. If you are showing several dairy goats in consecutive classes, have one person concentrate on preparing them for the next class. This includes a last minute brushing to remove and bedding picked up from lying down, removal of any litter from the hooves and perhaps a light spraying with hair conditioner. A last minute drink might improve body capacity. If flies are a problem, use a fly repellent, which should help the dairy goat to stand more quietly in the show-ring.

SHOW DAY

1. Have your dairy goat checked by the show veterinarian before unloading.
2. Set up your pen area and let your animals relax while you have their registration papers, checked by the Fair Official.
3. Find out the order of classes and be aware of the showing procedures. Normally, first and second place winners of each class must remain at ringside to compete for Junior or Senior Champion.

The Junior and Senior Champions, in turn, compete for Grand Champion of their respective breed. Registered animals receive credit for Championships only if the tattoos can be clearly read by the judge.

4. Clean up your animal in the morning so that you only need to wipe her off with a rag before entering the ring. Pay particular attention to the nose, ears, hooves and tail area.
5. Offer additional hay and water periodically to fill her stomach so that she shows her normal depth of barrel for the class.
6. Take your dairy goat out of the pen just prior to her class to let her settle down before entering the ring, but not so early that you tire her out.
7. Know your doe's birth, breeding and freshening date and the parts of the body in preparation for questions that may be asked by the judge.
8. Give your doe a final wipe-off before entering the ring.
9. Show that you enjoy exhibiting your dairy goat. Smile.

