

NEW YORK STATE 4-H MEAT GOAT PROJECT FACT SHEET #22



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Revised April 2013
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GETTING YOUR MEAT KID READY FOR A SHOW

Some people really enjoy exhibiting their goat project to the general public. A good opportunity to do this is by participating in your county and even your state 4-H livestock show. However, in order for a judge and the general public to fairly evaluate your meat kid, your kid needs to be properly prepared. Preparation includes teaching your kid to lead and stand quietly when being handled by people, and having your kid well groomed so that the judge can really see his conformation and not have to look past a muddy coat or long shaggy hair. All this preparation needs to start several weeks before the show.

Training your kid – the first step to training your kid to behave well at a show is to familiarize him with people. You want him to trust you and other people rather than panicking at the sight of people. Take the opportunity every day when you feed and water him to approach him quietly rather than chase him. Scratching him between the ears, brushing him, and feeding him some feed directly out of your hands will help to make him want to be around you.

Once he learns not to panic when you come into his pen and pet him, you can start to let him follow you on short walks around your land. Many tame goats will follow you without a leash. The next step is to buy him a collar and leadrope and teach him to tie. Tie him to a stout fence or post and stand close by while he struggles to free himself. You can use a quick release safety knot used for tying up horses if you know how to tie one. Gradually walk farther away as he becomes more resigned to being confined to one spot. However, do not leave a tied goat unattended. He could accidentally strangle and die. Practice this for about 10 minutes daily.

Next you can start to teach him to lead. Do not take a steady pull on the rope. This just makes it easier for him to lean against you. Instead give and take on the rope with short jerks. When he steps forward reward him by slacking up (giving) on the rope and praising him. Keep his head up with his collar or halter while you lead him. If he gets his head down it is easier for him to get out of control and run away with you. Teach him to lead with his front shoulder even with your leg. His head should be out in front of your body. Sometimes it helps to have a friend or family member assist you by pushing forward on his rump if he refuses to move forward with you. Try to get him used to having his legs stroked. This way you can start to teach him to properly set up. Every time you halt, set his front legs up first. Then set up his hind legs. Use the collar or halter to keep his body and head straight while you are setting him up. You want his legs to be square, i.e. the front legs should be directly under his body and even with each other, not one in front of the other. The same should be true of his hind legs. His hind legs can be slightly spread apart and stretched back a little so he looks proud and alert and his body is really on display. Gradually he will learn to set himself up without waiting for you to move his legs around. You can also use pressure on his shoulders to train him to set up.

Be sure not to overwork your goat. Work him several times a week but never for more than around 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to stop at a high point when he is really behaving well. Familiarize yourself with the different rules for showing your goat in front of a judge. Find out whether you are expected to wear all white clothes or just a clean, neat pair of blue jeans and nice shirt or blouse. Be sure not to wear a hat or cap and don't get between your goat and the judge (i.e. move to the other side when you are passing into the view of the judge). If you can, get ready for the show by practicing with a group of friends and their goats. Be sure to take turns handling each other's goats.

Making sure your goat is well groomed – take the time to brush your goat several times a week. This will help keep his coat shiny and also help to tame him down. Trim his hooves regularly and time one trimming to be about 7 to 10 days before the show. Check the clipping rules for the show you are showing him at. Usually you want to give your market kid a hair cut (clip him) about two weeks before the show. This way it will be easy for the judge to observe how well he is put together (his conformation) and how well muscled he is. If you wait and do him too close to the show, the clipper marks will show and he will look less smooth and be more susceptible to chilling if the weather turns cold. Also if he going to be slaughtered immediately after the fair, most buyers prefer a goat that has a neat short hair coat rather than one that looks shaved and half naked.

Make sure your goat is clean before you clip him. You can give him a bath with mild detergent first if he is really dirty. Otherwise, brushing should be enough. Use a pair of well oiled, large animal clippers with a blade that will leave his hair about ¼ to ½ “ long (usually a 83AU top blade and a 84AU bottom blade). Run the clippers in the direction his hair grows rather than against it. This means you will usually be running them parallel to his body rather than vertical. Hair below the hocks and knees is usually not shorn (especially with your big clippers!) and you will want to bob the long hairs at the end of his tail. You can use small animal clippers around his eyes, ears, pasterns, and any other sensitive areas.

In contrast, doe kids and mature breeding stock rarely get a complete body clip unless you are doing them many weeks before the show. Instead, they are “cleaned up” along their pasterns, fetlocks, tail area, and brisket. The tail is slicked down and lightly bobbed for a more natural look than for a dairy goat and unsightly hairs along the belly may also be trimmed. The ridge of hair running along the neck of bucks may also be trimmed as well. Small to moderate sized clippers are used fitted with #10 to #30 blades. Some people clip only certain areas and lightly blend the clipped areas into the main body of the goat while others lightly clip the entire goat using various blade sizes and guards.

Once your goat is washed and ready for the show, be sure to bed his stall well so he does not get manure stains.

Making sure your goat is in shape – keep good records on how your kid is growing to make sure that your kid is getting the right amount of food for his age and build. Make sure your kid gets plenty of exercise to help develop his muscles. It also helps to keep track of his body condition score so you can tell how ready he is for slaughtering for the various goat meat markets. You need to keep in mind that the judge is going to evaluate your goat on how ready for slaughter he appears on show day. Your kid may still be growing rapidly and not quite ready for slaughter on show day. Or you may have a kid that has finished a growth spurt and has started getting too fat or over-finished at show time. If your goat does not show well, try to evaluate what you might want to do differently next time. Remember that there is a lot more to a market kid project than just showing so try not to over emphasize the importance of the show.

Make sure you have all your paperwork with you – check the show requirements to see what health papers are needed and when your veterinarian has to view the goat to fill out the papers. If you show breeding stock, make sure to get your goat registered with the proper breed association in time to get the registration papers back before the show if the show requires registration papers. Registered goats need to be properly identified by their tattoos while market wethers and unregistered goats need official scrapie eartags or tattoos for identification.

Suggested Activities

- 1) Take time several times a week to brush your goat and teach him to lead and stand.*
- 2) Watch a clipping demonstration and then either clip your own goat or assist in the clipping depending on your age and experience.*
- 3) Watch a goat show and critique the showmanship skills of the different participants.
- 4) Participate in a 4-H county livestock show.*

* Activity is suitable for Cloverbuds.