

Is Your Goat Ready for the Fair?

By Judy Kaye

As summer time approaches here in the West, we start getting our goats ready for Fair. I am not talking about his physique. The proper weight and condition should already be on target. I am talking about his general appearance and preparation.

Hopefully, you have bought your wether from a reputable breeder; one that has taken care of the major animal husbandry practices. These include: proper disbudding, scrotal removal, and a scrapie tag.

The scrapie tag comes from the original breeder. Your goat should have one in his ear at the time of purchase. Your breeder should also have provided a bill of sale.

Improper disbudding results in a wether with horns or scurs. Your first responsibility is to know the horn rules for your fair. Generally, if your wether has horns, the horns need to be tipped (When I say tipped I am talking about trimming off the sharp point at the end of the horn and sanding it smooth.). You can use a pair of hoof trimmers to remove about 1/4" to 3/8" off the horn tip. Make them as blunt as possible. This helps to reduce the risk of exhibitors and fairgoers from being poked or scratched by the horn. What about scurs? Scurs are horn tissue that has grown back and are loose from the skull. Most fair rules allow scurs if 1" or less. If the nub is longer than 1" it can be twisted off with a pair of pliers. The nub can also be cut off with a pair of hoof trimmers. Consult your local Vet on removal of large scurs or horns as they bleed profusely. You may want to have blood stop powder on hand when trimming horns. Despite the screaming and possible bleeding, trimming scurs does not hurt them.

Shearing your wether: About a month before fair, clip your wether. This allows you to see his condition more accurately. There is nothing more shocking than taking off the fluff and finding a lot smaller goat. I use a Lister-type clipper with Covercote blades to shear the goats. I never go below a Medium blade (aka: A2). I like to keep our wethers sheared down especially during the hot summer months. You can wash your wether before clipping. Usually I do not wash before clipping unless he is really dirty. I prefer to use a blower to remove dust and loose hair. You can make a spray with a solution of 1/3 part water, 1/3 part white vinegar and 1/3 part rubbing alcohol. Saturate the coat with this solution. Brush in with a rice root or other stiff brush. Then use a blower and blow out the goat's hair until damp. Clip for show day. When using Covercotes, you can clip right up to show day. It is less pressure on the goat and exhibitor to do it a day or two in advance. Medium blades are best a week ahead, which allows any lines to blend. Clip your wether from head to tail and from the hocks and knees up. You need to go with-the-hair on the tail to blend it. Remember, the idea is to enhance the goat's natural attributes. Do not leave a big tassel on the tail. And blend the clipping into the knee and hock joints! Your wether should not have leg bracelets above the joint (This is where the hair around the hock and knees is not blended and visually reduces the size of the forearm and

gaskin.). You can pull the hair up on the legs, but make sure it is blended and trimmed to straight angles in every direction. The joints should be the same size as the cannon bones. After clipping, you can blow or rinse the hair off. I use skin conditioner after clipping, like Revive. Fact: Goats have lice. After shearing your wether you might see little bugs on them. These are lice and their presence will get you kicked out of the fair. Since lice are bloodsuckers they can also affect your goat's growth performance. Prevention is the best practice. Use a pouron like Cyence or powder like Sevin dust. This will kill lice immediately without any harm or withdrawal period. Trim your wether's feet when you have him up on the stand clipping him. Trimming his feet before show time will give him time to learn to walk with his "new shoes." Also, if you quick him (draw blood) he has time to recover. Do not be afraid to trim heel off your goat's feet. Some grow a lot of heel and it needs to be trimmed too.



Blend, blend, blend!



Avoid unsightly bracelets.



Tail Tassels

Washing your wether: Most exhibitors wash their wether at the fair too much and too often. Only apply soap to extremely dirty spots, like the knees. Preferably rinse your wether with plain water to keep him clean and cool. After rinsing I apply either Show Sheen or Revive. This helps keep the wether handling good and makes them more dirt resistant.

What equipment do you need to show your wether? You really only need 1 thing to show your wether, a neck chain. Most dog chains will work. There are many types commercially available, the larger the link the better. A large link is more comfortable for your hand and the goat. I prefer plastic link chains as they are easiest to use. Purchase a locking link at the hardware store to attach the ends of the chain. If the chain fits easily over the head there is a greater risk of losing him in the ring. Note: If you are in pain from the chain on your hand...think about how it feels to the goat on his throat. It is likely the chain isn't high enough on the goat's neck, is too small (not enough room for your hand), or the goat just isn't trained properly. Note: Pinch collars when used properly are an effective tool for a small person on a big goat. However, read the rules to make sure they are not illegal at your fair.

Teaching them to lead: The best practice is to train your goat to learn how to lead with a rope halter. Do not drag them. Get behind and drive them forward. Make kissing or clicking sounds to "chase" them. Take them on the same route several days in a row. They are smart and will figure out where you are going. After a few days you can walk by their shoulder. Start using the chain with the halter. Use the chain more and more until the goat will lead with the chain alone.

Once you've accomplished these steps you will have spent time at home with your project and will be fully prepared for the fair. So get out there and clip, trim, blend, rinse, and know the rules. With all these ingredients you will have a successful project. Good luck and have fun! If you have additional questions send me an email: Ask Judy, wrr@jps.net.

PS



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