

Fitting Market Goats for Shows in Tennessee

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The question comes up quite often about the correct way to fit a Market Goat in Tennessee. The debate will go on for some time, but this fact sheet will try to give some guidelines and suggestions for fitting Market Goats. When the group of agents in Middle Tennessee started the program, it was understood that there would be limited rules for this program. Historically, some leaders, agents and breeders would stretch the rules as far as they could and still stay within the guidelines. With limited rules, it would provide a more level playing field for all the youth involved. Rules for fitting are the same way. There are several different ideas on fitting Market Goats for show and it is understood that there may never be a set of hard, fast rules for fitting market goats. The main goal of **every** 4-H project is youth development. This area with a Market Goat; the whole idea is on making our youth more ready for their adult life. The goat is just a vehicle for us to teach life skills.

The main objective of fitting goats for show is to make the goat look the very best that you can. While this is more than a beauty contest, the physical appearance of the goat and the exhibitor both come into play at any show. Due to the fact, that most Junior Shows have become the most competitive events in the show world. You need to do whatever you can to give your animal and yourself every possible available advantage you can. This is true with whatever species of animal you might show.

A show goat is an animal that we want to be very lean. One of the strongest faults that many judges give for tying a goat out to the top spots is due to the goat being fat. Therefore, we are striving to have the correct amount of finish or "bloom" on our goat. Washing a goat removes all the natural oil from the hair. Without this oil, the hide and the hair feels coarse and dry to the touch. Using a hair dryer will only add to the dry coarse touch and can increase dehydration. Wash your goat at least a week prior to the show. Keep it in a clean, dry stall or barn area. Daily remove any manure, and this will insure that your goat will be clean at the show. This also means hauling the goat in a clean, well bedded truck or trailer. If on a show day, you need to wash your goat, try to spot wash the goat and dry with a chamois or use a waterless soap. It seems that it takes forever for a goat to warm up on a show and there is nothing uglier than a freshly washed, hump-backed, wrinkle-hided, shivering goat. Some exhibitors will use a modified sheep blanket or cover after they wash their goat and bring it to the show to help insure that the goat will stay clean. This is important if you are body clipping your goat and showing it in cold weather. Check the rear end of the goat to make sure that it has not had an accident under the cover. Cleanliness is next to Godliness when it comes to showing goats.

There are a number of issues that must be addressed before deciding which type of clipper or blades should be used, when to clip your goat, and most importantly, how to clip your goat. Generally speaking, it is important to understand what removing the hair from the animal does in terms of freshness

and bloom. One advantage of hair is for the retention of bloom or fluid in the carcass. Since we know that we want goats that are extremely lean, there is little, if any, fat on the outer carcass of the goat. Therefore, when we remove the hair from our goats, we create a situation where the goat loses body fluid and bloom. Much of this occurs in the first 12 hours after clipping. With this in mind, the closer that you clip your goat to show time, the fresher that it will feel. This is especially true if you have a thin goat. In like terms, if your goat is carrying too much condition, the clipping should be done earlier so your goat can lose some of the condition and make it feel leaner and firmer to the touch.

The type of clippers that are used really does not make too much difference. The type of blade makes all the difference in the world. The range of clippings that I have seen had been from shaving to no clipping at all. I will tell you that I consider one to be as NASTY as the other. Many people tend to use the blades that are being used in the market lamb arena. These surgical type blades remove too much hair and tend to turn your potential champion into a little, "pink," hairless beast. Many of the Boer type crosses have very unusual hide color patterns. When these "little darlings" have all the hair removed, this allows these patterns to show through and can really detract from the appearance of your goat. When possible, if you use these types of blades, clipping should be done at least a week prior to the show. If possible, I would recommend that a medium type of blade or an "extra cover" type of blade be used. This small amount of hair will also provide enough smoothness to improve the touch of the goat. If your goat has an abundance of cashmere in their hair, they will need to be clipped with a fine type of blade and given enough time for some regrowth before the show.

Some judges prefer that goats be clipped and others prefer them to be unclipped, the common denominator is that the animal be clean. Clipping usually improves the appearance of your goat and improves the "handle" of your goat. No matter how fresh a long-haired goat may be, the presence of hair dramatically affects the touch or handle of a goat. If you decide to clip your goat, there are two types of accepted clippings. One is a total body clip and the other is a belly, flank and "wild hair" clip. Many times, this last type starts as one and ends as the other. Let's first talk about the latter of these types of clipping. This method helps make the goat appear cleaner about the underline and will give the appearance that the goat is trimmer throughout. Exhibitors need to understand that it takes quite a bit of time to blend this clipping job into a smooth appearance. Many times, this type of clip job leads to the appearance that it was done with a weed eater rather than a set of clippers. Time and care must be taken when using this approach in fitting a goat for a show. Many times, this type is too difficult for youngsters to attempt. A full body clip is where you remove all the hair above the hocks and knees. **EVERYTHING!!!** This includes the belly, sides, between the rear legs, the neck and even the head.

If you decide to give a full body clip, leaving hair on the head gives the appearance that the goat may be old and stale. The only exception to this is the switch on the tail. Leave only the amount of hair on the switch that would be comparable to a paintbrush of that size. The switch on your goat is not a fan, nor

is it the tail of a poodle. Leaving lots of hair on the tail may make your goat look wider, but it also makes your goat's butt look narrower. This is not a good thing. When clipping, **always** clip against the hair. In other words, if the hair grows down, clip up. Also be careful of "cross clipping" the hair. This leaves lines and can ruin the velvety appearance of fresh clipped hair. Leaving the hair from the knees and hocks down will give the goat the appearance of being heavily boned and trimming the hair around the hoof line will give the appearance of the kid being bigger footed.

A good fitting job will mean the difference between winning your class and just being an "also ran." Take your time, practice clipping at times that will not hurt the appearance of your goat at a show. When you look around at the goats that are winning show, notice how their goats are fitted. Learn by watching and practice using clippers. Above all else, never give up on doing the best job you can.