

These Are Meat Animals!

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Now that you have narrowed your selections down to the kids that have the “look” and are structurally correct, it is time to put the finishing touches on your prospect pickin’. Since we are showing meat goats, it is EXTREMELY important to select kids that have an abundance of meat and muscling. I am sure you are aware there is a huge difference between light-muscled and heavy-muscled goats. But how much muscle is enough? Can you get too much muscle? In regard to selecting prospects, you must select young kids that excel in muscularity. Selecting narrow-based, flat-legged kids almost always result in narrow, light-muscled, RED RIBBON finished goats!

You also have to keep in mind body condition or bloom. A thin goat always looks lighter muscled than a bloomy or gat goat as a prospect. But I PROMISE you, this will change as the thin kid grows and blooms! So what do you do? Well, the answer starts at the ground and goes up and from the rump goes forward.

All heavy muscled livestock walk wide. Therefore, a kid that walks wide on the ground is or will be heavy muscled, regardless of how big-butted or narrow-butted and how much or how little condition is on the kid. The second area you need to look for muscling is through the center of the leg or the stifle. Quite obviously, the more shape and expression a kid has through his leg, the more flare and mass he will have as a finished goat. But you say. “I found a huge-butted kid that walks narrow on the ground.” Odds are you have found a highly-fitted, light muscled goat that will mature into a flat, narrow-based finished product. (We will discuss this beast a little further in just a moment!) The other side of the coin is the flat-legged, narrow-stifled kid that walks wide on the ground. He will usually develop his muscularity and shape as he blooms and lays on condition. Have I confused you yet? Then, let’s try something else. One of the easiest areas to evaluate muscling in prospects is through the forearm. This area is rarely ever covered by fat and is affected little by lack of bloom. A prospect that has a big forearm with lots of muscle shape in this area will almost always be heavy muscled when finished.

NOTICE, I have not talked about looking at the topline of the kid for muscling. I am always hesitant to recommend evaluating toplines for muscling on young kids because it can get you in trouble. I do understand that rack and loin shape and width are two of the big muscle areas we evaluate on finished goats. But problems arise when you select for width of top on prospects. When you select a wide-topped goat, you MAY have just committed the “sin” of selecting what we in the livestock business call a “COUNTERFEIT.” Goats, be they big or little, that are wide-topped and narrow on the ground are ALWAYS fat and light muscled. Also, if you only select for wide-topped prospects you will almost always miss that “sleeper.”

Ninety percent of the time that sleeper will come back and bite you, if you know what I mean! I prefer to select for proportional width and true shape of top, rather than just width. A heavy muscled kid should be square-topped and then get wider as you go toward the ground. When you find this prospect and he meets all our other criteria, BUY HIM, (if the price is right)—he will be good! The more common discoveries are the thinner, “greener” prospects that are hard to evaluate for top shape. When this situation arises, it’s time to let your hands do a little work.

When handling toplines for muscling, I prefer to evaluate the rack rather than the loin. Since the rack area is smaller, I find it much easier to evaluate for shape

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differences. When you grab the rack area (right behind the shoulders) and you find anything other than spine, your prospect has muscle. A shapely rack will feel like a roll of coins on each side of the spine. The larger the diameter of the coins, the more total muscle shape your prospect possesses. If you get a handful of bone, that is probably what you will have when he is finished – a narrow –topped, high-spined, light-muscled goat! Another issue that you can address while you are handling the prospects is one you can address while you are handling the prospects is one that is going to play a much larger role in the future of showing market goats –handling firmness. There is a world of difference in the “touch” of goats. This is solely a function of muscle tone and firmness. When you are handling those prospects and you happen to run across one that feels like a concrete block, I would probably put a star by his number.

The final area I use in evaluating muscling is bone. That’s right—bone. Research clearly shows that in all species (a few exceptions exist) there is a direct correlation between bone and muscling. Therefore, when you select for heavier boned animals, you are generally selecting for heavier muscled animals. Now don’t get on your soap-box and tell me about all the great muscled, fine-boned animals you have seen. I have seen a few, myself. But one again, this is the exception to the rule. Breed differences also play a major role in this situation.

Now, let’s address the issue of too much muscle. When you select tight, round, extremely heavy-muscled prospects you are walking a slippery slope. Although that massive kid may grow out and be fine, the more common result is a little, coarse (but thick) “pumpkin” or a finished goat that is so tight that when he moves he looks like a “chaffed” duck and will get a red ribbon or worse due to his lack of structural soundness.

So what do you do? Simply pick as much muscle as you can without them being round, course and tight. Select wide walking, thick stifled, big forearmed kids that have thick, square tops and get wider as you go to the ground. At this point, you should have prospects with the “look”, are structurally correct and heavy muscled. Now, it’s time to “PAY THE PIPER.”