

Your Project Animal Home

By Ricky C. Skillington, Central Region Goat Specialist, University of Tennessee Extension

Once you have selected your future champions, there are a number of areas that need to be addressed. Make sure your pens are ready to receive your new prospects before you attempt to bring them home. There is nothing worse or more stressful to a young prospect than to be hauled for miles (and sometimes days), to be forced to sit on a trailer 2-3 more days after arriving home until the new pen is readied. Make sure the pen is well bedded and contains a fresh bucket of electrolyte water along with a delicious “light” snack of high quality legume hay such as alfalfa. Notice I said a **LIGHT** snack of hay. Remember, your prospect may be pretty empty and providing a whole bale of hay could give them the opportunity to gorge themselves. Extra-heavy consumption of hay will most likely provide them with a serious hay gut and a flaming case of the “screen door” squirts. If you do not know about or have never had an animal with the “screen doors” –just use your imagination!

When you pick up your prospects, either from the sale or off the farm, make sure you have the appropriate health certificates that will allow you to bring them home. Simply check with your local or state veterinarian, they will be glad to assist you in ensuring that your new kids meet all your state’s health requirements. A note of caution—if you are buying off the farm, make sure that the breeder is aware of your health requirements. Many times, for one reason or another, it takes a couple of days to secure health papers. If you are buying directly from a sale, the health papers are **USUALLY** in order. However, it never hurts to call ahead just to make sure.

Before you load your prospects, you also need to check with the breeder about the vaccinations your kids have had or have not had. Be absolutely sure that your new prospects have received **at least two** overeating shots. There is nothing worse than finding that great prospect, bringing him home, starting him on feed and then losing him to overeating disease. I make a habit of always giving a C, D, and T shot to every animal I bring home regardless of his/her vaccination history. This 2cc injection is pretty cheap compared to the alternative. Also find out if your new prospects have been given any antibiotics to aid in the prevention of respiratory problems. Due to the stress that occurs when young goats are moved, mixed or hauled, they almost always get the “dribbles.” You have all seen animals with the “dribbles,” they are the ones that are dripping from every unpluggable hole! If no antibiotics have been given, I like to treat the kids before I put them on the truck. I also recommend that anytime you utilize an antibiotic that you also use some sort of probiotic with it. Antibiotics are great for destroying those “bad bugs” that cause problems, but they also destroy the “good bugs” that are required to keep the rumen of your young prospect operating in top order.

I also like to find out the last time the kids were dewormed and with what compound they were dewormed. This allows you to continue a deworming program or at least start one if the practice has not been applied. I like to know what the kids were last dewormed with so that it can work into a deworming rotation. Another practice I have found extremely helpful is securing a small amount of feed from the breeder of the kid. Providing your new prospect with a little “home cooking” always helps them adjust to their new environment and also aids in the transition to your feeding program.

Another vaccination we should discuss is sore-mouth. Many goat producers do not vaccinate for this virus. They simply let the virus run its course if the kids contract

the disease. Once an animal has had sore-mouth it is no longer susceptible to the disease. Although sore-mouth is not devastating, it is contagious to humans and therefore needs to be addressed. I highly recommend inquiring about whether you kids have been vaccinated; if they have not, it is very simple to perform this vaccination. There is nothing worse than to have spent all the money and hours on your project and have him break out with sore-mouth the week of your money show and then be forced to leave him home over a few cent vaccination.

I realize that goat kids are small animals and can be transported in a multitude of “devices,” and NO you do not have to own a 24 foot aluminum goose-neck trailer to haul them. But make sure your hauling “device” is safe for the animal and will provide both wind and rain protection. Try riding in the back of a pickup at 65 miles per hour when it is 40 degrees outside – the wind chill is pretty SEVERE! I have seen young prospects put into large bird cages, placed in car trunks and tied with baling twine to the fifth wheel ball in the bed of a pickup truck that had NO racks. If you want your new INVESTMENTS to be as stress free as possible, please provide them with a bedded, draft-free ride to their new residence.

After arriving home, place your prospects in their pens and allow them to rest for a couple of days before attempting to alter their world by halter breaking or any number of other practices that are yet to begin. Watch them closely, be sure they are eating, drinking and adjusting comfortably to their new surroundings. You should realize that often these young kids have gone through this terrible transition from their home ranch to your pen and this is then only compounded by just having been weaned from their dams. Also pay close attention to the health of your prospects. Watch for respiratory problems, especially pneumonia. These are not “put-it-off-until-tomorrow” problems. If you do, you may be back to hunting new prospects sooner than you intend. Simply use good judgment when you bring home your prospects, provide them a new home away from home and as a popular TV commercial says, “leave the light on for them...”