

# Market Goat Projects

## Getting Started



Raising a market goat to show in a livestock show can be one of the most rewarding projects a youth can do. Goats are ideal projects for youth who want to show livestock but may not have the ability to raise hogs or steers. Like sheep, goats require smaller living spaces and less input costs up front. But don't let them fool you, a successful goat project takes just as much time and effort as some of the larger livestock projects. This fact sheet has some tips to get your started with your market goat project.

### Selection

The first step to a market goat project is picking the right kind of goat. There are many goat breeders throughout Utah that can help exhibitors get good quality meat goats. There are also breeders raising dairy and pet goats. It's important to select a goat that is specifically bred for the correct end goal. In Utah, the vast majority of market goats have Boer bloodlines. Boer goats are a meat goat breed from South Africa. They are characterized by being white bodied with red heads, although solid colored or spotted goats are becoming more popular.

When selecting your goat, you want to look for natural width and muscle shape. Even at a young age, you'll be able to identify animals with natural width by getting a good view from the front and behind of the animal. Muscle shape is visible over the rack and through the rump. Goats should be square across the topline, not triangular. You also want a good balanced goat that has a strong topline. Although goats are not level hipped the same way as other market species, a strong topline can be a great indicator of muscle.

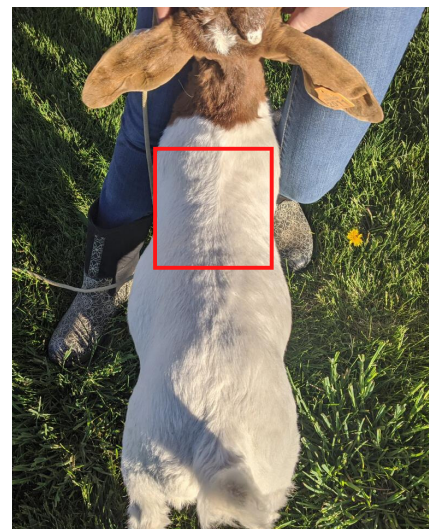
Another thing to consider when selecting your goat is to get one that is the proper age and size for the target fair. Goats typically gain .3 pounds a day when healthy and on a good diet. You should weigh your goat as often as you can throughout the season (daily or weekly if possible) to make sure you are staying on track.

Use this handy calculator to determine how big your goat needs to be at weigh in to reach it's target weight at fair:

<https://extension.usu.edu/4H-Livestock-Calculator/goat-weight-calculator>



Notice the natural width and muscle shape of the goat on the left.



This goat has a naturally thick and square rack shape..



## Nutrition



After picking a good quality meat goat, it's up to you to help it reach its potential with proper nutrition. The most important element is clean, fresh water. Goats should drink 1 - 3 gallons a day.

There are lots of feed options out there, but goats should be on a high quality grain that has 16 - 18% protein with some sort of forage (typically hay). When it comes to protein, there can be too much of a good thing. Goats are prone to urinary calculi when fed large amounts of grain and not enough hay. They should not be fed feeds that are higher than 18% and should be properly balanced for calcium and phosphorus.

Goats do well on high quality fibers such as alfalfa hay. Keep in mind that alfalfa is higher in protein, so adjust your feed accordingly. Just a handful of hay a day is enough to keep their rumen (stomach) happy.

If you aren't using a feed specific for goats, make sure that you offer goat mineral. Goats need a high level of copper in their diets, but copper is highly toxic to sheep so it's very important that you don't accidentally mix their feed.

You may want to consider supplements if you need to correct poor nutrition or to increase energy by adding fat or protein. If you are providing clean fresh water and a well balanced diet, there's no need for supplemental products, and supplements can not be used to correct poor genetics.

Although not directly related to nutrition, don't underestimate the power of deworming your goat. Read the label and make sure you are using an approved product for meat animals and are within the legal withdrawal requirements before the show. Consulting with your veterinarian can be a great way to establish a deworming schedule.

## Handling

Although there is no substitute for good genetics and quality feed, your showmanship and ability to handle your goat are just as important when trying to earn a blue ribbon. A goat that won't walk out when being led or stand still in a line makes it hard for a judge to get a good view. Most fairs will allow you to use a collar or a halter for your goat, but it's important to halter break either way. Don't wait to halter break until a week before the fair. It's best to get started right away. You can begin the process by tying your goat to the fence. Watch them closely so they don't get hurt. When they stop fighting, turn them loose.



Photo: Lidd Livestock & Design

When you are getting ready to lead, have a helper encourage your goat either in front with feed in a bucket, or from behind by clapping your hands or pinching above the tail head. Reward your goat with a treat or by relieving the pressure for every step in the right direction. Your goat should willingly step out and walk next to you without fighting by the time you get to the fair. If you are going to be showing in a collar, begin using it as soon as your goat is used to walking by your side in a halter.

Along with walking, it's important for your goat to stand still and brace (push into the exhibitor's leg). Some goats naturally brace but others need to be taught. You can teach your goat to brace by gently pushing them over a small ledge (such as off the horse trailer) or into a ditch with slow moving water. As soon as they begin to push, step away and reward them. Make your goat brace before you turn them into their pen or let them eat their grain. Gradually increase the time until your goat will brace for 5 to 10 minutes at a time. This is a good workout for both of you! It's also a good idea to have a helper pretend to be the judge and practice moving around your goat and setting its legs as though you were in the show ring.

Here are some things you should do with your goat on a daily basis:

- Tie up to the fence
- Walk on a halter
- Brace
- Set legs



The goal is to be able to walk into the show ring and have no surprises. You'll find that the adage "champions are made at home" is especially true.

These tips will help get you started with a market goat project. It's always a good idea to work closely with a club leader or an experienced exhibitor for more tips and tricks to make your market goat project a success!

Explore other opportunities for junior livestock projects at our website: at: <https://utah4h.org/projects/ag/livestock>



The goat above is learning to accept the halter and lead. The goat below is learning how to brace into the exhibitor.



## Sources

- <https://abga.org/about-abga/history/>
- [https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/urinary\\_calculi\\_in\\_sheep\\_and\\_goats](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/urinary_calculi_in_sheep_and_goats)
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