



# Guidelines on Preparing and Showing Meat Goats For Alabama Youth

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# INTRODUCTION

This article has been prepared for training and educating Alabama youth (19 years and under) to compete in meat-goat shows. Youth participation in goat shows can be rewarding in many ways, such as learning about goats and their care and management from the very early age, developing leadership and confidence while participating in the actual shows, and gaining show skills. This kind of involvement may help youth to choose a career in animal science, veterinary science, farming, or other animal-related occupations. There are several aspects that youth and their parent/guardian must be familiar with to be able to successfully compete in goat shows. These aspects are briefly presented in this article.

## GOAT SELECTION AND/OR PROCUREMENT FOR THE SHOW

If you have goat herd and would like to select a few to show, select those which show the best characteristics for the type of breed. In Figure 1, we can see a show quality Boer goat with different body parts labeled. A few common characteristics that should be looked for while selecting a show goat are listed below.

- Goats should look healthy with shiny and smooth coat, bright eyes, and no abnormalities on any parts of the body.
- Body parts should blend together.
- Goats should be well muscled with a good body condition score (3-4 on a 1-5 scale).
- Legs should be strong and well balanced with healthy joints and hooves.
- There should not be any sign of disease and parasites.
- Females must have two functional teats of good size, and males must have good-sized and balanced testicles.

If you do not have the goats for a show and would like to buy some, find a reliable, reputed goat farm to buy goats. Such a farm will be able to show you the health, performance, and genetic records and assure you of the good quality breed. It is not a good idea to buy from sale barns or stockyards. Goats taken there have usually been culled ones by previous owners because of one problem or another.





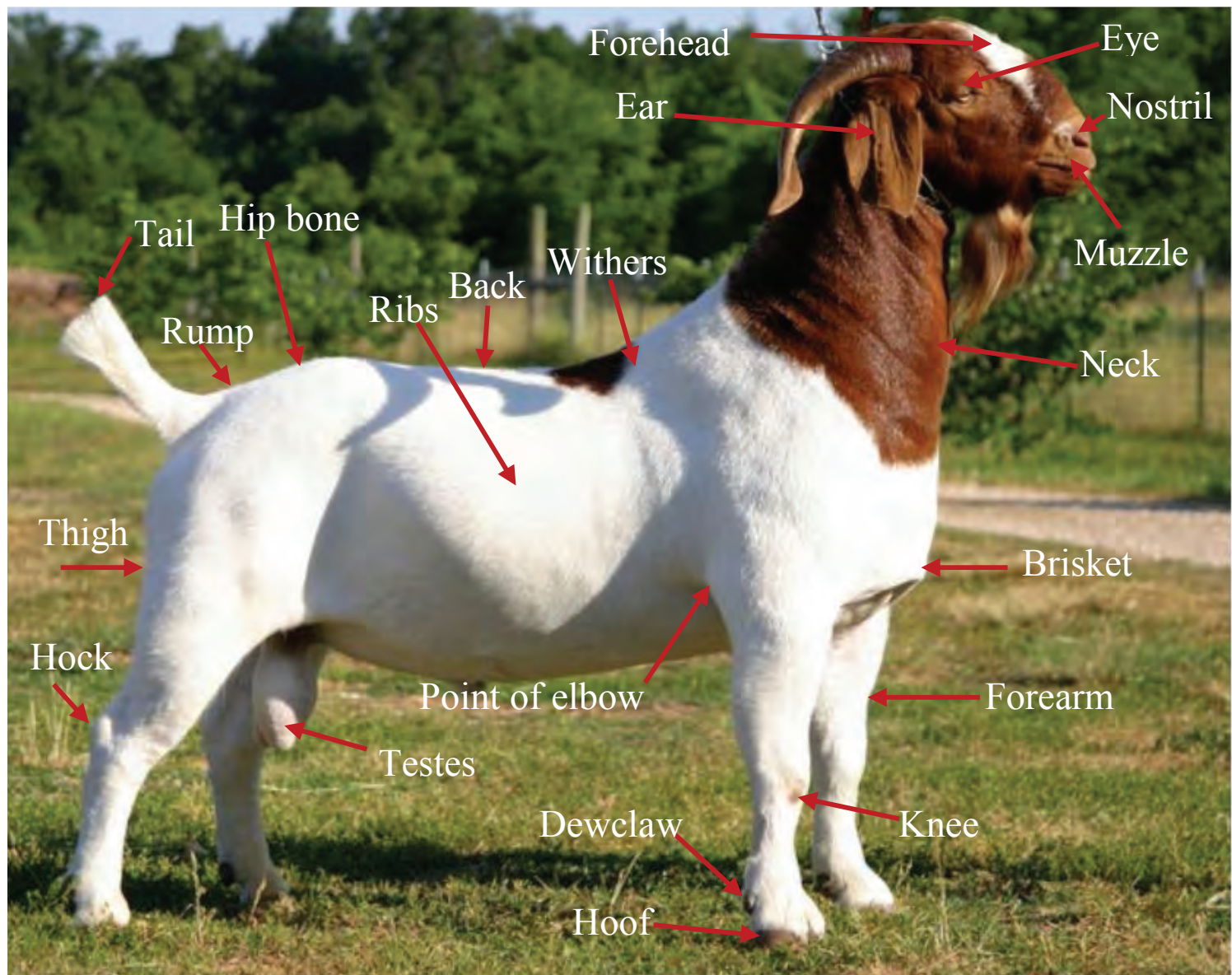


Figure 1. Body parts of a show quality Boer goat.

## PREPARATION BEFORE GOAT PROCUREMENT

If you are new to goat farming, you need to learn about it prior to establishing a farm. Self-study, attending relevant training and educational programs, visiting good goat farms around your area, and consulting with your local county agents are all good steps to learn more. The following are the basic things that need to be done before bringing any goats to any property.

### Site Selection

Before procuring any goats, one needs to identify a suitable area to raise goats. A dry, well-drained area that has a plenty of forages and browse available is good for keeping goats. A swampy area, area that gets frequent flooding, or remain wet for a long time after rain is not suitable for goats. Goats will not perform well and suffer from various health problems when kept in wet areas.

## Provision of Basic Facilities

The following basic facilities should be in place before procuring goats.

1. **Fencing:** Once the suitable site has been identified, it should be fenced properly on the perimeter. Proper fencing contains goats in the desired place in order to avoid any possible liability and protect them from predators and theft. Cross-fencing is required for rotational grazing system.
2. **Pasture and browse:** If there is not much forage available for goats in the selected site, suitable warm-season and cool-season grasses, legumes, and browse species should be established before bringing goats to your farm.
3. **Feeders:** Goats need to have access to free-choice salt and mineral mix supplied on clean feeders. Also, there must be hay feeders/racks and concentrate feeders. All types of feeders need to be placed above the ground in such a way that goats cannot step, defecate, or urinate on it. Feeders need to be kept dry and clean with the provision of roofing. Frequent cleaning minimizes health problems arising from dirty feeders.
4. **Waterers:** There must be a provision for a continuous supply of clean drinking water for goats. Water system development may require installation of water lines and watering trough/tanks, which should be positioned properly not to allow goats to contaminate with their excreta and feet. This will also prevent kids from drowning, and avoid contamination from flooding or surface run off.
5. **Shelters:** Goats need shelters during inclement weather conditions such as rain, hot summer, cold winter, and strong winds. The availability of tree shade will be useful to minimize heat and cold stress as well as wind current. Some kind of artificial shelter is necessary to protect them from rain and extreme weather conditions. Goats do not like to be wet.
6. **Guardian animals:** Provision of guardian dogs, donkeys, or llamas kept together with the goat herd minimizes the threat of predators and theft.
7. **Handling facility:** This facility is required to catch and control goats conveniently for performing routine health care such as body examination, sample collection (if necessary), hoof inspection and trimming, weighing, medication, and so on.
8. **Weighing facility:** A proper weighing scale is required in any goat operation for determining the body weight of goats. Body weight is required for calculating medication dosage, estimating selling price, putting in show category, and assessing the growth performance.

County agents, livestock and forage specialists, and technical assistance personnel working with different government and non-government organizations that serve your area should be able to provide you with further information on any of the above facilities. Also, lots of information regarding goat farming is available at [www.extension.org/goat](http://www.extension.org/goat). Moreover, several relevant publications are available from land-grant universities, which focus on goats such as Tuskegee University, Langston University, and most of the other 1890 land-grant universities through their cooperative extension programs. These universities also conduct educational programs such as training, workshops, and field days at different times during the year. If you need any training or educational material, your local county extension agent should be able to help you.

# CARE AND MANAGEMENT OF SHOW GOATS

The basic care and management of show goats is not much different from non-show goats. The basic health care and management of goats are listed below.

1. **Colostrum feeding:** Colostrum is the very first mammary secretion of does after or around kidding. It is thicker than normal milk and sticky. Colostrum changes to normal milk in three to four days. The newborn should ingest enough colostrum within 24 hours of birth – ingestion should start soon after birth and then as frequently as the newborn desires. Colostrum contains immunoglobulins, which are special kinds of protein that provide immunity to the newborn against many diseases. Immunity is the ability of animals' body to fight against infections. Colostrum also contains water, energy, and several other nutrients that are required for the newborns' survival and growth.
2. **Hoof inspection and trimming:** Goat herds should be inspected for any overgrown hooves from time to time and trimmed if necessary. Otherwise, hooves get cracked, bend towards the soft tissues underneath it, keep the toes apart and expose interdigital tissues to poking objects, and so on. All these situations accelerate hoof diseases and cause lameness in the animals.
3. **Vaccination:** Vaccination against *Clostridium perfringens* type C and D, and tetanus is usually recommended. Contact your veterinarian for further vaccination requirements for your herd.
4. **FAMACHA and smart drenching:** An internal parasite problem can be a major hurdle in your herd, especially the barber pole worm (*Haemonchus contortus*). This worm is a blood sucker, which cause anemia in goats. FAMACHA card should be used to monitor the anemic condition of goats every two weeks when the weather condition is warm and wet, and every three to four weeks during cold and dry weather. All the anemic goats should be treated following the direction of 'FAMACHA and smart drenching' principle. You need to be trained on this system to be able to use it.
5. **Body condition score:** This score usually ranges from 1 to 5 for meat goats. Goats in condition score 1 are very lean and thin; you can see and feel all bony structures of those goats such as vertebra (backbone), ribs, and sternum (breastbone). There is not much muscle and fat between bones and skin. Condition score 5 indicates that the goats are very fat, as there is a thick layer of muscle and fat between bones and skin; you will have a hard time feeling backbones, ribs, and breastbone. Both too thin and too fat goats are not desirable. Try to maintain a body condition between 3 and 4.



- 6. Health inspection and care:** Other than the above mentioned points, goats should be inspected everyday attentively head to toe for any abnormality in any part of the body, body secretion and excretions, and behavior. If you notice any kind of abnormality in any animal, the animal should be separated from the herd, quarantined, and treated immediately. When the animal resumes its normal health condition, then it should be brought back to the herd.
- 7. Nutrition and feeding:** Goats should be fed well for their good health and performance. They need to have access to a good quality pasture that has enough forage for them to be able to graze and browse. As already mentioned, there must be a provision of continuous supply of clean drinking water and free choice of salt and trace mineral mix specifically prepared for goats. If the available forage in the pasture is not enough for goats, then you need to supplement with a good quality hay (using a hay rack) and concentrate feed (on suitable feeder) such as commercial feeds prepared for goats, homemade feed consisting of energy and protein sources (for example, corn and soybean mix), and industrial byproducts (soy hulls, peanut skins, cottonseed meal, etc.). You need to maintain the target condition score (3-4) of your goats with proper feeding management.

## TRAINING OF SHOW GOATS

Goats selected for shows should be trained for at least two months. Walk and train your goat every day with a leading chain for about 15 to 20 minutes. After each walking and training, reward the goat with some feed. You can mimic the situation of an actual show while walking and training your goat by changing positions, stopping frequently between walks, and adjusting the goat's posture with all legs straight and in parallel position to each other (back legs, front legs, and the back leg and front leg on the same side), straight back, and head in a raised position as shown in Figure 2. During the training, do not harass your goats, but love and care for them so that you can gain trust. Well-trained goat will follow your lead in the actual show, and help you win the competition. Also, make sure to groom your goats before starting each training session so that they get used to the procedures, and will not give you a hard time when you try to do it before the actual show.



Figure 2. Desired goat posture at the show ring.

Untrained goats will not follow the showing person as desired; instead, they may resist to go to the show ring, become reluctant to walk, try to escape and run away, jump, sit down rather than standing, bend on their knees, and so many other complications, which will lower your score (Figure 3).



Figure 3. A goat lying down (A), trying to escape (B), and trying to jump (C) at an actual show ring.

## PREPARATION OF GOATS FOR THE SHOW

You need to have a “goat show kit” as presented below to prepare your goats for the show.

**Goat show kit:** collar and leading chain, hair clipper, towel, shampoo, brush, hoof trimmer and accessories (cleaning brush, iodine just in case there is bleeding while trimming hoof, hoof leveler), tag and tag applicator (in case goats are not tagged already).

Once you have the show kit, begin preparing your goats for the show as listed below.

1. **Feed properly:** Pay attention to proper feeding of show goats to obtain the target body condition (3-4). If the goats are in poor body condition (below 2.5), increase nutrient supply to them. However, if they are too fat with higher than 4 body condition score, then reduce energy and protein supplement. You need to be watchful on the body condition even before training your goats.
2. **Tag:** Tag your animals for identification as soon as you procure them (if not done so earlier).
3. **Clip hair:** The target of hair clipping is to give a smooth, shiny look to the goat at the show. Do the major hair clipping 10 to 14 days in advance of the actual show date. This will provide time for the hair to grow back and provide smooth look in case you happen to mess up while clipping. Do the final clipping couple of days before the show, if any necessary fix on the body coat is required.



4. **Trim hoof:** Inspect and trim the overgrown hooves as often as necessary during the training period, and then one week before the show. If you do not know how to trim hooves, get help from somebody who trims on a regular basis.
5. **Clean:** Shampoo and wash the body of the goats one day before the show. Make sure to contain the goat in a proper handling facility while shampooing and washing. Use warm water for washing if the day is cold. After washing, dry the goat with a towel and let it be in the sun to dry completely. Make a provision of clean bedding so that goats would not get dirty again. Make sure every part of the body is clean such as under the tail, legs, hoof, between the toes, inside the ear, and eyes.
6. **Brush:** Brush the hair coat to give it a shiny and clean look. Brush it immediately after drying with towel, and before bringing to the show. You can brush more frequently if you feel it is necessary.
7. **Get a health certificate:** You may be required to present the current health certificate for your goats in order to participate in the show. Check with the show organizer(s) and arrange for the necessary paperwork on time.
8. **Register for the show:** If you are required to pre-register for the show, do so on time. You need to check with the show organizer.
9. **Other arrangements for the show day:** Make provision for food, drinks, and sitting arrangements such as chairs for your team, goat feed, and water. Usually, none of these supplies are provided by the organizers in any show. Make sure you have transportation to bring your goats to the show venue. Be aware of all rules and regulations of the show in advance and follow them.

## ATTIRE AND PRESENTATION AT THE SHOW

- A. **Attire:** You need to understand that you are showing goats rather than showing yourself. However, you need to dress properly for the show. Comfortable pant, buttoned shirt, and boots will be good attire for showing goats. This kind of attire will minimize the chance of injury to you if something goes wrong. You do not need to put on any dress or suit, nor wear a hat or goggles. Make sure you shower before going to the show and remain clean and tidy throughout the show. Get your hair cut if necessary before the show. If you have long hair, make a pony tail or bun.
- B. **Presentation:** How you present your goats at the show ring makes a huge difference in your score. Important tips that you should be familiar with and implement during the show are listed below.
  1. Arrive at the show venue on time and sign in. Ask the organizer if there is any requirement before you participate in the show.
  2. Watch the show ring and surroundings, and be aware of any highs and lows on the walking ground within the show ring. Be sure to avoid those while walking.
  3. Be aware of your number on the roll and be ready when called to enter the ring.
  4. While entering the show ring, hold the leading chain of your goat with your right hand keeping the goat on your right side, and walk in a clockwise direction unless you are directed otherwise.



5. There will be a judge assessing how you are showing the goat, and at the same time judging your goat. You need to always face the judge, be attentive, follow the given directions, and answer questions that you are asked. Remain quiet and attentive if you are not asked any questions. Do not talk or engage with other exhibitors while you are in the ring.
6. Do not stay between your goat and the judge. Remain standing during the whole show.
7. Align yourself and the goat in a straight line with other exhibitors during the show (Figure 4).
8. Like paying attention to the judge, it is equally important that you position your goat in the desired posture (Figure 2) all the time. Positioning should be done quickly and gently. Overdoing it will irritate the goat, and result in unexpected behavior. If this happens, remain calm and reposition the goat gently. Never show your anger to the goat.
9. Walk the goat properly when you are asked to do so, aligning yourself with other exhibitors. If your goat begins to urinate or defecate, allow him/her to finish, and then lead the goat again. While walking, your goat should be between you and the judge.
10. If the judge walks around and changes his/her position, make sure you change your position too so that you are not blocking the judge's view.
11. Show your pleasant personality, and smile!





# GOAT SHOW IN ALABAMA

Tuskegee University and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System organize goat shows annually. There may be different local organizations which organize goat shows in your local area. You need to be aware of those and participate. Some of the goat show organizers, venues, dates, and contact information are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Annual goat show events in Alabama.

Name	Event type	Venue	Date	Contact
Tuskegee University Pre-Vet Club Youth Goat Show	Market goats & breeding goats show (meat)	Tuskegee University Caprine Research and Education Unit	Third Saturday in October	Dr. Gurung: (334) 727-8457 ngurung@mytu.tuskegee.edu
Alabama National Fair	4-H & FFA Meat Goat Show	Montgomery		Tel (334) 272-6831 Fax (334) 272-6835
Au Block & Bridle Club Sheep & Goat Show	Market goats & breeding goats show			Marilyn Chambliss: mac0045@auburn.edu; Bob Ebert: 334-844-1563, <a href="mailto:ebertra@auburn.edu">ebertra@auburn.edu</a>



# TUSKEGEE

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