

## **Preparing a Goat for the Show Ring**

**There is a difference between the basic care a pygmy goat needs and the care a pygmy goat that is going to be in the show ring will need. It has taken me many years and a ton of research to put together the correct feeding program for my farm and area and it has to start when they are born. Every state and even every county can be specific to its own needs. I often would buy an animal that was in perfect show condition but as soon as I moved it to my farm it would lose weight and its hair coat would look terrible. There was no way I was going to take it to the show ring. I just could not figure out what I was doing wrong. After many hours of research and even a little, well maybe a lot of experimenting I started to realize that these animals needed time to get acclimate to my farm and my feeding program.**

**Over the years I have asked numerous breeders for advice on feeding and care. Each time I would take this information home and apply it to my own program. Some advice worked and some advice did not. This did not mean some breeders were right and some were wrong. It just meant that every farms needs were different. It has taken several years but through trial and error I have now incorporated all the advice I have received into my own program.**

**This is the procedure I use at my farm to get my animals show ring ready. I want to stress that this does not mean this is the only way, this is just my way and what seems to work for me.**

**CLEAN WATER 24/7- the more they drink, the more they eat. Goats will not drink dirty water. I keep mine heated in the winter to ensure they are getting enough water to drink. This keeps them hydrated and less likely to get sick.**

**CLEAN HAY (no weeds, fox tail or mold) high quality alfalfa or alfalfa/grass mix. I like small, thin stems with lots of leaf. Hay needs to be fed out of a feeder not off the ground, this is a must. Also use something they can't get in and use as a bed. They will not eat hay they are lounging in and using for bedding. Animals fed off the ground are more likely to ingest parasites. This will defeat your worming program. If the hay falls on the ground and they walk on it, they will not eat it. If the hay bucket is full but they are sleeping on it then they are not eating it. If they are not eating then they are not putting on weight.**

**MINERAL I prefer a loose free choice mineral, something that is goat specific is best, the blocks work well also. Loose mineral needs to be kept out of the weather. This is where the blocks come in handy. Goats need copper so I try to stay away from anything for sheep or that is labeled for both. Key ingredients I look for are Selenium and Vitamin E. These ingredients are also key to a breeding program.**

**PROTIEN PELLETT** - The pellet I use is 18% protein and is medicated for coccidiosis, there are several good medications on the market. It also contains ammonium chloride. This helps prevent urinary calculi (stones). These are more frequent in wethers but they can also occur in buck and does. I mix it with COB (corn, oats & barley) and feed 2 parts pellet to 1 part COB. I feed 15 goats a 2gal bucket a day. If the pan is not empty the next day then I cut back a bit. If they gobble it up before I am done feeding then I increase the amount at the next feeding. I also give this to my growing babies until they are a year old.

**WORMING-** If you can feel the back bone of an animal and the hair coat feels rough but its belly is large it probably needs to be wormed. Just because its belly is large does not mean it is fat. I use injectable Ivermectin for older animals and for the babies I use the Ivermectin sheep drench. I worm my show animals quarterly. If they are still not gaining weight like I want or their hair coat is still rough then I worm them again 10-14days later. A properly wormed animal should have a smooth even hair coat. If an animal is missing hair down the middle of its face this could mean it needs to be wormed. This is not always the case but is a good sign.

**DELOUSING-** I use a capful of Ivermectin pour on for cattle about 1week before every show. Animals that are not shown get deloused about 4 times a year or as needed. A patchy hair coat that looks like the animal has been rubbing probably means it has lice.

**HOOF TRIMMING-** I trim a few days before every show. It's important to keep up on trimming. Feet and legs can become deformed or not grow right if they are neglected. I try to trim every 10-12 weeks especially on my growing babies.

I keep goats I am taking to the show and my growing babies separate from the rest of the herd. This helps keep my feed costs down and I know they are getting enough to eat to keep them in proper show condition.

No matter how much money was paid for a goat or how fantastic the pedigree is, if it's not properly fed and taken care of it will not thrive or do well in the show ring. I start to prepare my babies for the show ring from day one.

Although it helps, Miss America cannot win the pageant on good genetics alone. She has had to spend most of her life preparing and prepping for her big moment.