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Market Goats: Tips for Beginning a Livestock Project

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The 4-H Junior Livestock program is one of the oldest and largest experiential education programs for youth in the United States (Lance, 1997). As 4-H members participate in 4-H junior livestock programs they acquire livestock knowledge, develop life skills, and form attitudes of confidence and responsibility. These “hands-on” programs are supported by Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) research and curriculum developed by University Extension functions in areas of agriculture, family and consumer science, 4-H youth development, and other related areas (Asunda, 2011). The value of 4-H livestock programs is evident through educational opportunities for 4-H livestock youth and through competitive activities by providing activities that motivate 4-H youth to set goals, complete tasks, and strive for excellence (Lance, 1997).

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide several tips for beginning a market goat 4-H youth livestock project. 4-H market goat projects are gaining popularity, as seen by the increased level of competition and 4-H livestock shows. Market goats

are gaining popularity because of the relative ease, safety, and meaningful experiences gained through working with and showing a market goat.

Tips for Providing a Positive Experience in Raising a 4-H Market Goat

Following Best Management Practices

Following Best Management Practices will help 4-H members eliminate problems that may arise which could potentially keep youth from having a positive experience. Ideally, market goats should be shown between the age of 8-10 months and weigh between 85-95 lbs. Please visit your local University Extension Agent, and local Veterinarian to receive additional information about Best Management Practices.

Protection from the Elements

Market goats require shelter to escape the elements. Summer heat and winter cold can be hard on market goats if shade and shelter are not provided. When providing shelter for market goats locate the shelter and entrance facing away from prevailing winds, elevated from standing water, well drained, and easily accessible for feeding and watering. Market goats will be more comfortable, clean, and freer from disease and parasites when clean and dry bedding is provided. Market goats also require adequate space for growth potential and exercise; suggested space and housing guidelines for market goats per head include:



| Enclosed Housing | Exercise Area | Pasture Area | Type of Housing | Fencing Material | Family Needs |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|--|---|--|
| 20-25 sq. ft. | 50 sq. ft. | 0.2-0.3 acres | Minimum of 3 enclosed sides (Removable sides optional) | Electric, Woven, Field fence, Wire panels | 2-3 goats (Must follow local community ordinances) |

Providing a Nutritionally Balanced Diet

Market goats will need to eat approximately 5 to 7 lbs. of grain concentrate/combined dry matter for every 1 lb. of weight gain, typically market goats should gain .25 lbs. per day or consuming 1.75-2lbs of grain concentrate per day (Jones, 1998).

Knowing the weight of your market goat at the time of purchase will help you calculate whether your goat will need to be fed a light, medium, or heavy feed ration. Refer to the feed chart below to calculate your feeding program.

| Days Before Show | 120 | 90 | 60 | 30 | 0 |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Weight | 50-60 lbs | 61-71 lbs | 72-82 lbs | 83-94 lbs | 94-105 lbs |
| Expected Gain Average | .375 lb/day | .375/day | .375/day | .375/day | - |
| Quality of Feed | 14-18% CP | 14-18% CP | 14-18% CP | 14-18% CP | 14-18% CP |
| Feed Needed per Day | 2-2.8 lbs | 2-2.8 lbs | 3.5-4 lbs | 4-5 lbs | 4-5 lbs |

There are six basic and essential nutrients required by market goats; including water, protein, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, and vitamins. Providing fresh water every day to your market goat is the most crucial component in a healthy feeding program. Water should be checked daily. Water troughs should be small in size so they can be drained and cleaned on a regular basis and kept in the shade to keep the water as cool and clean as possible (Brown, 1996). Protein, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, and vitamins provide the energy and other nutritional elements needed by your market goat to be healthy and aide in your market goat reaching its fullest potential. Your goat’s health is critical to the success of your 4-H market goat project. There are many sources of nutritionally balanced feeds and rations provided in the commercial market, see your local veterinarian, university extension agent, and feed dealer to find the optimal feeding program for you your market goat.

from the feeder. Providing clean, high quality feeds to your market goat will lead to an efficient rate of gain for your animal. Remember to never make quick changes in your animal’s diet; this can cause a decline in feed intake resulting in inefficient weight gain. If changes to the feed ration do occur it should be made over a period of several days or even weeks if the change is dramatic.

Rate of Gain

Follow this formula in determining your Goats Rate of Gain: Current Weight of your animal, subtract the previous weight of your animal. Take this weight and divide it by how many days it has been since you last weighed your animal. This will give you your average daily gain. If you would like to project your animal’s targeted weight, take the average daily gain; multiply this number by the number of days until the day of the show and then add the animal’s current weight. This total will give you the approximate animal’s weight the day of the show.

Provide a Constant Feeding Schedule

Providing feed to your market goat twice a day will aide in the highest rate of weight gain for your animal. Provide clean feeders that are easily accessible, and routinely remove old or stale feed

Preventing Disease and Illness

Providing a health program for your market goat is a priority. Vaccinations are key in disease prevention. Controlling internal parasites is a

continuous issue for market goats. Parasites can cause weight loss, poor appetites, loose stools, and various stages of anemia as a result of parasite infections. Timely and routine treatment for parasites is a necessity (Texas A&M University Extension Service, 2012). Contact your local veterinarian to begin routine health check-ups, and to provide a health care program for your market goat which include vaccinations, deworming, disease prevention, and treatment, external examinations, dehorning and or horn tipping, and hoof trimming.

Making a Commitment

Your market goat project will require you to make a commitment. Your 4-H livestock project requires your time, your family's support, and patience throughout the entire process. There are many responsibilities required by you in order to be successful in your market goat project, including; prior planning, goat selection, purchasing your goat, daily feeding, training, grooming, and ultimately showing and competing with your goat (Craft, 2016). Be emotionally, mentally, and physically ready to work and compete with your goat. Show day can be challenging, do all that you can do beforehand to be prepared as much as possible. Another way to help you prepare includes attending livestock show clinics and activities to learn as much as possible about raising and showing market goats. Become familiar with the livestock show process, and practice as much as you can with your

goat in order to have fun with a positive experience as possible.

Working with and showing your market goat can be an excellent, exciting, and rewarding experience. Your market goat project can provide you with experiences, memories, skills, and learning opportunities that will benefit you throughout your life (Jones, 1998).

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