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Junior Livestock Shows “Market Goats”

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Junior livestock shows and programs throughout the country are popular for many reasons. Some reasons include: developing essential life skills, gaining confidence and fostering responsibility, and caring for an animal. These skills are developed through feeding and working with the animal; teaching them to lead, set up, brace, clipping and bathing, exercising them, and trimming their feet. Participants are responsible for monitoring feed consumption, determining average daily weight gain, and to be fiscally responsible for their livestock projects. Through planning and by following a few simple steps, a positive, life changing experience can unfold right before a participant's eye.

Why Market Goats?

Junior livestock show goats are bred to represent the most desirable characteristics of the market goat industry, and provides goat exhibitors an opportunity to be recognized as the best of the best. According to a Texas A&M University publication (2012), goat is "the most widely-consumed meat in the world." The major demand for goat meat comes from a myriad of ethnic groups (Solomon, 1992). Showing a market goat provides an opportunity for goat exhibitors to learn about goats and the meat goat industry, to showcase meat goats and goat products in a competitive event where exhibitors and the general public can observe and learn, and last, but not least—HAVE A FUN AGRICULTURE EXPERIENCE.

Market Goat Breeds

The major breed used in market show goats is Boer. The Boer goat is a breed of goat that was developed in South Africa in the early 1900s for meat production. Their name is derived from the Afrikaans word Boer, meaning farmer. Boer goats are a popular breed for meat, and are also known to be fast growers with a high rate of weight gain. Furthermore, market show goats can also carry the influence of Nubian, Spanish, Kiko, Angora, and other meat goat breeds (Texas A&M University, 2012). The ideal age for a market goat to be at show time is somewhere between 6 and 10 months of age. This time frame is usually when an animal is near or approaching their maturity. Be aware that goats start to lose their milk teeth at 10 months of age. Depending when kid goats are born; the ideal market weight of a show goat is between 80-120 pounds. Determining average daily weight gain is essential when projecting a market goat's targeted finish weight.

Selecting Your Market Goat

Selecting a market goat is probably one of the most important, as well as the most challenging aspects of the entire project. Finding a reputable breeder or utilizing the assistance of local Extension service personnel may help ease the challenge through this part of the selection process.

Genetics – If the animal selected lacks the proper genetic make-up, the animal will not develop to the potential you dreamed your animal would be.

Genetics will determine the performance potential of your market goat.

Environment - Once a quality animal has been acquired, the other environmental conditions which the exhibitor can provide will come into play, such as providing the feeds, necessary supplements, proper amounts of exercise, etc.

Traits for Selection

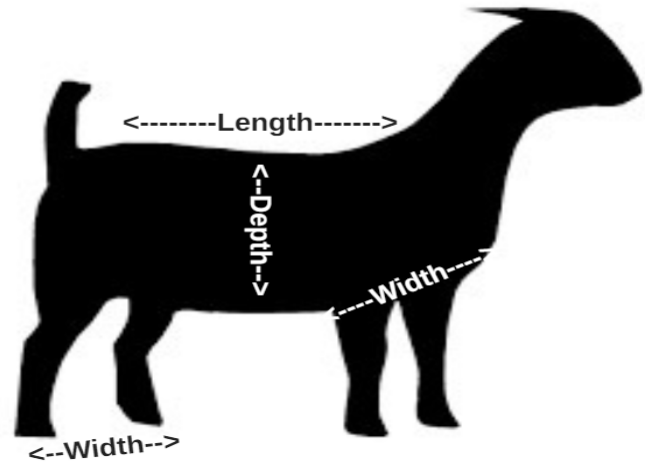
Structural Correctness - The show animal should stand square with their legs straight underneath the body, not cow hocked or pigeon toed. The animal should be level over the top, not sway backed, weak in the topline, or pinched behind the withers and shoulder.

Width Throughout - When you watch the animal walk away there should be noticed a good amount of width, as well as over the top and throughout the front.

Depth of Body - This is the distance vertically from the animal's top to the bottom of their fore/rear flank. This is a characteristic that is very important in breeding shows; however, ample depth of body is a necessity in show goats as well providing substantial amounts of lean product.

Spring of Rib - Refers to an animal's body capacity providing ample space for vital organs as well as capacity to eat proper amounts of quality feeds to convert energy into efficient gains.

Muscle Volume - This should be definite and easy to identify. Muscle volume should extend down through the stifle, down the forearms, as well as an overall heavy muscling appearance to the animal.



Large Frame – Meat goats should have some size and scale, having a large size of frame will give a clue as to the growth potential of the offspring.

Structure and Confirmation of Market Goats

From this point, gauging the future overall muscle volume your show animal will gain and develop is what you will need to focus on. **Muscle, Muscle, Muscle – Length, Width, and Depth.** Typically if you have all of the previous structural qualities mentioned, the rest will follow, such as the muscling, size of frame, depth of body, and more (Jones, 1998).

Building Muscle: Proper show feeds, clean and fresh water everyday, and muscle building exercises are important necessities in obtaining the best potential possible in market goats

Style and Balance – Refers to how all of the parts of structure and confirmation come together for a market goat. A market goat should have a sense of style, balance, level top, be smooth and wide throughout showing a high degree of correctness.

Showing Your Goat

Make sure all appropriate and necessary equipment has been loaded and brought to the show; including grooming and cleaning supplies, feed and feeding supplies, fresh water, and all other necessary supplies needed for fitting and showing.

Concentrate on the animal and the judge. Do not get side-tracked by parents and other spectators. Work hard the entire time in the show arena to present the animal. The hours spent before the show, will



enhance the outcome within the show ring. Calmly show the animal. Do not get mad and frustrated with an uncooperative animal. Be pleasant in conversation with the judge, and be knowledgeable about the animal. **Remember;** Showmanship is won at home. There is an old saying: “Champions do not become champions in the show ring, they are merely recognized there. If you want to see where someone develops into a champion look at his/her daily routine” (Craft, 2016).

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