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# 1 A Brief Overview

The book you are holding, and by association probably reading, is a compendium of useful information about “*Capra aegagrus hircus*” or “domestic goat” for the non-Latin speaking reader. While by no means the be-all and end-all encyclopedia of all things cloven hooved, the accuracy and usefulness of the information contained within this book can be guaranteed.

# 2 A Short History of Goats

*What is the origin of the goat?  
What was their habitat like? How did they come to be domesticated?*

**Origin-** Goats have been around a very long time, longer than even humans as we know them today. Goat-like animals have been around even longer. Fossil records imply that goats and sheep split off from another similar species at around the same time. Exactly how many years ago they came into being is unknown. It is easy however, to place the number well into the millions. They had already existed for a long time before humans started to stop wandering, and the first efforts at farming began. The first known human civilization had important ties to goats.

**Domestication-** The wild Bezoar Goat of the middle east was the first of the wild goats to be domesticated, and one if not the first animal in the world to become bonded with humans. The people of the first known human civilizations in Mesopotamia looked to the wild for sources of more permanent food, farming was effective, but not perfect, and a growing society needed more outlets for food. The potential the wild goats held as a source for meat and milk was too large for early humans to ignore. Domestication became a question of “how?” rather than “Why?” and before they knew it farm animals were a part of life.

**Habitat-** In the wild the goats of today have changed very little from the goats of the past. They tend to favor high altitudes, and mountainous or hilled terrain. They are a browsing (selective eating) herbivore and enjoy eating a wide range of vegetation. Life in primarily mountainous areas have gifted many wild goats and their descendants a high resistance to colder temperatures. Unforgiving mountains have bred the goat into a durable and hearty creature. Although they live in mountains, and are also goats, they are not to be mistaken with the animal known as the “Mountain Goat” which is not actually a goat species.

# 3 Identifying Domestic Goats

*There are many breeds of goats in the world. Following is a description of the most common domestic breeds.*



## American Alpine

A very common dairy breed that began in the French Alps, Alpine are medium sized, and come in any and all of the usual goat colors (Brown/black/white). One thing all Alpine hold in common is a black stripe that runs down their back



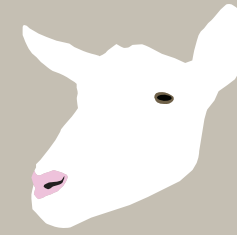
## Toggenburg

Originating in Switzerland, Toggenburgs are one of the heavier breeds. They have been selectively bred over time to have increased milk production. Toggenburg can be identified by their heavier build, and their color. Pure bred Toggs are all a distinct light brown/gray in color



## Oberhasli

Also from Switzerland the Oberhasli is one of the newest breeds of Dairy goat registered in the 1970's before this they were seen as the Swiss Alpine. Now in its own category the Oberhasli is recognized worldwide. True to its origin the Oberhasli looks just like an Alpine, the major difference being all Oberhasli are dark brown with black markings with rare cases of all black females



## Saanen

Yet another breed from Switzerland The Saanen is a breed known for its high productivity. The high milk output of Saanen make them a favorite among many farmers. They are easy to spot because of their sheer white coat.



## Nubian

Originating in Africa but later widespread in Europe the Anglo-Nubian is a distinct and hearty breed. The Nubian is very distinct in appearance being taller than the other major breeds. Nubian also possess long ears, and the bridge of its nose is more rounded.



## Lamancha

An American breed Lamancha stand out in many areas. They owe much of their popularity as a breed to the high butterfat content in their milk. Visually, they are noteworthy for their incredibly short ears, a trait that makes them immediately recognizable from other breeds.



## Boer

Originating from South Africa Boer goats are a meat breed and the most common meat breed at that. Boer are set apart and easily identified by their shorter stockier builds, at a glance it is easy to tell the Boer were bred for a different purpose than the other breeds in this list.

# 4 Wild Cousins of the Domestic Goat

*Some goats still live out in the wild today. Many of these varieties have earned the title of "wild".*



### Markhor

The Markhor is a species of wild goat native to the middle east, particularly Pakistan of which it is the National Animal. Markhor are among the heavier varieties of goats with full grown healthy males weighing within the 200's. They are very recognizable because of their massive spiraling horns. They maintain the common trait of goats being adapted to higher elevations.



### Ibex

Ibex is the name of 6 different yet, similar species of wild goat. The Ibex is the most widespread and common species of wild goat as well. They are identifiable by their long, large, curling horns. The Bezoar Ibex is the animal domestic goats descended from. They were first domesticated around 10,000 years ago according to fossil records.

### Tur

There are two major species of Tur, the West Caucasian Tur which is endangered, and the East Caucasian Tur. True to their name, both species of Tur live on the eastern or western sides of the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range respectively. Tur have many predators, and are nocturnal in nature, eating at night, and resting during the day to better match the behaviors of their predators.



# 5 What makes a Goat a Goat?

*Goats are without question interesting creatures. What are the traits that make an animal a goat?*

An animal is any living organism that gets nutrients from organic material (meat, plants, etc.) as opposed to plants which draw nutrients from soil and sunlight. Goats, as you are probably well aware are animals. What is it however that makes a goat, a goat?

There are many traits that distinguish goats from other animals, these traits allow them to be classified, and grouped. An animal is more after all than just its individual parts. Big things like size, and shape, down to tiny things like how many toes something has define where they end up grouped.

What are goats though? Goats are even-toed ungulates, ungulates being large generally hooved mammals. Even-toed ungulates can be identified by, as the name suggests, the even number of toes on their hooves. For goats this number is two. Goats are of the family Bovidae a group of species that are ruminants with cloven hooves. Ruminants have four stomachs. The Bovidae family also contains cows, sheep, buffalo, antelope, and many other species. Classification goes much deeper from here.

The Bovidae family breaks into ten sub-families, these families are as follow:

- Aepycerotinae* - Impala
- Alcelaphinae* - Wildebeest and Hartebeest
- Antilopinae* - True Antelope
- Bovinae* - Cattle and Buffalo
- Caprinae* - Goat-antelope**
- Cephalophinae* - Duiker
- Hippotraginae* - Grazing antelope
- Pantholopinae* - Tibetan antelope
- Peleinae* - Grey rhebok
- Reduncinae* - Marsh antelope

Of these ten groups, goats belong to ***Caprinae*** the Goat-antelope. The phrase Goat-antelope sounds quite exotic, however even the casual observer can see that some of the genera that make up this sub-family are very important animals to the modern day human.

***Caprinae*** further divides into ten genera, these genera are:

- Ammotragus* - Barbary sheep
- Budorcas* - Takin
- Capra* - Goats**
- Hemitragus* - Himalayan tahr
- Nemorhaedus* - Gorals
- Oreamnos* - Mountain goat
- Ovibos* - Muskox
- Ovis* - Sheep
- Pseudois* - Blue sheep
- Rupicapra* - Chamois

Within ***Caprinae*** you may notice two genera that have goat within their english name. ***Capra***, and ***Oreamnos***. Capras hold the title of true goats whereas the mountain goats of *Oreamnos* do not. This is the result of inaccurate naming creating the common

misconception that mountain goats are goats.

***Capra*** is the genus that contains all true goats. Traits all members of *capra* have in common are excellent agility making life in the most unforgiving of mountains possible, as well as distinct beards in males (and often females) a trait shared by few animals. Goats are often separated by geography making it very rare for the territory of two goat species to overlap. Being separated from each other has led species of goats to evolve in very diverse ways. From the Toggenburgs of Switzerland to the Markhor of Pakistan all the way to the Alpine of America, goats continue to spread and become more diverse.

There are 9 different species and one subspecies within ***Capra*** :

- Capra aegagrus* - Wild goat/Bezoar ibex
- Capra (aegagrus) hircus* - Domestic goat
- Capra caucasica* - West Caucasian tur
- Capra cylindricornis* - East Caucasian tur
- Capra falconeri* - Markhor
- Capra ibex* - Alpine ibex
- Capra pyrenaica* - Spanish ibex
- Capra nubiana* - Nubian ibex
- Capra sibirica* - Siberian ibex
- Capra walie* - Walia ibex

***Capra aegagrus*** the wild goat is the direct ancestor of ***Capra aegagrus hircus*** the domestic goat, this direct relation makes them part of the same species.



# 6 Meat or Dairy? What's the difference

*Domestic breeds can have one of two primary purposes.  
what makes a breed meat or dairy depends on some important characteristics*



## Meat



The most common breed of meat goat is the Boer. Boer have been bred over countless generations to possess the qualities that would make them produce more meat. The adaptations this selective breeding has produced have nearly optimized the Boer to be eaten and provide food for anyone who grows or purchases these goats.

Meat goats have the traits someone would expect from a meat animal. The biggest trait which you could probably guess, is meat. Meat goats grow more stout and heavier than the average goat. Goats are a source of food and protein for people all over the world. Their use as meat animals was one of the determining factors of early

man's decision to domesticate animals and furthermore led to the domestication of goats.

The increased mass of meat goats has given them the tendency to have and build more muscle than non-meat goats. The strength of a goat isn't normally a factor that farmers are concerned with, however this makes them more adept at jobs less common for goats, such as a career as a pack animal, or pulling a cart. These positions normally only need to be filled in very remote areas as vehicles and heavy machinery exist, and many of them can more efficiently fill the job that would be held by a working goat.

## Dairy



Just as goats have been bred selectively to produce more meat, many goats have been selectively bred to produce more milk. Goat breeds that have gone through this process produce dairy goats.

Dairy goats differ from meat goats in a myriad of ways. First and foremost exactly as you would expect dairy goats produce milk. Meat goats also produce milk, however the quality and quantity can't even be compared to that of a dairy goat. It is in this area where the differences between the two types of goats are most apparent. Just as people the world over rely on the meat from goats to survive, many people also need milk, and dairy goats are the best source they have

that is accessible to them. In addition to the need for goat milk in some locations and cultures, the milk from goats in many cases is very good for the human body. Goat milk contains lower levels of lactose making it in many cases a safe substitute for regular milk from a cow.

As producing milk burns a large number of calories, dairy goats tend to be leaner and less muscular than meat breeds. The difference in musculature makes many dairy breeds more agile than their meat based cousins. There is more freedom for different sizes and body types among dairy goats as they don't need to be as strong or heavy genetically to serve their purpose.



# 7 Caring For Domestic Goats

*Taking care of an animal takes a lot of work. Humans however, have animal care down to a science.*

## I. What Goat is Right For Me?

Once you have decided that you want a goat, the first logical step is to stop and think about why you want a goat.

Goats can serve many purposes, and it is your job as the owner to choose what purpose your goats are going to serve. Be it as pets, meat, or even a myriad of other services the uses of domestic goats are many, and far reaching. Deciding on which of these options best suit your wants and needs is an important first step to deciding what breed of goat you should look into buying.

The two major purposes as discussed in the last chapter are milk and meat. Domestic goats serving these two important purposes make up the vast majority of goats out in the world. Odds are encountering these goats at some point in your daily life was an influencing factor on your decision to get goats for yourself.

Outside of milk and meat, goats have been used for things such as brush removal, companionship, and as pack animals.

Although still quite rare, using goats for brush removal is becoming increasingly common out in the world. Goats are seen as a fast and natural method to removing troublesome plants as they enjoy and even thrive on eating wild plants. Several companies have sprung up across America that focus on renting out goats for the purpose of clearing areas out for development. Goats perform this job less efficiently than human tools, but are less labor intensive, and much more environmentally friendly than troublesome power tools. If you find yourself in an area where people would like this service a fair deal of money stands to be made by investing in this venture and charging clients accordingly. Nearly any medium to large sized breed would be well suited to perform this job.

Companionship for goats can mean many things. Goats have been used as companions for both humans, and other animals. It is not uncommon for people who work with horses to only own a single horse. Horses are

animals that need companionship. To facilitate the needs of the horse, owners will often purchase smaller animals such as goats or donkeys to keep the horse company. These animals take up less space, and are far cheaper to maintain than another horse while still providing the level of companionship needed to sustain the horse's happiness. Goats are social creatures, with a great deal of personality. This makes them a great choice as pets for humans. Animals like goats that have curious and generally friendly dispositions can bring a great deal of enjoyment into people's lives.

Recently activities such as "Goat Yoga" have started to become popular on social media. These are regular everyday activities that feature free ranging goats into the area of

the activity. Being surrounded by warm and friendly animals in tandem with relaxing activities hold the potential to bring a lot of joy and relaxation into the lives of the participants.

Lastly goats can be used as pack animals. This purpose has a very limited area of use. In modern society more often than not pack animals are less practical than vehicles. Even in the case where you would use a pack animal more often than not horses, mules, and donkeys are a more practical choice due to their higher carrying capacities. However, in some areas the terrain is mountainous and nearly impossible for a larger animal to traverse safely. In these situations, goats that are smaller, and better suited to rough terrain are the most logical choice.

## II. What Does My Goat Eat?

Culturally speaking, goats are known for their seemingly strange eating habits. Most people have more than likely heard stories of goats eating anything up to, and including tin cans. While goats don't eat everything, and certainly don't eat metal cans, this folk tale does have roots in reality. Goats are browsing animals. This means that they don't graze like a cow or a sheep would, they pick through things eating and trying things selectively. Browsing is the same way that deer and many other forest creatures eat. What this means is that browsing, when combined with the natural curiosity that goats possess leads to goats testing a myriad of objects for edibility. A goat probably isn't going to try to eat a tin can, they may however be interested

in eating the paper wrapper that probably covers the outside of the can. These eating habits leave goats with a fascination for many household items like string, and shoelaces. It is also safe to say goodbye to any plants you have particular attachment to if they are within the reach of goats.

Aside from a goats daily browsing, they also require a healthy dose of grains and hay to maintain a decent diet. What feeds you should get your goat vary greatly depending on things like breed, purpose, and location. To find out what feed is best for your goat you should talk to employees at your local feed store, or converse with farmers and other goat owners in the area.

## III. To Enclose a Goat

It is a fact that the more intelligent an animal is the harder it is to contain them. When natural curiosity, and a strong memory are thrown into the mix it becomes a recipe for disaster. Goats are notorious for being difficult to fence in. Serious consideration must be made in deciding on and planning out an enclosure. A good mindset to have when building goat fencing is to plan on always having to repair, replace, expand, and improve the enclosure. The natural abilities of goats lead them to see fences less as an absolute, and more as a suggestion.

What are these natural abilities, and how do they factor in? Goats, especially those in their prime, are excellent at jumping. With a running start, a fence as tall as four feet can be easily cleared by a medium to large sized goat. In the right conditions even taller fences are not out of the question. Meat goats however, are much less likely to be able to jump this high because of their increased weight, and more muscular builds.

Next is the curiosity possessed by goats. They are going to explore every inch of their enclosure in no time at all, and before you know it they will have looked over the entire fence. The most curious goats in the herd will start testing the fence for potential weaknesses, and future escape points. As notorious problem solvers the fence is just a puzzle. One that they will figure out eventually.

Their next concern is the durability of the fence. Many fences are made from strung together metal wire, forming a tough structure that by not being solid conserves materials and money. These fences although practical have the glaring weakness of lackluster structural integrity. They aren't easy to break, but a heavy enough goat will work at using its weight to eventually bend the wire of the fence down to a more manageable height. They will also knock the fence over if the fence posts aren't dug deep enough into the ground to provide adequate support.

Lastly, goats will utilize their environment to facilitate an escape from a pen. If there are nearby structures or objects such as fallen trees, or the goats own shelter they can, and will be used to gain an advantage over the fence if possible. To this extent it becomes necessary to frequently survey the pen to ensure nothing has changed that will give the goats an advantage in their escape.

Not all goats will try to escape their pens. Things change from goat to goat, however many goats will be more than content to stay in a pen day in and day out provided they have what they would consider enough space to explore and eat within. Personalities within a herd may differ greatly throughout, and some goats will be notably more problematic than others.



## IV. Should You Get a Goat?

A major factor in the purchasing of goats as pets, or to start small farms is the fun and, energy that are produced by young goats. Even if you aim to buy an older goat preparations must be made

While goat kids are without question fun and exciting pets, there is a lot of care and effort that needs to be put into raising them. Before you go out and buy a kid, or breed a goat you already own, certain factors must be considered.

Do you have the space required for more goats? Goats need room to run and play in order to stay happy. Too many goats in a small area will result in miserable animals with poor health. A miserable goat is probably the last thing any farmer wants, and management of herd size is the first step to preventing this from happening. It is key to overlook the land you have available, and ensure there is enough room for the number of goats you want to have.

Can you afford the cost of feeding and maintaining more goats? Goats aren't the most expensive animal to take care of by any measurement, however it is the job of the owner to ensure they can financially support the animals they buy and grow. It is best to estimate the costs and weigh them against the profits you will make from them, as well as your own income before making any final decisions. You will need to buy feed,

fence, shelter, and have enough supplies left over to fund the occasional vet visit should any problems arise with your animals. Milk replacer will also be needed if you purchase a goat before it is weaned.

Do you have the time to take care of your goat? Goats are largely independent creatures. They need company, but for the most part do not need human interaction. That said, the more time a goat spends with its owner, the more the goat will like, trust, and respect it's owner. Goats tend to be friendly, but without human interaction will grow to become skittish and unmanageable. A show goat that doesn't trust its showman, or even people in general will not behave in the show ring. A goat that doesn't trust people will be far more difficult to milk, and any maintenance that needs to be done to their hooves, or if their fur needs to be trimmed will be next to impossible on the part of the person who has to do the job. If you do not have the time to spend with your animals, it is advised that you do not purchase any animals for yourself. This is true for any domestic animal, as well as goats.

If you meet these three major requirements, and would like to own a goat, find a farm near you willing to sell goats of the breed you are interested in owning.



# 8 Showing Goats

## The Steps Involved

*A common reason to have goats is to use as show animals  
A lot of practice and skill goes into being a good showman*

Dairy goat shows are held all over the world. Most official shows in America for dairy goats are sanctioned by the American Dairy Goat Association or ADGA. The ADGA also is in charge of the registration of most show goats in the United States. For meat goats this job often falls to the American Boer Goat Association or ABGA. The two acronyms are very similar so there may be some confusion over which one is which.

Sanctioned shows take place all over the country often at fairgrounds, with larger shows taking place in much larger venues. These shows can often be broken up into two major categories, 4-H Shows, and Open Shows. 4-H shows may only have participants that are members of 4-H, and are ages 5-19. Open Shows are much more flexible and showman of any age may participate, provided they meet whatever the shows entry requirement are.

From here, shows can be further divided into different sections by breed of goat, and further from there into individual classes. Showman are often limited on how many goats they may enter per class this rule varies from show to show however. Classes vary also, but tend to be divided by age of animal.

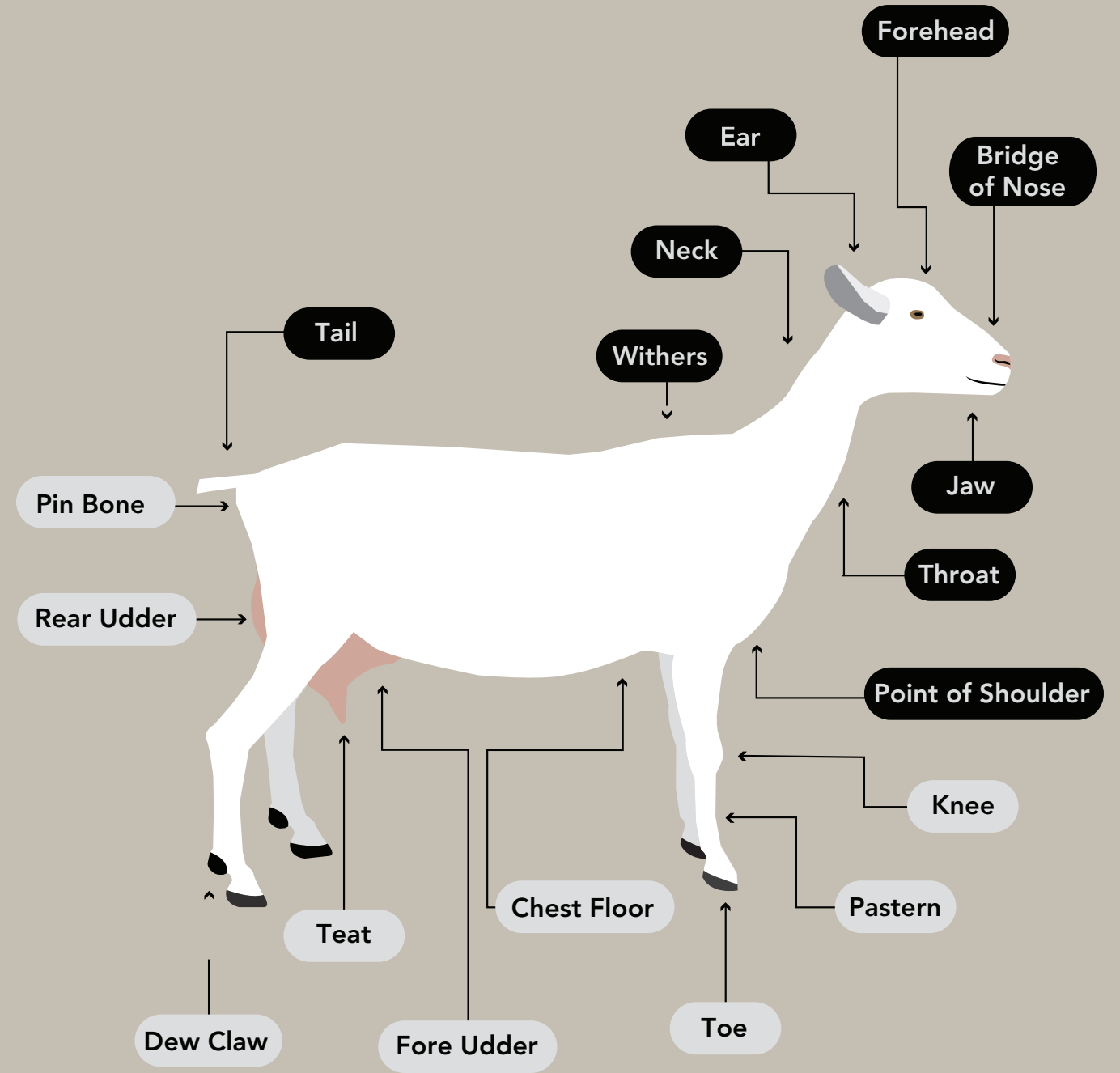
The only way to truly understand showing any animal, including goats is with firsthand experience, however there are several things to know going in to streamline the process.

Vet checks happen before almost every show. Farmers and showman like to avoid contagious diseases, so it is imperative that you have your goats' vaccinations and vet paperwork up to date. It is good practice to have this paperwork with you and on hand before the show to save on time, and complications.

Make completely sure you have properly signed up, and signed into the show. You don't want to miss out because you missed some paperwork. You can't participate in a show you haven't actually signed up for.

Maintain your goats before the show. Goats are judged largely on their appearance. Making sure your goats fur has been clipped, that it is clean, and that its hooves have been taken care of is an important step in doing well in a show. Master showmen have many techniques to making a goat look its best. Don't be afraid to ask them for pointers, as it may be the difference between first and second place for your animal.

## Parts of a Goat



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