Finding a Balance in the Market Goat Shows

Using a Common Sense Approach to Raising Your Show Goats

With so much information floating around out there, it is hard to know what is fact, somewhat fact, or just plain fallacy. Many times in preparing our goats for the shows, we understand the process of what we are suppose to do, but we are not sure about the timing or even why we are doing it. Are we suppose to start our exercise program now, wait two months, or wait until closer to the show? Should we shear him now or leave his hair on him until a week before our first show? What about those expensive supplements, will that help him become a true competitor in the show ring? All of these and more are questions that I have heard people comment on during the clinics I have spoken at, stating that in the past there have been no clear answers. So throughout this article I believe you will gain a better understanding of not only when and how to go about some of your show goat preparation, but the answer to the question..... why. To start off, I can tell you it’s all about finding a balance.

Genetics or Environment

During the time my family and I have been in the market goat industry, I have seen people make the mistake of going one of two ways. The first is going out and finding a kid that has some qualities about him, but unfortunately, due to his genetics, doesn’t have the potential in terms of his overall growth and future muscle volume. However, the family takes him home and admirably, works with him every day, buying expensive feed and supplements, and doing the perfect job in creating a effective exercise program. Although, in the show they do not place high because the wether they started out with did not have the genetic potential to gain the correct amount muscling and growth. The second, is the opposite of the previous example. The family goes out and buys a wether that has great genetics, potential for future muscle growth, a kid that will develop the size and scale, but the fail to take the necessary steps in preparation, feeding, and exercise. So any potential the wether has is not developed or brought out due to the lack of work done with the goat. So I believe it is so important to find a good balance in selection, preparation, feeding, and overall work done with our animals, which will become more than evident in the market goat shows.

Shearing...Should I Wait?

My answer to that would be no. There is one main reason, which will lead into many other advantages for doing this early. Typically, many people clip their animals one week before the show. This gives the animal time develop a little bit of growth, coving up any lines or mistakes we made while clipping, but not enough to where the hair grows over the limit in regards to the maximum hair length allowed in the ring. The problem that we run into if we clip
them the week before the show is without doing it several times before, they exhibit a shock due to the time of year. The major stock shows are usually taking place during the colder months of the year. So clipping your animal for the first time creates many negative effects, that inhibit your ability to do well in the ring. It is very similar to you wearing a coat in the house during February, then someone tells you take that coat off, put on a tee shirt, and we are going outside to play. You probably wouldn't feel like much like playing for quite a while, until you were acclimated to that cold environment. I can assure you this does not happen in only a few days. So what's the cure for this? Starting your clipping when it is only cool. Starting early is the key to every advantage in terms of your goats development. So why would clipping be any different. My advice is to begin clipping in the beginning of October and to do so periodically until your last show arrives. In October it is beginning to become cool, this gives your goat a chance to become accustomed to being sheared, acclimate to the current change to cooler temperatures, without having to withstand the harsh cold that will soon be here. By beginning the clipping process early you will increase your wether's chances of performing well in the show ring.

Exercise. Is two months before the show enough?

This is probably the first and most prominent mistake I see people make when raising show wethers. Much of their muscle gain and eventually their overall muscle volume will depend on time frame you allow your market goat to develop. As I have said in my previous article on exercising your animals, "Think: Arnold Schwarzenegger! Not Lance Armstrong. Your Market Goat's Exercise Program", our first concern and priority is our wether's health. That being said, when putting together an exercise program, what you are doing is starting to build layers of muscle. Each time you exercise your market wether, done correctly, you should be gaining small layers of muscle in incremental stages. So beginning in the September, starting slowly, and continuing throughout the entire show season, not only gives your wether a chance to adapt to each stage of your exercise program, but allows him to add muscle to the muscling your animal has already developed in the previous weeks or months. Essentially building muscle on top of muscle. With the quality of the goats we see in the ring becoming higher and the need to have firm handle on his top to compete, a solid exercise program has become essential. Responding to this need requires a longer time frame for your wether develop, resulting in a an increase in overall muscle volume and a wether that does not have too much of a heightened strain from program that focused on too short of time period.

Feeding, Water, and Weight Limits

This will be one of the biggest challenges you'll face, not to mention the most confusing, due to the vast amount of varying information out there relating to how to keep your animal from surpassing the weight limit before the show.
All things in regards to your goat's care should happen slowly and incrementally. The idea behind this article is to raise a healthy and happy animal, while still being able to complete the necessary steps for your preparation to be able to compete successfully in the show ring. Finding the correct balance, between not doing enough and doing too much, can sometimes be blurred. A great rule of thumb is if it is not healthy for your animal, it's probably not going to increase your chances in the show ring. A healthy animal typically is eye appealing, well conditioned, relaxed, and generally happy. The best way to achieve this, find the balance, using common sense. Thank you.

Sincerely,
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