

Dairy Goat Handbook

Training

It is important to handle the dairy goats more than you ordinarily would. This includes training them to be led, so that they will respond obediently to a light pull on the collar. Accustom them to a hand moving over their neck, withers, back and ribs and to such judging maneuvers as feeling the skin texture or checking udder attachments. Train them to walk slowly so they will appear more graceful in the show-ring.

Practicing with your goats at home can result in better behaving animals in the ring and increased confidence on your part. Animals should be accustomed to being handled by strangers, especially having someone else's hand move over their neck, withers, back and sides, and udder so that they will stand still when being examined by the judge.

Provide a properly fitted neck chain or collar to lead the dairy goat. It should be loose enough to be comfortably fit the dairy goat but tight enough so that it will not slip off over the head. Chains have the advantage of being relatively resistant to chewing destruction by other dairy goats, but since they come in many sizes, select the proper link size to complement the size of the animal. No refined junior kid can look her best while wearing a neck chain that is heavy enough to control a 250-pound buck. Leather collars are easy on the hands, but tend to detract from the appearance of a long, lean neck, especially if they are too wide. When using a collar, the buckle should be kept in the showman's hand on the side of the neck away from the judge.

Collars should fit correctly, so that you can control your animal's movements in the ring. It is ideal to work with your animals ahead of time until they lead readily and respond quickly to signals. They should move forward with a slight pull on the collar and stop when you pull slightly up and back. Getting your animals used to wearing a collar and teaching them to lead and be tolerant of strangers is important with young stock, because they can often be stubborn about learning show manners.

A show animal should be trained to lead easily and stand quietly while being handled and "set up." This will be easier if you start while she is at a young age. The training sessions are most productive if they are no more than five minutes long and are held daily after feeding time, because dairy goats have a limited attention span.

1. Place the collar on the kid and allow her to get used to it for several days.
2. Begin teaching her to lead by holding the collar in one hand and gently pushing on her rear end with the other hand. This will give you more control over her and keep her moving in the right direction. Once she understands what is expected of her, continued practice will make her more responsive.
3. When she leads obediently, teach her how to stand still. Stop briefly at first then gradually increase the length of standing time. Praise her while she is still.
4. Start "setting up" the doe when she will stand quietly. Practice different methods of "setting up" to find out which way works better for you.

Method 1- Gently grasp the leg with your hand and place in the square stance desired.

Method 2- Walk the doe into position and then adjust the leg position by pushing at the point of shoulder to cause the opposite hind leg to move into place. This takes a little more time to work out the code with your animal, but it is a less conspicuous way of setting up your doe. This method works well with a touchy or sensitive doe.

A stubborn adult doe can be more easily taught to lead by gently holding her tail and urging her to move forward. Be careful not to do this too hard or too often, as it could cause her to be "tail shy" and not allow the judge to examine her.