

## **The basics of show preparation** By Marie Barnes Micathel Stud, Cudal, NSW

The following are some very basic thoughts on what to consider before heading out to your first show. My apologies to my peers who see or do it differently, the views are humbly that of the author

- **Selecting your team**

Try to get the basics right first, there is no point in putting time, effort and money into an animal that will not even make it into the ring. Everybody has it happen, but keeping in mind the basics of the 4 T's will put you on the right track.

1. Teeth – correct bite, and correct number of teeth for class entered ( if applicable)
2. Teats – always interpretive, but do at least know what your animal has and whether you really think it meets the breed standard.
3. Testes – must be of uniform and acceptable size. They should also be of a firm nature suggesting the animal is capable of breeding
4. Toes – well legs and basic structure really. Good feet, pastern and leg structure with correct angles through hock and shoulder will at least give a correct starting point.

Once you have picked an animal that is basically correct, start to look for things that make it 'better' in your eyes than its paddock peers. Longer, broader, more masculine/ feminine, more character etc are things that should be coming to mind. Try to compare your stock with others of similar age at other studs, or have another breeder look over your selections, but at the end of the day – YOU have to be happy with the animals you choose to represent YOUR stud!!

- **Meeting show requirements**

Make sure you read the requirements of entry for a show. Most shows require entries to be submitted well before the day of competition, so make sure yours are sent in time. Enter your animals in their correct classes. Ensure your animals are registered, tattooed, have completed any required health tests and all health and transport documents are in order. Preparation with these things prevents a disaster the night before the show!

- **Feeding your team**

If you are just heading down to the local for a 1 dayer and your goats are in good order, a team may not need to be fed. If you are considering a run of shows, or a major show, your stock will need to be looking their best without being overfat. This will involve feeding them a balanced ration. My personal preference is to go easy on the barley and corn as they can cause leg issues and the goats may get too fat too fast.

Speak to breeders in your area who you think present their animals appropriately and ask their advice. My rule is animals need 6 weeks on feed to get to a major show with heavily lactating does who have worked hard needing another 2 weeks on top of that.

- **Presenting your team**

Most of us like to look our best when we are heading out in public and the same must apply to your goats, they are the ambassadors of your stud and should be presented as such.

Lets start from the ground up!

**Feet:** When goats are on feed, feet will need to be trimmed more often and this is important. Bad foot trimming or lack of regular trimming can turn good feet and legs bad.

**Coats:** can be brushed and stripped of excess coarse hair and cashmere – the budget conscious tool is a hacksaw blade, the Porsche model is a Mars grooming comb or similar.

**Trimming** is becoming an artform and there are many who do a more thorough job than me, but the truth remains a fundamental tidy up will turn dowdy into diva in about 20 minutes!

The basics are: **Head** – trim the excess hair from the brow of the goat so that you are showing off the bone structure. Blend your edges and be careful not to go too far down the nose otherwise the opposite to what you desire is achieved! Take a look at pictures to guide if unsure. Oiling horns on show day is a nice finishing touch.

**Body:** Remove the whorly type hairs down near the belly, you are just taking away a visual distraction that breaks the long line of a deep body.

You will also need to trim the excess hair off a bucks neck so it is easy for the judge to see if the animal has a good shoulder and neck. Too much hair left on the neck can give the illusion that a lovely correct buck is too short or unbalanced.

**Tails:** should be trimmed neatly but not heavily, and it is said by some that on bucks don't at all.

**Hair around feet:** Some people like to trim the hair around the goats feet, personally I don't, and only take the heavier hair out from between their toes. Animals are too often seen in the showing with heavily trimmed feet hair, sporting undertrimmed platform style feet and this is just plain ugly and only serves to highlight the animals (often manmade) faults.

Your goat will require a wash before the show but do allow them time to dry before transport and try not to wash them in hideous weather. Speaking of coats do remember to make sure your goats are lice free for shows – even at the small ones where you may not be checked – its just plain manners! And at the bigger shows – you will be sent home!

Do not transport does more than 4months in kid – you are just asking for trouble.

**Logistics and what to take:**

Obviously, feed and water containers, feed, grooming equipment, foot trimmers, leads for showing and getting your animals about the pavilion, stud sign, white coats if you need them, but more importantly it is good to plan for things to go wrong. SO it's a good idea to take a basic first aid for your goats, antiseptic spray, an odd bandage or two (I've only ever had to use them on human competitors but they are still handy!) basic veterinary medications, electrolytes and scour treatments. Please do be extremely careful that you only administer medications with the knowledge

and authorisation of the show society because at most shows there are rules regarding their use with penalties for doing so without notification.

### **Show day etiquette**

You selected your team, fed them and groomed them and you have finally made it to the show – usually not without arguments or tears! Do remember you are representing your stud and business, and that try to remain cool calm and collected, if you win be gracious in victory and congratulate your peers on either side of you in the line, it's a nice touch not seen often enough. Do also remember that show organisers are volunteers and most are not paid for the long hours, before during and after a show, try to be patient with stewards and officials and thank them at the end of the day for their efforts. We would not have the shows without them.

### **Handling in the ring**

The first time in the ring can be bewildering. Pay attention to only three things- your animal, your stewards, and your judge. You need to be ready to react when directed. Keep your animal looking its best when you are in the lineup, and make adjustments discreetly when the judge is not looking at you. Nothing looks worse than an animal standing badly with the handler chatting to someone outside the ring – it is unprofessional and an insult to both your animal and judge you have put it before!

Practice at home how to stand an animal up –get a friend to tell you when you have it right – it is often the difference between at least placings in a class! Head up legs square and not too stretched out are a few basic starters!

### **A final word!**

**At a show you are promoting our industry and showing the world what you are trying to achieve as a breeder, you are in the public eye. Do your best, have fun, enjoy your day because just being able to take part is success in itself!**