

Training Lambs & Goats

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Training your lambs and goats is an involved process and you must practice in order for them to maintain what they've learned. However, it will be rewarding to see the results of your efforts. This is what makes lambs and goats good 4-H projects.

Halter-breaking is an excellent way to start the gentling process, especially if an exhibitor has several animals. Inexpensive rope halters can be made or purchased. Lambs and goats should be caught, haltered and tied to the fence. Collars can be used on goats instead of halters. Tied animals should never be left unattended. While the animals are tied, exhibitors can place the feet properly and get them accustomed to setting up.

After the animals begin to gentle down, the exhibitor can start teaching them to lead. An acceptable way to lead a lamb is with one hand under his chin and the other hand on the back of his head. Goats can be taught by using slight pressure on the collar. It is important that you have someone to assist you by patting the animal on his dock (or gently tugging the tail) whenever it stops. *After you feel comfortable leading the lamb, learn how to position your hands in a way that hold the lamb's ears forward. This gives the judge the impression that your lamb is long-necked and very stylish. Lead with your arm extended and with your body 1-2 feet from the lamb.*

The next step in the training process is for the exhibitor to lead the animal (without a halter for lambs) and properly set him up. Set the hind legs up first, then place the front legs, keeping the body and neck straight and the head in a high, proud position with ears up and forward.



Using headracks or tying the animal can help teach it to stand correctly.



Leading with no halter.



Setting up feet & legs.

Last, but not least, is bracing. The animal should learn to lead, set and remain set-up while the exhibitor moves around him. Then it is ready to be taught to brace or push. A lamb must push or brace himself when the judge is handling him. Most exhibitors are also bracing their goats. Lambs and goats can be taught to push by placing them on a trimming table or other platform with their rear feet near the edge. **Teaching to brace.** Position the legs and then gently push the animal backward by using the inside, soft part of your thigh. Do not overpower the animal or knock him off the platform. Though some catch on faster than others, eventually the animal learns to lean forward to keep from falling backward. Usually, after a few days, lambs and goats will be conditioned to brace once you set them up and push with your thigh.

After the animals learn to brace on the platform, try this on the ground. One of the biggest mistakes made is overpowering an animal when bracing in practice or in the show ring. A constant, steady pressure is much more desirable because the judge can evaluate the animal easier. Once an animal starts bad habits like over-driving or kicking his back legs too far back, it is hard to stop. The best way to avoid this is to be careful not to over-practice when teaching it to push.

Remember to keep practicing several times a week for short periods. Your animals must do this enough that they respond easily to your movements.

Call your Sutton County Extension Office at: 387-3101 for help or additional information.



Teaching to brace.



Showing the lamb.



Showing the goat.