

# The Basic Steps to Judging Meat Goats

Evaluate the four main views of the goat, which would include the top view, rear view, front view, and side view.

## Top View

When viewing from the top the goat should be rectangular in shape and be smooth with firm flesh. The back should be strong with a nearly level top line that is broad in its appearance. The loin should be wide, full, and deep. Width of top and boldness to the shoulders indicated more rib capacity.

## Rear View

When viewing from behind the hind quarters should be full, wide, and deep with muscling carrying down into the hocks. The muscle should be present on the inside and outside of the legs. The hocks should be wide and set far apart with the round being the widest part on the goat when viewed from behind.

## Front View

When viewing from the front, the head should be medium in length, masculine in appearance, broad across the muzzle, large open nostrils, strong jaw, wide spread to the eyes, and a wide across the forehead. The front legs need to be medium in length with a wide set between them. Legs should be fairly straight when viewing from the front with a deep set to the heel. The heart girth should show a bold sprung rib cage with depth through the fore rib and hind rib. Meanwhile the brisket should be broad, deep, and fairly firm.

## Side View

When viewing from the side the neck should be short to medium in length. The neck should be strong and thicker at the base which blends in smoothly at the shoulders. The neck should also tie in nicely to the brisket. The rump should be long, broad, with a slight slope, and even in its flesh. The hips should be wide and separated apart between the pins. The tail head should be slightly placed higher than the pin bones. The fore and hind legs should be perpendicular to the hocks and pasterns. The hock should have some angulation to them and not be too straight in appearance. The barrel needs to be uniform in depth, width, and proportional from a profile. The shoulder should be moderately heavy, well muscled, with even cover and firmness of muscle.



## Handling

The purpose of handling is to determine the amount of finish, firmness of muscle, and evaluate structural problems.

- Estimate the amount of cover over the top line and the ribs.
- Estimate the width to the round at the half way point from the rump and the hocks. Identify the firmness of the round and decipher the difference between muscle and fat.
- Check for depth of hind quarters from the tail setting to the flank.
- Evaluate the bones, joints, knees, hocks, and structure on the goat.
- Review the firmness over the rack, loin, and hind quarters.
- Determine the amount of muscle over the rack.
- Determine the amount of muscle in the loin estimating the length, width, and depth of loin.
- Check for depth of hind flank, length of back, and width between the hocks.

## Terminology

**Stature-** refers to the overall skeletal size and length of the goat. Goats must have an adequate length of cannon bone from knee to pastern and should be above average in overall length of body and general size. Cannon bone length is a good indication of skeletal size. The goat's height measured at the withers should be slightly more than at the hips, and bones must be of good size.

**Short bodied** - short from the shoulders through the hip. Lacking in overall body length.

**Lacks scale and size** - not big enough for its age or sex.

**Head-** should combine the eyes, nose, ears, and overall form with strength and refinement. It should have a balance of length, width and substance that insures an ability to consume large amounts of forage with ease.

**Good wide horn set** - horns set wide apart across the head.

**Correct Bite-** the bottom jaw needs to align up with the top dental pad.

**Parrot Mouth-** the bottom jaw is shorter than the top jaw, which causes an incorrect bite.



**Monkey Mouth or Mouth is out** – the front teeth do not align up with the bottom teeth. This can also be called an over shot mouth with means the bottom teeth extend out beyond the top teeth.

**Front end-** is a combination of chest and shoulder features. The goat should have a wide chest floor and prominent brisket with a smooth blending of shoulder blades and sharp withers. This insures room for the heart and lungs to do their work with ease and also is evidence of proper muscle and ligament strength.

**Front Legs-** should be straight, perpendicular to the ground, sound in the knees and full at the pint of the elbow. The legs should move with the front feet pointing straight ahead.

**Splays out in the front** - front feet turn out when the goat stands or walks.

**Weak/down in the pasterns** - pasterns are weak and give when the goat walks or stands. A goat that may walk on his/her dewclaws is considered severe.

**Neck-** The juncture of the neck and shoulder should be free of excess tissue. It should gently slope to indicate muscling. Smoothness and quality are important in this area. A long clean neck with muscling in balance to the remainder of the animal is desired.

**Smooth over the shoulder and through the front end-** being wide and flat at the rack. The shoulder should tie in nicely to the neck, ribs, and brisket.

**Shoulders-** The goat's muscling should increase from the withers to the point of the shoulder with the thickest muscle occurring immediately above the chest floor. The circumference of the forearm is the second most important indicator of meatiness, so the forearm muscle should exhibit a prominent bulge and should tie in deep into the knee.

**Broad through their chest floor or bold sprung-** this kind of goat will have the desirable barrel with the proper shape through the ribs. The front legs will be set wide apart and not be flat at the breastbone. The rack should be wide and smooth with the ribs being round.

**Lacks volume/depth/capacity** - is narrow and shallow bodied. Front legs are set close together, and the hips are usually short and steep. This animal lacks room to have a large functioning rumen system, or lungs.

**Smooth over the rack** - feels smooth over the withers and ribs.

**Slab sided or lacks spring of rib** - flat ribbed or narrow bodied - these animals lack volume/depth/capacity.



**Muscle-** Meat characteristics can be visually determined by examining the animal hindquarters loin, shoulders and neck.

**Back-** is straight, strong, wide, long, and level is desired in goats. This denotes a strong body with good muscling and is indicative of strength to carry large quantities of feed.

**Weak/soft over the top -** gives behind the shoulders, falls off behind the withers. Isn't smooth through the rack.

**Loin-** The loin eye or ribeye is typically the best indicator of meatiness in market goats. It should be wide with a symmetrically oval shape on each side of the backbone. This muscle should carry forward over the ribs or rack.

**Hindquarters-** A long, deeply attached muscle, relatively thick at the thigh and stifle is desirable in meat goats. Heavier muscling on the outside of the leg is acceptable. Muscle over the rump should be obvious.

**Rump-** should be long, wide, and level from thurl to thurl, cleanly fleshed and have a slight slope from hips to pins. The shape of the rump is important as it affects leg set.

**Short through the rump -** lacking adequate distance between the hooks and pins.

**Short through the hip -** not enough distance between the hook & pin bones.

**Pinched through the withers/behind the shoulders or sharp through the rack -** the rack narrows behind the withers. Usually this can be seen all the way down the ribs & behind the front legs.

**Feet-** refer to having strong pasterns, well-formed feet with tight toes, deep heels, and a level sole. Such feet are highly resistant to injury or infection and easy to keep trimmed. Goats with uneven toes and extremely weak pasterns should be culled.

**Hind Legs-** should be wide apart and straight when viewed from the rear, with clean hocks and a good combination of bone refinement and strength. Observed from the side, a line originating at the pin bone would fall parallel to the leg bone from hock to pastern and touch the ground behind the heel of the foot. The resulting angles produced at the hock and stifle joint will be most ideal for easy walking and a minimum of joint problems.

**Clean him/her up on his/her feet and legs -** exhibits structure problems with pasterns or hocks - usually not serve.

**Correct on their feet and legs-** they are structurally correct.



**Tracks wide from the Front/Rear** – walks straight and wide in the front/rear.

**Tracks Well-** is structurally correct with ample width between the hocks.

**Hocks in** - cow hocked. Hocks turn in when the goat stands or walks.

**Steep rumped** - too much angle between the hook and pin bones.

**Deep through the twist** - distance between the bottom of the anus and where the legs split. Goats that are deep in the twist have more leg muscling.

**Carcass merit** - the value of the animal when slaughtered in the carcass evaluated. Overall thickness and volume of muscle as demonstrated on the live animal indicating carcass value.

**Finish/cover** - amount of fat covering the goat. Goats put fat on two-thirds the way down the rib cage towards the chest floor first. The loin is the last place to finish.

**Condition-** refers to the amount of finish or fat the animal is carrying. Goats deposit fat internally before they do externally. The ideal condition is a thin, but uniform, covering over the loin, rib and shoulder. The external fat thickness over the loin at the 13th rib should be between .08 to .12 inches or an average .1 inch.

**Correctly finished or correct amount of finish** - wether is fed out to have the correct amount of fat covering. Is not too fat or too thin. The goat is smooth.

**Not enough finish or lacking finish** - not enough fat & muscling.

**Over finished** - too fat

**Smooth over the rack** - the goat is flat & shows good finish over the withers and ribs.

**Stale** - past his prime. Starting to put on fat and loose their top. Internal fat causes a belly, and external fat is evident.

**Wastey** - too much fat on carcass, both external and internal.

**Short through the loin** - loin (between the 12th rib & hook bones) is too short for his size.

**Well balanced** - the goat is put together well. All the parts match & tie in correctly.

**Symmetrical** - not real wide & powerful in the front, and narrow through the hips.



**Stylish** - is well balanced and pretty to look at.

**Eye appeal** - nice to look at, flashy.

