

Goat Foot Care and Disbudding in Small Ruminants

Bosques J., J. Walter and S.F. Gamble

Foot Care - Hoof care is important for goat production. Depending on genetics, metabolic condition and management practices, this issue can be more of a problem in some herds than others. For example, animals in rocky terrain will need less hoof care than those living in smooth soil.

Regardless of your situation, a regular hoof check can prevent issues before they hurt the performance of your herd. Our goal when trimming hooves is to flatten the bottom of this area at an angle that provides balance and comfort to the animal while at the same time, removing the excess horn tissue. When trimming hooves we can also prevent or correct illnesses, such as foot rot or scald on our animals.

Disbudding - Horn removal has various advantages such as increased marketability of the animals, human safety and to avoid animals from getting tangled in fences. A goat's horn buds should be removed before two to three weeks of age, as they can be felt when these structures start growing and become noticeably painful to remove. The earlier we take care of this issue, the less chances of infection. Horn buds can be removed two ways: using a bud cauterizer or dehorning paste. In both methods goat producers attempt to kill horn-producing cells at an early age in order prevent these structures from developing.

Dehorning your goat herd will add value to your herd by reducing the occurrence of animal and human injuries. It will also reduce bullying from animals with horns against the ones with smaller or no-horns. By doing this you will promote better weight gains.

Production practices such as hoof trimming and dehorning are essential for the viability of your herd. Providing our goat herd with safe and stress-free management practices can result in increased weight gain, which in turn will result in greater profits.



Proper hoof trimming provides balanced footing for our animals to stand on.



Disbudding goat kids should be performed at two to three weeks of age.