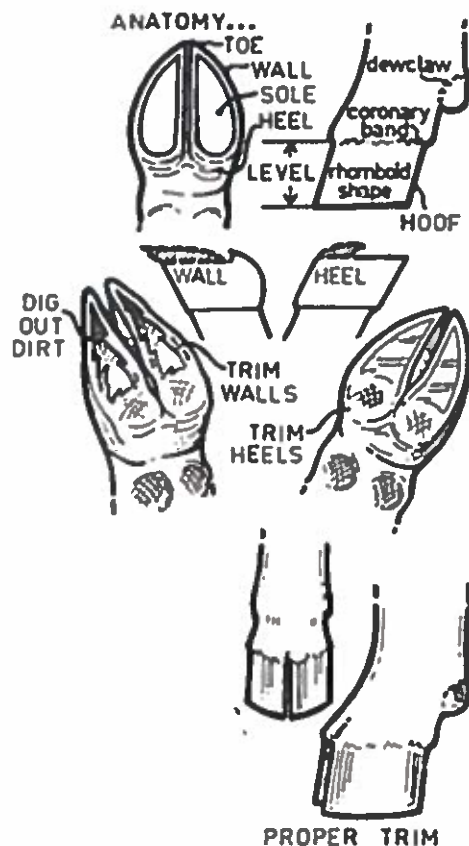


Goat Herd Management: Hoof Trimming

David Nistler, UF IFAS Extension Union County



Hoof trimming goats is a simple task that can be easily learned. The goal of hoof trimming is to allow your goat to walk normally. The lack of trimming, or improper trimming, can lead to foot and leg problems. The amount of time between trimmings depends on many factors, such as type of terrain, the goat's age, level of activity, nutritional level, and genetics. In environmental areas where natural wearing does not occur, producers need to trim hooves on a regular basis. Goats raised in relative confinement and on small acreages may require more frequent trimmings than goats raised in vast pastures. Generally, foot trimming should be done as needed.

Each hoof of the goat has two toes. The wall of each toe tends to overgrow and needs to be trimmed. The heels of the hoof and the dewclaws (especially on an older goat) may also develop extra tissue that needs to be trimmed. Most producers use foot shears or hoof trimmers. Other tools used may include a hoof knife with sharp edges, a pocketknife or a rasp. Pocketknives or a hoof knife can be dangerous to use for both operator and animal as goats may jump. Some people like to use hoof nippers to cut off the tip of the hoof or file it down with rasps.

Initially, use the point of the hoof trimmers to remove any dirt from the outside and the bottom of the hoof. The front of badly overgrown hooves can then be removed. The sides of the hoof should be cut back even with the sole of the foot. Continue to trim the sides around one toe and repeat the process on the other toe. Trim the frog and heel flat until the sole is parallel to the hairline of the pastern. Trim off thin slices. A good rule to follow is to stop when you see pink. If blood appears stop trimming and apply blood stop powder and finish the trimming at a later time.

The following are the tools needed in order of importance to the job. While you may not need everything on the list when you start out, you eventually will.

1. Hoof Trimmers or Shears - Hoof trimmers can be purchased for between \$7 - \$15 online or in stores. They have sharp blades and are spring loaded to make clipping easier, but keep away from young hands! The best trimmers lock in a closed position and have a wrist strap to keep them from flying out of your

hands when a goat kicks out. If you have older trimmers, be sure to sharpen them or change them out for new ones.

2. Goat Stand - Even the best behaved goats will only put up with so much. A goat stand reduces back pains for the farmer and stress on the animal. Some include feed buckets so you can snip away while the goat eats. They are made from both metal and wood in a variety of styles Metal stands are sturdier, and some are even collapsible to make it easier to move around. If working with large goats (or bucks), a sturdy metal stand is probably your best bet.

3. Hoof Pick - A hoof pick helps clean out dirt and poop from the center part of hooves. It is just a metal tip that scrapes against the hooves. I really like the combo pick/brush on the right because the smaller your kit is, the easier it is to find things. We use the same one designed for horses, but on a busy day, you can use the tips of your shears to knock off big chunks of mud.

4. Brush - A simple (and inexpensive) brush that you can use with water to scrape mud and other debris from the outside of hooves. These will need to be thrown away as they get broken bristles and too dirty to clean. A rag will do a similar job, but not as well.

5. File or Hoof Rasp/Plane - This is a file that is used for the finishing touches. While not necessary for routine trimming, it is recommended for use before showing to get hooves looking their best. The best files have both a fine and course side depending on the amount you need to take off.