

Hoof Trimming in Goats

— Written By Kaitlyn Johnson

Trimming your goats' hooves is a task that can be easily learned, however, the challenging part is committing to following a timely schedule for trimming. Many foot and leg issues arise from the lack of hoof trimming or improper trimming techniques. The amount of time between trimmings varies depending on a variety of factors, including the terrain the animals are on, the age of the goat, level of activity, nutritional level and even the breed. Goats that are raised in smaller pastures that are "clean" (relatively free of debris and rocks) or in confinement will typically require more frequent trimmings than goats that are raised on vast pastures and pastures that contain things for the animals to climb on. Each animal will require observation to determine when the hoof needs to be trimmed, there is no set trimming interval. Once you become familiar with how the hoof is supposed to look, it will become easier to identify when it is needed. A properly trimmed hoof should look like that of a newborn kid.

The tools recommended to trim hoofs include: gloves, a set of hoof shears that have sharp edges, and a way to restrain the animal. Some optional items include: a rasp, a hoof knife with a sharp edge, some iodine, turpentine, or copper sulfate. The latter is typically used in treating foot rot, foot scald or abscesses.

The first step in trimming is to clean off the hoof, so that it is free of dirt and debris. Besides being easier to see, a clean foot will not dull the shears edge as fast as a dirty foot. The next step is to remove any rim or excess growth from the walls of the foot. The wall may have grown and folded back under the foot. In this case some of the overlapped toe will have to be cut back so that the rim of the wall can be removed properly. The trimming of the wall and toe should be done using shears, the heel and sole can be cut using shears but some find it easier to use a hoof knife. All depends on what you have on hand and prefer. If you choose to use the hoof knife, always cut away from the goat and yourself. The sole should be trimmed down in this slices until the heel, sole and wall form a flat surface upon which the goat should stand at a correct angle of about 45 degrees. Stop trimming as soon as the sole begins to appear a pinkish color, this means you are getting close to the "quick". Any further trimming will cause the foot to bleed. If you do happen to cut to close a disinfectant such as iodine should be used. In most cases after the application of iodine the weight of the goat itself will put pressure on the cut and stop the bleeding.

If the hooves have been neglected for some time, and the toes are very long it is usually not practical to try to bring them back to normal in one trimming. It is generally better to trim a little at a time to gradually bring them back to proper shape, size and angle with more frequent trimmings. A good rule of thumb is to keep the hair line of the hoof almost parallel to the ground and the more often trimming is done the less time and energy per trimming it takes, and the more conditioned the animals will be to trimming. This in most cases will lead to better behaved goats and decreased chance of the animal developing foot problems.

In summary, a conscientious effort at a good foot care program will keep goats looking better, healthier and more productive.

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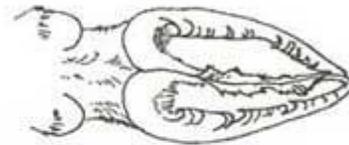


Trimming hooves correctly takes practice. I use the ARS hoof trimmers due to their ability to be re-sharpened and they fit in my small hands. They cost a little more but last.

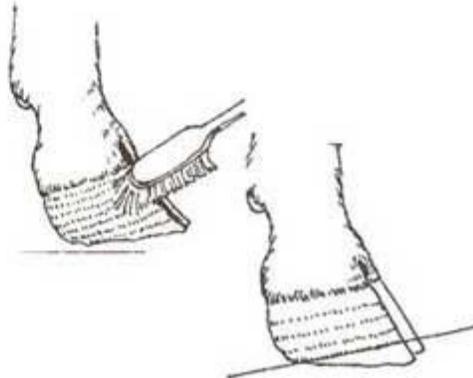
Hooves that are overgrown will turn under around the sides and may even grow out in front like elf shoes.



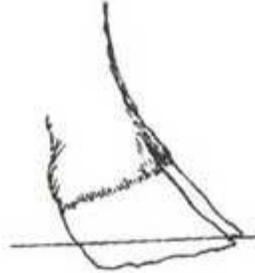
Start by cleaning the manure and crud out from the toes with a hoof pick or the point of your shears. Then trim off the overgrown sides down to the white sole.



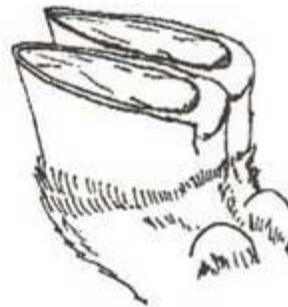
Now take a tooth brush and some water and scrub the sides of the hoof until you can see the little growth lines that are circling the hoof parallel with the hair at the top of the hoof. This is the correct angle for the trimmed hoof to end up.



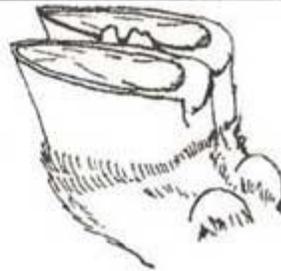
The toes of the hoof grow faster than the heel. Because of this, many people tend to trim at the wrong angle - like this -----> This will cause the foot to roll backwards, forcing the pasterns to break down.



Start trimming slices off the hard side nail and the soft, white center to level out the hoof. Trim down until you can see the white change to pink. Trim the heel only down until it is level with the growth ring that the toe is on. The toe and heel should be at the same level.



There may be some little flaps coming out of the middle, between the hooves, these will need to be snipped off.



Then, using your carpenter's plane, and holding both toes together, so they will come out level, plane off the entire bottom of the hoof (including the heel) until it is level. If the hoof oozes little pin-pricks of blood, don't worry,



When the heel grows too fast or is left long, it gives the feeling and appearance of walking on “high heels”. When the hoof is drastically overgrown, it may take several trimmings over a period of time for them to be corrected.

Hooves need to be trimmed regularly depending on your terrain and their nutritional intake. If you have rocky terrain, you may only trim once or twice a year. If you have soft terrain or keep your goats in pens, you may have to trim monthly. Some people build low platforms of rock and cement for the goats to play on to help them keep their hooves in shape.

YouTube Videos:

www.thegoatmentor.com

Ok State University <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ya17IujktZM>

Kentucky State University (Very Good Video)

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Boer+Goat+Hoof+Trimming&FORM=RESTAB#view=detail&mid=A1D3C080873AB1D3EFD5A1D3C080873AB1D3EFD5>

Scroll further for pictures.

HOOF TRIMMING

WWW.ABGA.ORG

Hind feet untrimmed. Notice the correct pasterns in spite of the condition of the feet.



Viewing foot of previous animal from the sole.



Trim foot in straight line from heel to toe.



Previous foot half trimmed. Both toes should be trimmed to the same length.



Previous foot almost complete.



One foot completed. Notice how level the foot is with the heel slightly lower than the toe.



Finished!

