

Ottawa County 4-H Pack Goat Handbook

This handbook is intended to teach members what to look for when selecting a pack animal and tips for training. The pack goat project is a long term project that will involve years of working with your chosen pack goat. In order to pack you will want to start training your goat early and build on the training as they grow.

This handbook also outlines what is the rules and requirements for showing in the pack goat class at the fairs in Ottawa County.

What to Look for When Selecting a Pack Goat

The first thing to consider is how you intend to use your goat. Will you be taking short day hikes or going on long overnight hikes. For short day hikes you can use a smaller goat with little problems. If you are planning to go on long overnight hikes you are going to want to get a larger dairy or meat breed so that it is able to carry more weight.

You will also want to look at the friendliness of the goat. If you are training a goat at a young age you will want to spend lots of time with the kid, hugging, etc. This is called imprinting. If you are training a goat from an older age you will still want to bond with your goat. Look for goats that seem friendly and aren't afraid of people.

You will want to look for a healthy and alert goat no matter what age goat you are selecting. Make sure it is muscular with a wide deep chest. Since the goat will be doing a lot of walking and will be carrying weight strong legs and pasterns are a must. Also look for a strong, level topline. Horns are not allowed for 4-H pack goats so you will want to disbud kids or purchase an adult without horns.

Necessary Equipment

In addition to the standard equipment required to raise and maintain goats you will also need packing equipment.

You will need a collar or halter and a lead. While not all trails will require you to have your goat on a lead you should always have one with you. You will want to familiarize your goat with being tied and led.

There are two types of saddles/packs. The first is a soft pack which can be pretty much any type of soft bag that can get secured comfortably on the goat's back. This will be used during training and can be used when you only need the goat to carry a small weight. Soft packs can typically carry up to 10% of the goat's weight. Make sure that you do not overload your goat. It can injure their back.

The second type of saddle is the cross buck saddle. These are typically made of wood or aluminum. They are a miniature version of what is often used on horses and mules. These require a saddle pad between the saddle and the goat's back and use panniers (bags) that are attached to the saddle. With this type of saddle a goat can typically carry approximately 25% of their weight. Make sure to include the weight of the saddle and bags when you are calculating the weight they can carry.

Due to the fact that pack goats are often walking it is especially important that their feet are well maintained. Be sure that you keep them properly trimmed and cleaned.

Tips for Training Your Pack Goat

While kids are too young to begin carrying any weight it is still advisable that you begin training while they are young if you can. Start by getting them used to being on a collar and lead. Work on getting them to follow you. You do not want to have to drag your pack goat along the trail whenever you go on a hike. They should also learn to stay behind you and not run ahead.

It is a good idea to teach your goat commands for when you go on hikes. Consider commands like “let’s go”, “whoa”, “stand/wait” and “up” so that they will know when you want them to walk (let’s go), stop (whoa), stand still so you can saddle them or get something out of the pack (stand or wait) and get into a truck or jump over a log (up). You may come up with other commands that you find useful as you are training them.

It is also a good idea to teach them to walk through water while they are still at a young age. Goats don’t like to do this normally and teaching them while they are young is much easier than trying to convince a full grown pack wether that you need him to cross a stream.

Teach them how to load into your vehicle. This is especially important if you are going to be traveling with only a pickup truck. You may not always have something for your goat to climb up on to get in the truck and teaching them to jump into the truck as they grow is easier than lifting a 150 lb. goat into the truck.

You will also want to get them used to being tied up. It is much easier to saddle a goat that isn’t moving around or fighting the lead. Some camps will also require you to tie your goats at night. For safety reasons you want them to be used to this before you go on a trip. Start by tying them on a short rope attached to the fence at about back level. Don’t leave them alone. You will want to supervise to make sure that they don’t get hurt as they get used to being tied.

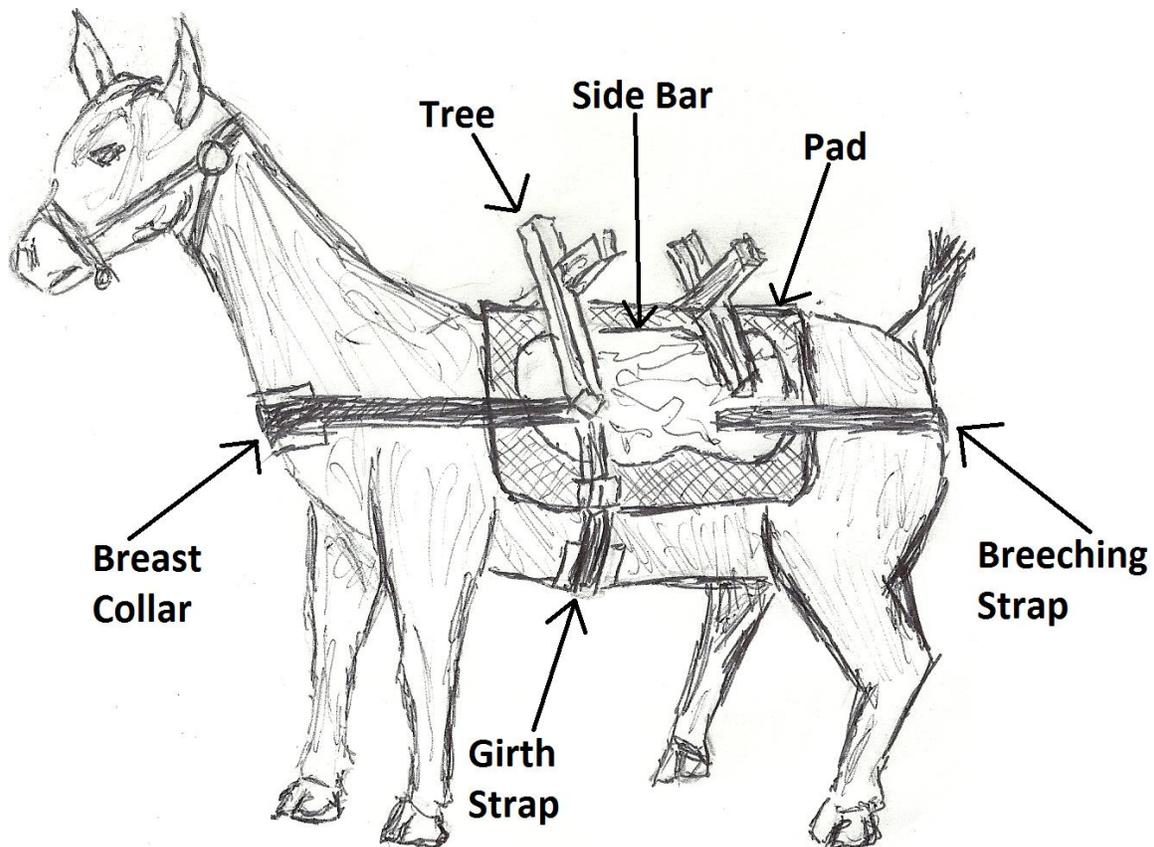
While kids are not able to carry weight you can start getting them used to a pack by placing a lightweight empty pack on them. Have them carry it for short distances and praise them when they do well. Make it fun for them right from the start. Once your goat is a year old you can begin carrying light loads in the packs.

A goat reaches maturity around 4 years of age. A good size for a pack goat that will be used for long trips is about 36” tall at the shoulder. Your goat could weigh up to around 200 lbs. depending on the breed. Large goats like this can carry about 25% of their weight (including the saddle and packs) and can walk for about 5-15 miles per day. When you switch your goat from the soft pack to a cross buck saddle it is a good idea to let them get used to the saddle before adding any weight to the packs. You will not want to go from no weight right to 25% of the weight. Gradually increase the weight that they carry in their packs. Always make sure that it is balanced between the two sides.

Rules and Requirements for Showing in the Pack Goat Class

1. The member should know the parts of a pack saddle
2. The member should be able place a saddle/pack on their goat.
 - a. For kids the pack can will be removed before starting the course. For goats over a year the pack should remain on the goat throughout the entire course. Points will be deducted if it slips or falls off.
 - b. Yearlings will not carry any weights.
 - c. Goats two years and older will be required to add weight to their packs as they go through the course. Weight should not exceed 20% of the goat's weight. Points will be deducted if the weight is not balanced.
3. The goat should stand still while being saddled and while weight is being added. Points will be deducted for excessive movement.
4. The goat should follow on a loose lead (no dragging or pulling the goat) through the obstacle course. Points will be deducted if the member drags the goat or has an excessively taunt lead.

Parts of a Saddle



Obstacle Course

The course will consist of 5-10 obstacles that simulate what a hiker and their pack goat might come across on the trail. The final obstacle will be loading your goat into a truck or trailer. There will also be an obstacle that tests to ensure your goat handles distractions well. The scorecard on the last page of this manual will be used for judging.

Possible Obstacles

- Plank – A board wide enough for the goat to walk across.
- Pond/Stream with Bridge – A small area of water with a bridge. The member crosses the bridge and the goat should either walk in the water or across the bridge.
- Jump – Some sort of jump to simulate a tree that might have fallen across the hiking trail.
- Weave – Weave poles that the goat should follow the member between. Tennis balls can be added to the top for additional difficulty level (points deducted for knocking them off).
- A-Frame – The goat would be required to climb calmly up and then walk down the other side, not jump.
- Teeter Totter - The goat should calmly cross the teeter totter without jumping off as it lowers.
- Balance Board – A wide teeter totter where the member and goat are required to stand on the board and balance with both ends off the ground.
- Backing Up – The goat would be required to back up on command.
- Distraction (required) – Some sort of distraction that the goat should accept calmly. Possibly loud noise, approach by another animal, etc.
- Loading (required) – The last obstacle will require the animal to load into either a trailer or truck.

References

Working Goats: <http://www.workinggoats.com/>

National Pack Goat Association: <http://www.napga.org/>

Frederick County 4-H Packgoat Page: <http://www.4hpackgoats.org/resources/project-documents>

Edel Weiss Acres: <http://home.comcast.net/~edelweissacres/ewacres5.htm>

Sheboygan County Extension: sheboygan.uwex.edu/files/2010/08/PackgoatProjectHandbook.pdf

University of New Hampshire Extension: <http://extension.unh.edu/4-H-Animal-and-Ag-Science/4-H-Working-Goat-Page>

Northwest Pack Goats & Supplies: <http://northwestpackgoats.com/>

Wind River Pack Goats: <http://www.goatpacking.com/goatpackingSupplies.htm>

Ottawa County 4-H Pack Goat Scorecard

	Maximum Score	Score
Appearance of Animal	15	
Hooves	5	
Cleanliness	5	
Overall Health Fit for Packing	5	
Appearance of Exhibitor: Clothes/Footwear for Packing	5	
Exhibitor Demonstrated Knowledge of Pack/Saddle	15	
Parts	5	
Saddle/Pack was Properly Placed on the Goat	10	
Obstacles (one obstacle must be a distraction)	65	
Maintained Loose Lead/Goat Followed Willingly	15	
1	5	
2	5	
3	5	
4	5	
5	5	
6	5	
7	5	
8	5	
9	5	
10 Loading	5	
Total		