

Picking A Dairy Goat

Signs of a Healthy Goat VS a Sick Goat

Bio Security

Anatomy and Conformation



By Jordan Beery of Flying Feets Farm

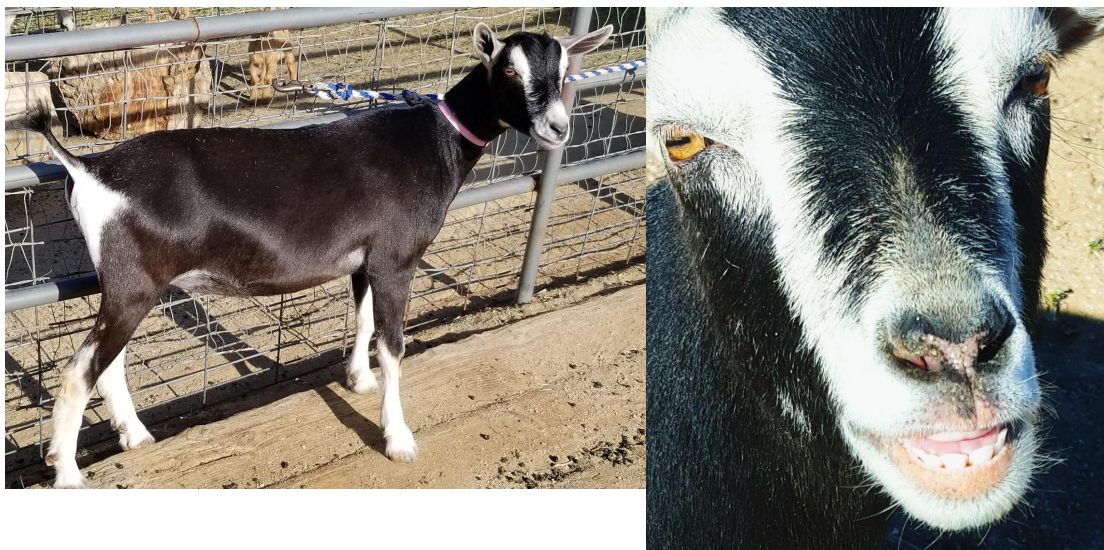
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Signs of a Healthy goat VS a Sick Goat

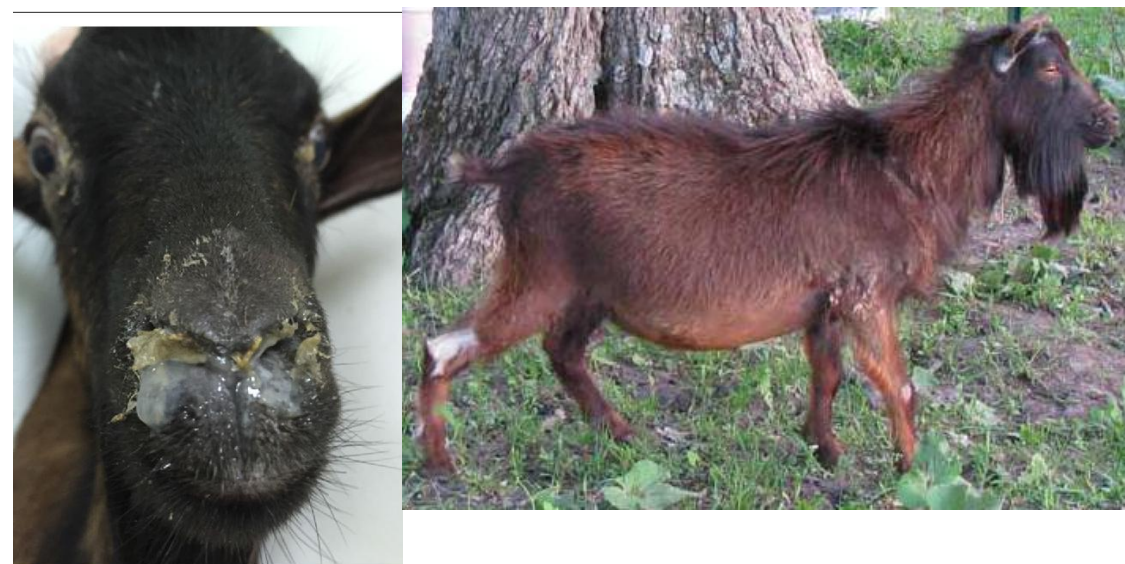
Healthy Goat

- Bright, clear eyes, free of discharge
- Nose clean, free of discharge
- Shiny hair
- Alert when handled
- Full rumen, good weight
- Good gait, moves easily and freely



Sick Goat

- Eyes dull, cloudy, or with discharge
- Nose with discharge
- Dull coat, black hair faded to brown
- Lethargic, not alert when handled
- Drawn up rumen, too skinny or too fat
- Limping, has trouble walking / moving
- Anything unusual such as abscesses or swollen joints



cal discharge observed on nosta des netits ruminar

Bio Security

Goats can carry diseases that can be contagious to other goats and some of these diseases can cause very bad sicknesses in your herd. It is important for your new goat to be healthy before it joins the rest of your herd because your other goats can catch whatever your new goat may have.

- Test negative for Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis (CAE), Caseous Lymphadenitis (CL) and Johnes before bringing new goats home. A negative test within the last year should be fine.
- Quarantine your new goat for at least 30 days. Keep them far enough away that there is no direct contact with your other goats.
- During quarantine watch for illness. Shipping fever and colds are not uncommon after the stress of going to a new home.
- Vaccinate new goat during quarantine if it hasn't been vaccinated before purchase.
- During quarantine it is a perfect time to slowly switch your new goat over to your own feeding practices.



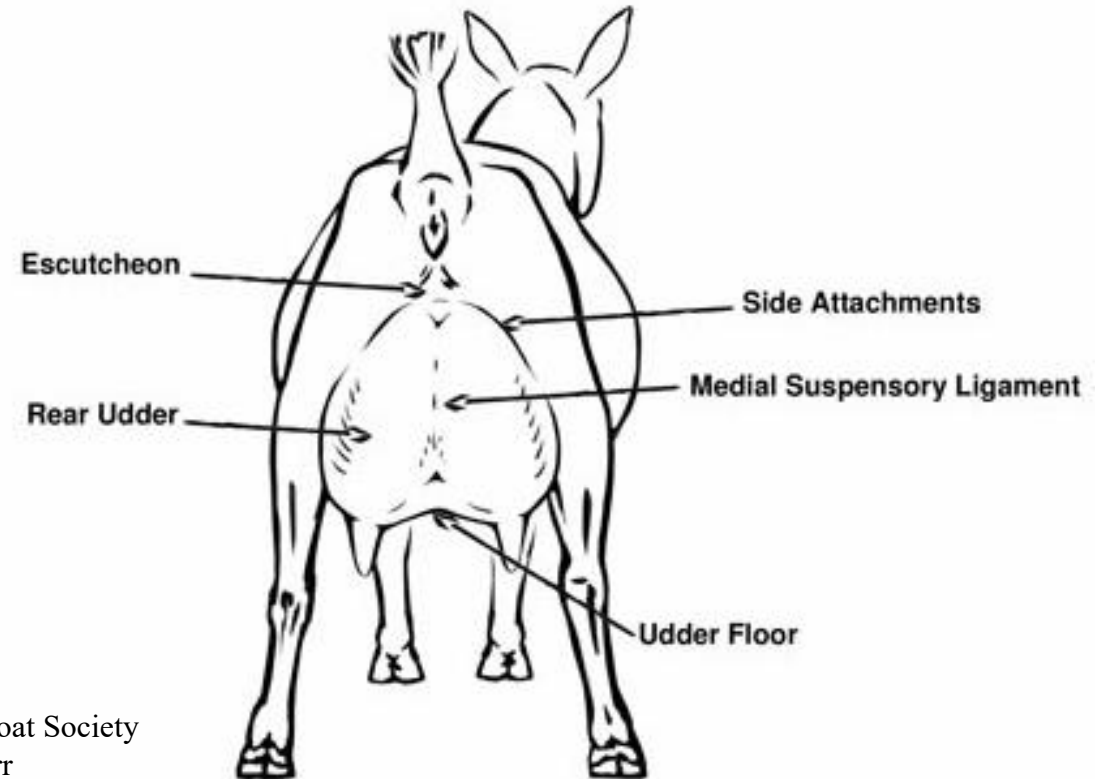
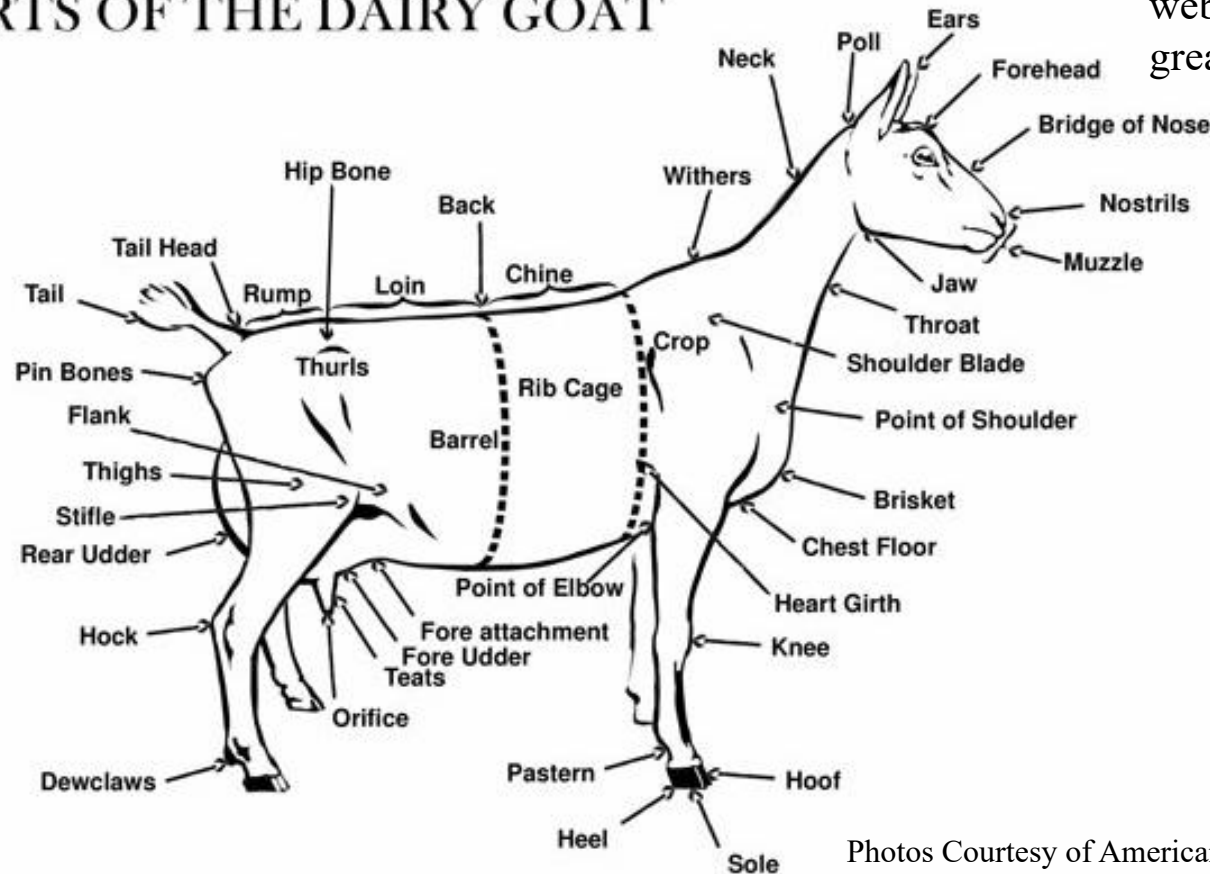
Conformation and Anatomy

Anatomy: Science that describes parts of the body

Conformation: The shape, structure and proportion of something, such as an animal.

Try to become familiar with goats body parts. It will help you to better understand conformation and will help you with choosing a conformationally sound goat and an animal that will be good for showing. Understanding anatomy will also help you understand terminology used by breeders and judges at shows. The American Dairy Goat Association has many excellent resources on their website that explains dairy goat conformation in depth and can be a great tool when trying to understand what to look for in a dairy goat.

PARTS OF THE DAIRY GOAT



Photos Courtesy of American Goat Society
Artwork by Karen Carr

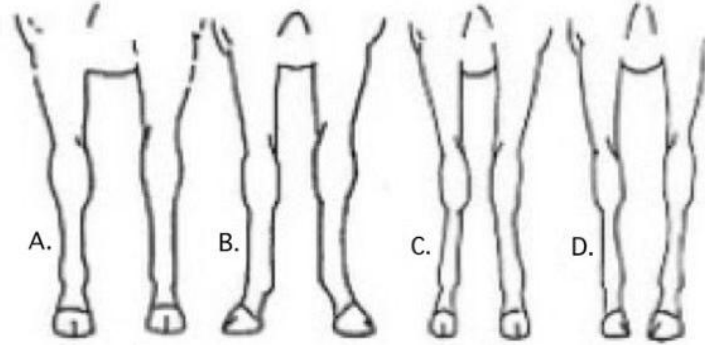
Feet and Legs

Good feet and legs are very important when it comes to choosing a goat for your herd. Your goat will need to have strong feet and legs to live a long, productive life that will carry them in to old age without causing lameness. Their feet and legs will have to support their bodies through breeding, pregnancy and be able to support the weight of an udder with ease.

- Legs should be straight as possible viewed from the front of the goat and from behind the goat.
- Front legs should be straight when viewed from the side, creating a straight line from the point of the withers down to the hoof.
- Rear legs when viewed from the side should be well angulated, creating a C shape above the goat's hock.
- Pasterns should be strong and upright
- Hooves should be tight between the toes, no splaying.
- Judge young animals' legs harshly (aside from newborns). A goat's legs never get better with age and will almost always get worse.
- Don't judge an old goat as harshly. A 9 year old goat may not have perfect legs, but it could still be a very high quality goat.

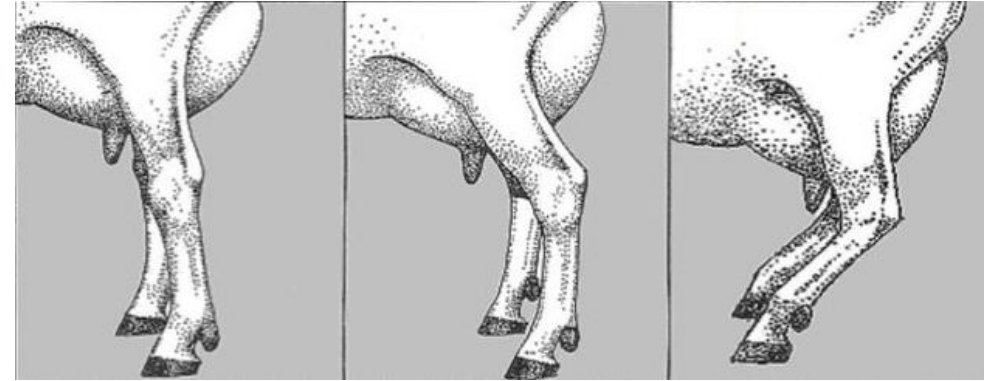


Examples of Good Legs and Feet VS Bad Legs and Feet



A: Correct Feet
B: Toes Out

C: Knock Kneed
D: Toes in



Left: Posty rear legs
Middle: Correct rear legs
Right: Over angulated rear legs



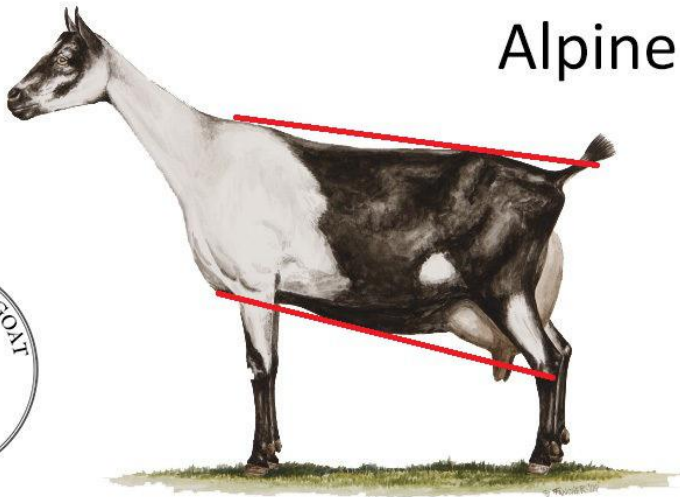
Left: weak pasterns **Middle:** Weak pasterns / splayed toes **Right:** splayed toes

Porportion, Structure and Dairyness

A dairy goat should be proportionate. Their body should look balanced throughout, meaning that they are pleasing to look at and there's nothing you notice about the goat that looks “off.” Dairy goats should be long bodied and have a level topline. You will hear of flatness of bone and openness of ribbing a lot in regards to dairy goats. These are some characteristics that show dairyness. A good spot to check a goat's dairyness is the ribs. Their ribs should have good spacing between them and the bones should be flat. Dairy goats should not look squatty and heavy boned. Their body style should be elegant looking. While you want a goat to be long and elegant, you still want them to have depth of body, meaning they have a big chest and a deep barrel. A healthy, productive goat will have a big rumen to hold a lot of hay. Don't confuse a big belly with a fat goat; most goats don't carry fat in their bellies. Goats should also have good width of body when viewed from the front and the back as well as from above. Wide hips and wide chests are good; lots of width between the rear legs is also good. Goats can take 3 or 4 years to reach maturity, so a younger goat may lack some of the depth of body a older animal will have. Don't expect a kid to have tons of depth of body. Something you will hear about is the “dairy wedge,” which refers to the shape of the body a correct dairy goat has.

Dairy Wedge

Alpine

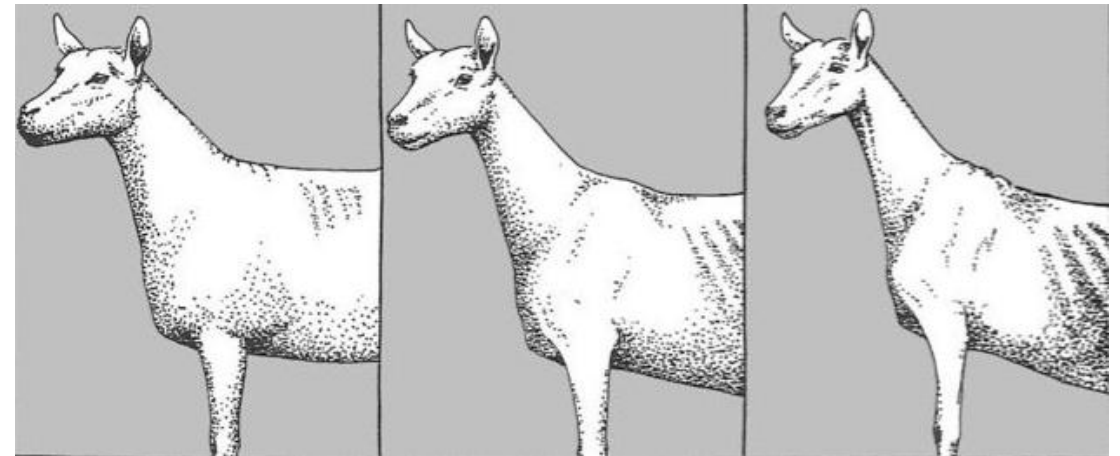


Dairyness:

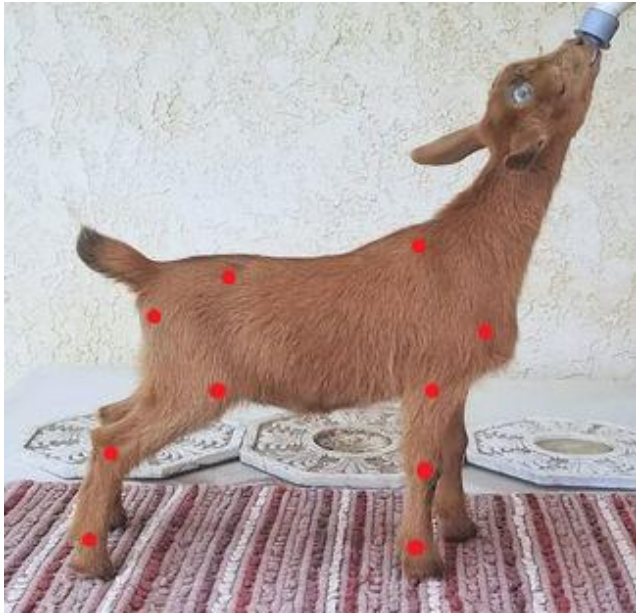
Lack of dairyness

Good dairyness

Too dairy



Proportion and balance are important. These red dots show different joints of the body and the ideal dairy goat should have as close to equal length between points as possible.

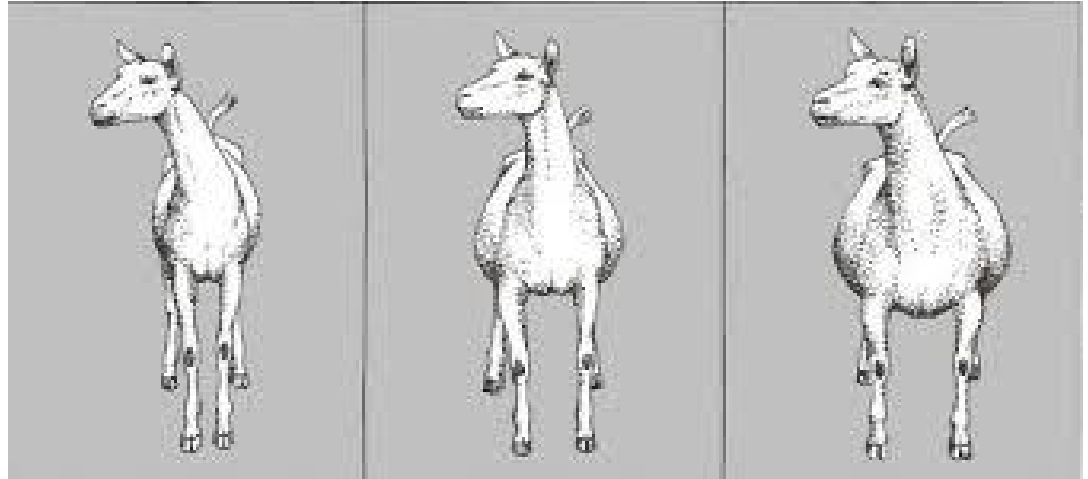


Strength

Narrow

Good

Wide

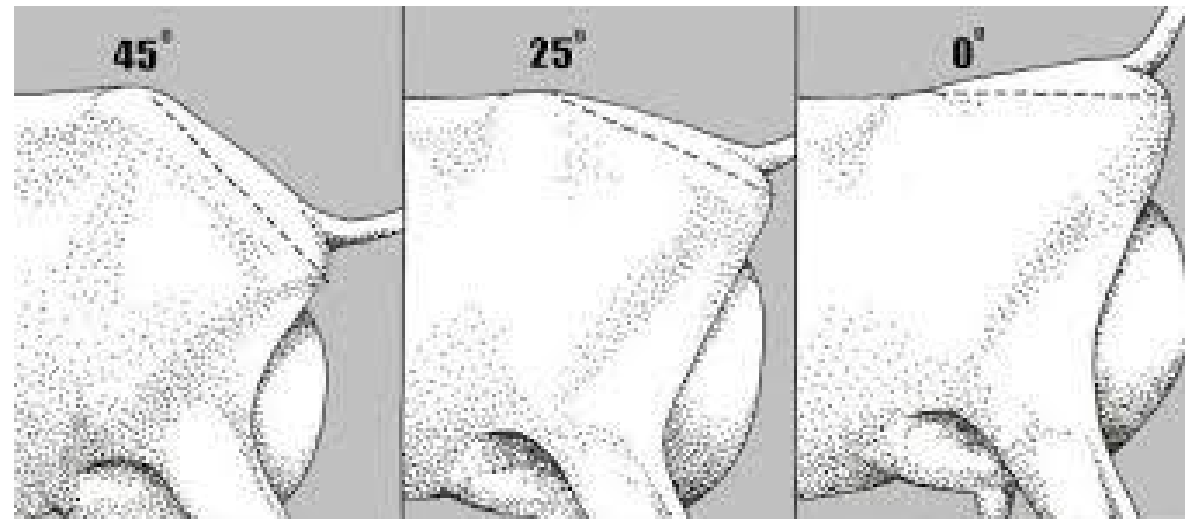


Rump Angle

Too Steep

Better

Pin bones almost too high

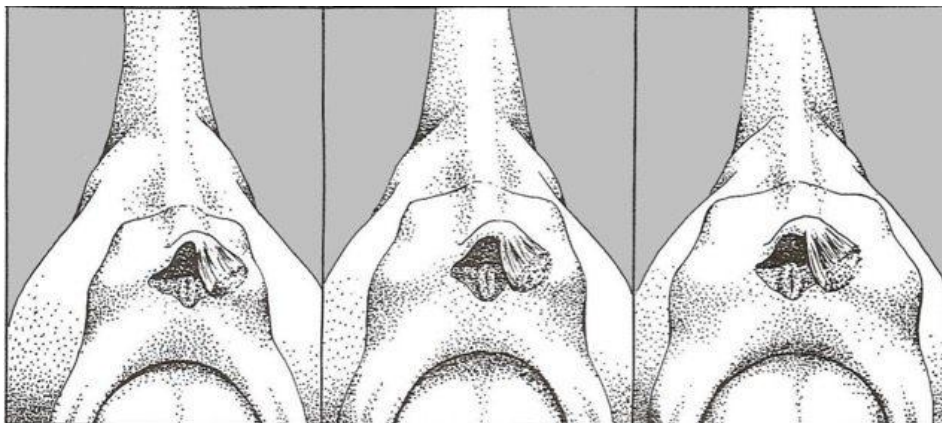


Rump Width

Narrow

Decent Width

Excellent Width

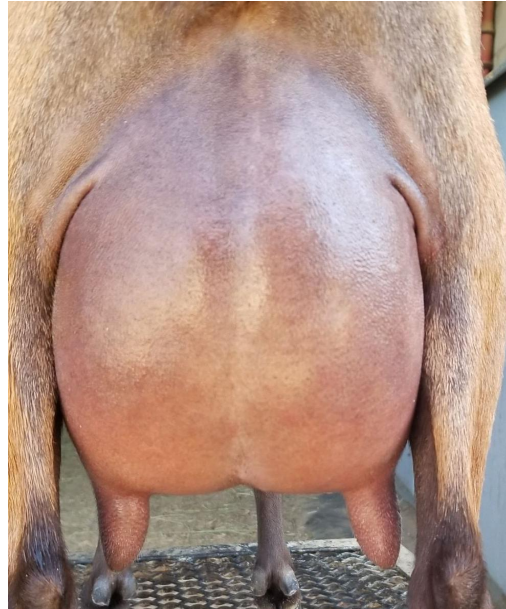


Mammary System / Udder

A dairy goat's main purpose is to produce milk, so when picking a potential dairy goat their udder should be closely evaluated, or if it's a junior kid or buck female relatives should be evaluated. Not only do you want a dairy goat with a conformationally correct udder, but you also want goats that have good production and long lactations.

- Well attached, snug into the goats escutcheon and snug against the belly.
- Udder floor carried above the hocks.
- Udder does not swing about when the goat is on the move.
- Teats placed at the bottom of the udder in the middle of each udder half.
- Teats a good size and length.
- Strong medial ligament, division between the udder halves.
- Soft and pliable texture, milks down as much as possible.
- Large orifice size for easy milking.

Correct udder



Poor udder



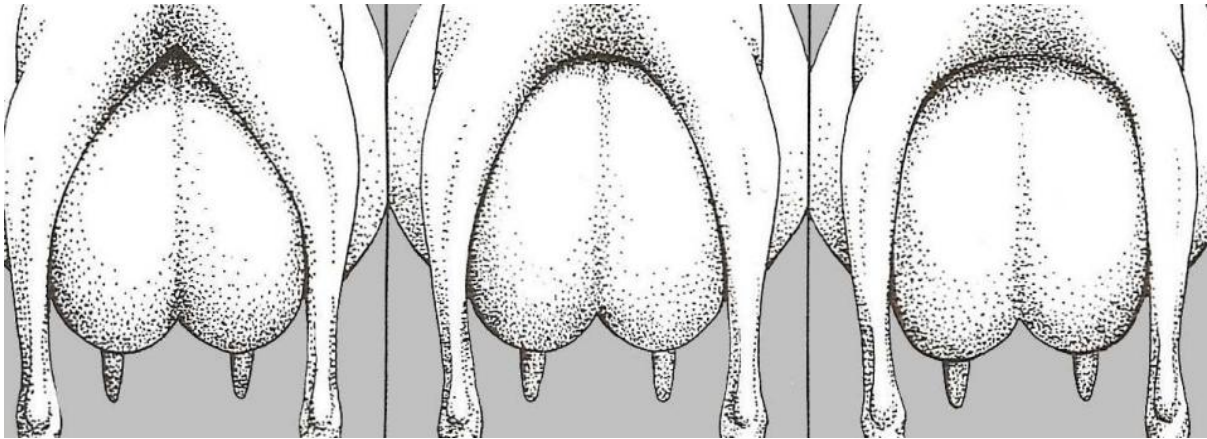
- Udder with no attachments, hangs loosely between legs, big pocket between udder and belly.
- Udder floor below the hocks.
- Udder swings about freely while goat is moving.
- Teats places on the sides of the udder, or too far forward or back.
- Huge yam shaped teats, or teats so tiny it impedes milking
- Weak medial ligament, no clear separation between halves
- Thick skin on the udder, udder has a meaty feel when milked out.
- Tiny orifices that impedes milking.

Rear Udder Arch

Narrow

Good

Wide

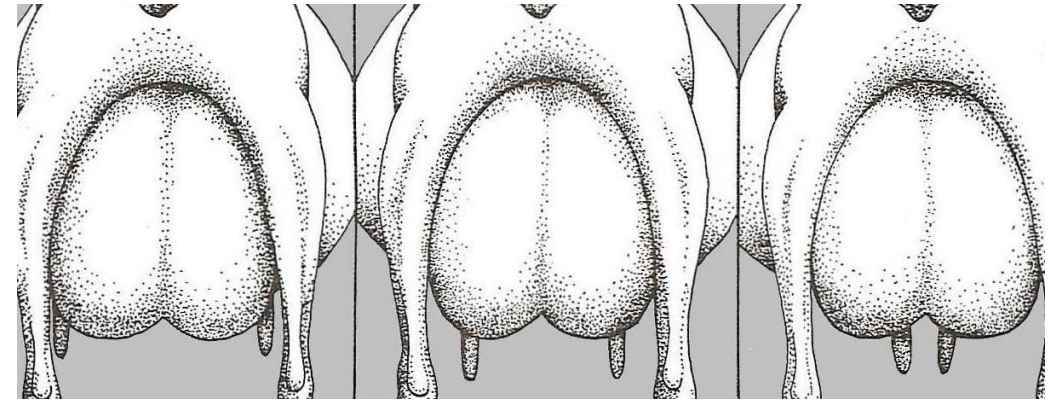


Teat Placement

Too far apart

Good

Too Close



Rear Udder Height

Too far down

Good

Excellent

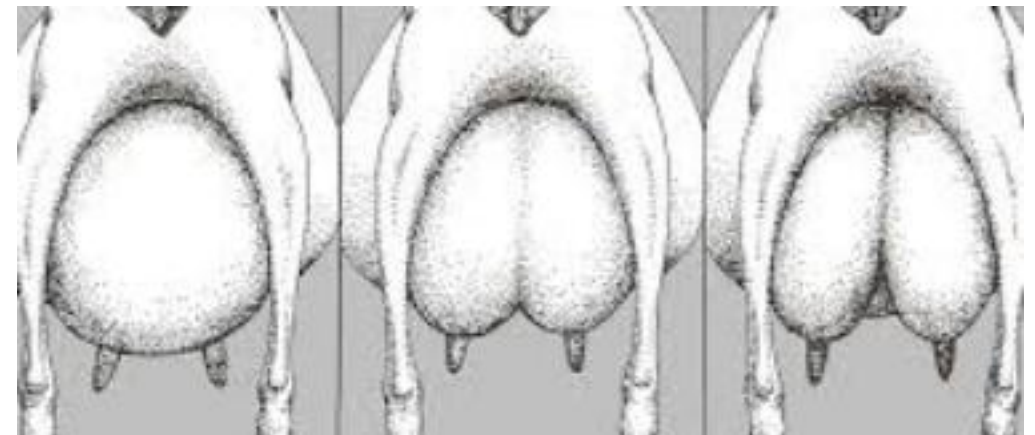


Medial Suspensory Ligament

No division

Good division

Too much division



Rear Udder Height Side View

Low

Good

High

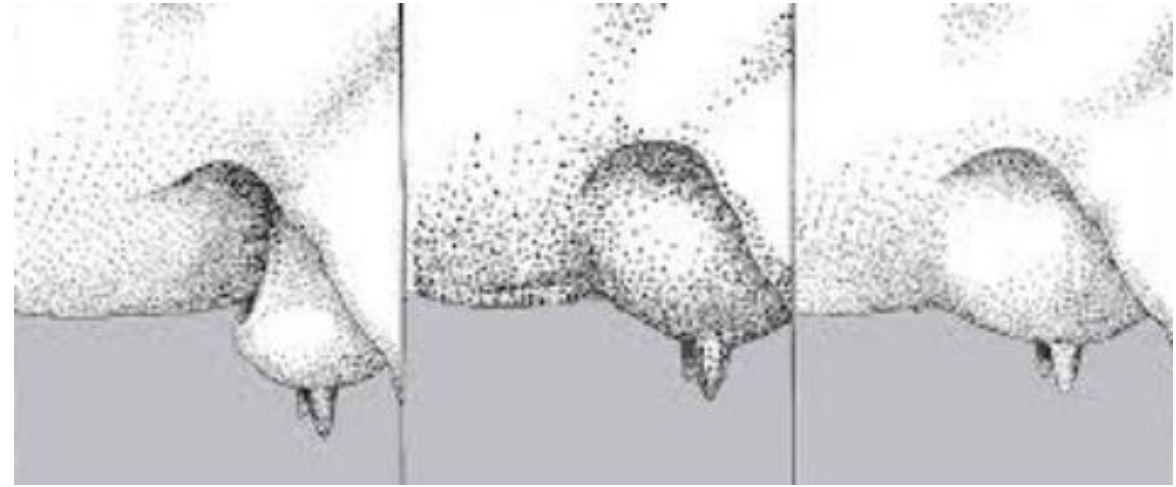


Fore Udder Attachment

Fore udder pocket

Good Fore udder

Great Fore udder



Udder Depth

Poor

Good

Shallow

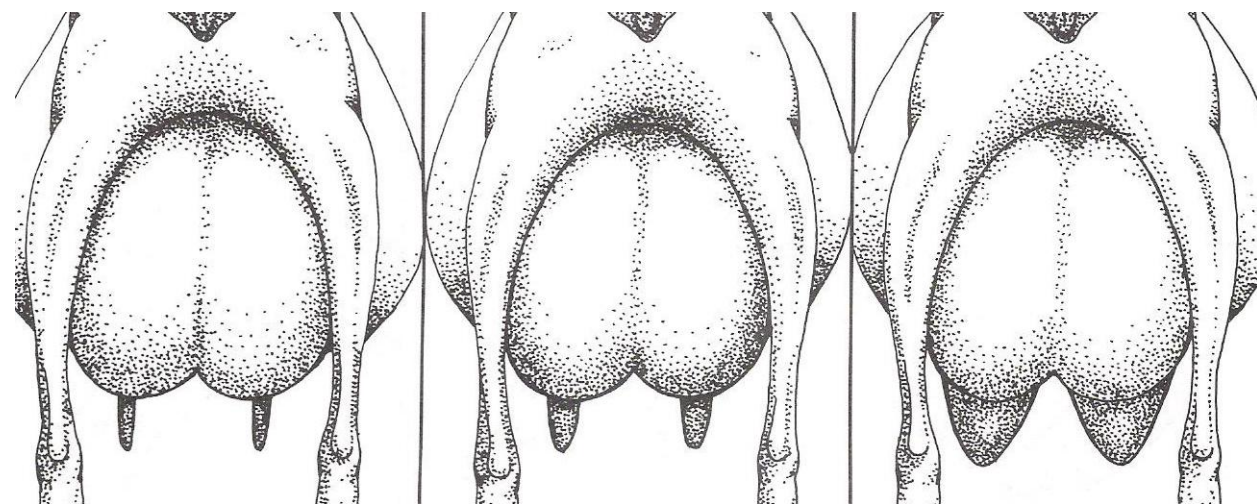


Teat Diameter

Small

Good

Too large

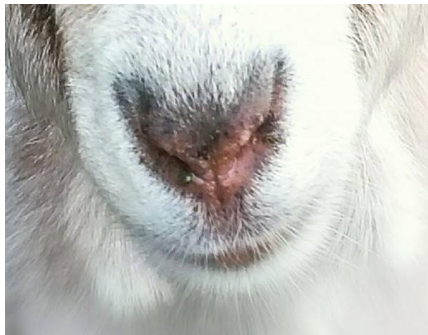


Head and Breed Character

All dairy goats should have a deep muzzle with wide-set, full nostrils, and should not be pinched and small. A goat needs a deep, wide muzzle because this is where they eat and breath and need to be able to do so with ease. A goat that can't do either of these things well is not going to be productive and can have more complications if they ever get ill.



Above: Deep muzzle / wide nostrils



Right: Pinched nose / small muzzle

All dairy goats breeds have their own unique qualities that make them seperate breeds. Whichever breed you choose, be sure to know what qualities your breed should have and which characteristics are considered a fault. Breed character can apply to many different characteristics for each breed, whether it be ears, head shape, coat color or height. Be sure to know the requirements of your breed.



Saanen: All white, erect ears



Nubian: Long pendulous ears and Roman Nose



Lamancha: very small external ear



Nigerian Dwarf: Height limit

Photo References Page

Page 2, Nasal discharge goat: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Susceptibility-of-Moroccan-sheep-and-goat-breeds-to-Fakri-Elhajjam/297be139754608d98878007e533109739d19500e/figure/0>

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Page 3, Goat with CAE joint: <https://i.pinimg.com/236x/d7/ef/56/d7ef56c6ae03148febeb912d650cf2bd--dwarf-goats-goat-care.jpg>

Page 3, Goat with CL lump: <https://www.salecreek.vet/three-diseases-all-goats-owners-should-be-aware-of-test-for-and-work-to-prevent.html>

Page 3, Goat with Johnes disease: <http://www.paratuberculosis.net/johnes.php>

Page 4, Dairy goat anatomy: <https://americangoatsociety.com/dairy-goat-anatomy.php>

Page 6, Front legs: <http://kindercommunique.blogspot.com/2012/11/conformation-part-1-feet.html>

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Page 6, Splayed Feet: <https://www.thegoatspot.net/threads/nadine-our-new-alpine.104120/>

Page 7, Alpine Dairy goat: ADGA.ORG

Page 7, Goat Dairy strength: ADGA.ORG

Page 8, Front end: ADGA.ORG

Page 8, Rump width: ADGA.ORG

Page 8, Rump Angle: ADGA.ORG

Page 9, Poor udder attachments: <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/full-goat-udder.html>

Page 10, all photos: ADGA.ORG

Page 11, all photos: ADGA.ORG

Page 12: Sannen, Nubian, Lamancha, and Nigerian Dwarf: ADGA.ORG