

Goat Tips

A goat is a *hiking companion* as well as a pack animal. You need to be their best friend and at the same time be the boss. You are the alpha of the herd; the goats look up to you for what to do.

The Bare Basics -

Do not allow anyone to squirt your goats for fun. They trust you to praise them when they do well and correct them when they mess up. If the goat gets squirted for no reason it will be confused and may think it has done something wrong.

Do not allow the goat to do something sometimes and then correct it for doing it at other times. Decide what is acceptable behavior in the beginning and stick with it. Be consistent!

Do not grab a goat by the horns, they don't like it. It will cause them to start using their horns when interacting with people. Goats will hit each other with their horns especially at feeding time. Whenever working with playing goats, one might push another goat into a person accidentally; please watch your young children around goats.

Do not holler and carry on at the goats for reasons beyond their control. In a group, do not lose your temper, argue or fight with each other. Goats do not like contention among people. They do not know why you are yelling and it makes them nervous. A trusting relationship is built around consistency. Talk calmly to and pet the goats thought out the day; they need your approval and they will give you their best.

Goats will get hypothermia if left in the rain and cold the same as people.

Goats can get Altitude Sickness the same as people: slow down, lighten their load, rest often, and offer water or energy drink. (do not be afraid to share electrolyte drinks with goats; just know they will want more for the taste.) If not acclimatized to the area, do not over hike the first two days so you and the goats have time to adjust. (if at high altitude and the goat is just acting 'off' Altitude Sickness may be the cause.)

Feeding Goats - Goat's eat the same as deer they browse all day and night. At the end of each day give each goat a small hand full of treats as a thanks job well done (with a vitamin B1 [thymine] in the bottom of your hand if the day's trip was stressful with the treats.) While you are setting up camp have a person take the goats over to a close by meadow or brush patch so they can eat for about 45 minutes or until they start playing then take back to camp. Do this about every two hours or so as you hike for about 10 minutes so they can get all the food they need to maintain their energy. This is a good policy for people also, remember to keep your energy up; eat a trail bar or handful of trail mix, and drink some water at least this often when hiking.

Loading Panniers - It is not recommended that you put equipment on the goats that you are not willing to carry yourself for that get a horse. Try to keep the volume close to the same in each of the side panniers and within about 6 to 12 oz. of each other, and heavy items at the bottom, load only soft or smooth items that will be next to the goat in the side

panniers. The younger the goat, the less variance there should be in the two pannier weights. **Total weight, including saddle, should not exceed 1/4 the goat's total weight for rugged terrain, or 1/3 for totally flat hiking.**

Saddles - When saddling or working with the goats tie each goat to a tree where they cannot reach each other. This will save a lot of "but it's my turn" headaches. Give the goat a good brushing before saddling and after saddle is removed, check saddle pad and strips for burs and sharp items, stand on left side of goat and place the saddle forward on goat and slide back into place (the wood part should be one finger width past the shoulder blade) do not slide saddle forward on goat place butt strip into position and lift the goats tail, Attach the chest strap with the clip, then do up the sternum strap pull down and up at the same time then engage buckle, the strap should be about 3 fingers width aft of the front legs or more, and on the sternum bone and not on the soft part of the belly when tight you should just get one snug finger between the goat and the strap at the bottom, two fingers it's too loose. Make this check one more time before you start hiking some goats will inflate their chest and the saddle will be too loose. Now take each leg below the knee bend the hoof up and back and then lift the knee up to at least a 90 ° angle towards his chin to pull and stretch the skin under the sternum strap so it will not bind and cause a sore when walking.

Hanging the panniers – Be sure to support the weight of the first pannier until the second one is on so not to twist the saddle, do up the load-lifter strap and pull to just take up the slack and a little more so it is not on the goats sides but not so much that it pack can rock left to right, then any top items on (if you add items outside the panniers; remember these can cause "catching" points for the pack) and snap all clips. Tuck the leach under a pannier strap so it will not drag or around the saddle horn so you can get to it if needed. At end of day remove saddle and panniers as one unit from the left side of goat, brush goat down good and apply bug repellent if needed, check for saddle sores and let goats browse in or near camp. Place all equipment together under a tree or cover to keep dry., secure the Orange screw stakes for night time, put rain tarp up for goats if needed, give each a vitamin B-1(thymine) and a treat, and offer them some water from the dish, lake or stream then tie them for the night before you go to bed.

Water - Goats do not like to get their feet wet, or be in the rain, but will if need to. When crossing small or large streams let the goats see where you crossed. They will rock hop, jump, or look for another way, or just walk through and get wet. If not, you may need to lead them across. Be careful so you don't fall in, especially when the led goat makes that last bit jump past you. Once you cross, stop on the other side, if they are thirsty they will drink. Pause till they have all had the water they want then move on. They may drink up to a gallon of water at a time and may not drink again for several days. At the end of each day offer the goats a drink of water from the water bowl provided or take them down to the stream or lake to drink. (if the forage is very wet and there is a lot of morning dew, do not be surprised if the goats don't drink much.)

Tying goats out at night - Secure the Orange screw stakes as close to tents as you can but not to interfere with camp and that they cannot get tangled up with each other or wrapper around items and so each goat can have shelter under a tree or tarp if needed, each goat may be attached with his leash hooked to the orange screw stake with the carabiner. In the morning unhook the goats so they can start eating and remove the orange screw stakes so not to leave them at camp.

It is not recommended that you tie the goats and leave them unattended. You are putting them at risk and they do not like to be left alone. Once at camp the goats are usually left loose until bed time this is their dinner time. Keep a close eye on the goats as they may follow any one that walks by your camp. If needed have someone take the goats over to the meadow to eat while the others setup camp for the night.

Well Behaved in Camp –

Once at camp the goats are usually left loose. Teaching them camp manners is simply teaching them what things they are not allowed to do or areas they are not allowed in.

Rule Number One: Don't ever chase a goat away from the scene of its crime. You cannot catch him and the goat knows it. Just making it leave the areas is not a correction. In the goat's way of thinking it won the confrontation and you may actually be teaching the goat to play games in which it tries to see how much stuff it can get out of the bag before dancing away just out of reach. To the goat this is fun, but to the humans in camp it leads to thoughts of goat murder. A correction is made by contact with the goat. Anything you squirt or throw that contacts the goats is the same as if you touched it. Be careful if you throw something to make sure it isn't going to hurt the goat. **Pain is not necessary It will not work** only the verbal command and something to contact the goat and make it move away.

Rule Number Two: When teaching camp manners, NEVER feed a goat people food. Once a goat gets a piece of your bread or some of your potato chips you will be mobbed every time you eat. It is annoying for guests when the goats are pushing and shoving them, hoping for a hand out and potentially dangerous for children. Save the people food for people. If you are eating and a goat steps up for a sniff or nibble of your lunch tell it "NO" or "BACK" and make the goat back off. Squirt it or push it back with your foot or knee or open hand. Don't pet or scratch your goat while you are eating. The goat will learn to go elsewhere or at least keep its distance when you are eating. With a little thinking, you can adapt this training to include the whole cooking area. If you have an extra persistent goat (usually one that has been fed) then you may have to tie it while cooking and eating. Teaching them camp manners is simply teaching them what things they are not allowed to do or areas they are not allowed in.

A little fore thought on your part can stop a lot of problems before they happen. If you leave panniers or backpacks with great smelling stuff in them laying around, out of your area of control; then don't be surprised when the goats start poking into all of the bags pulling out clothes and food. **Yes, they can open zippers.**

Especially with goats in camp always keep the food under your supervision. Do not allow any goat to sniff around any pannier bags or packs. The bags should be an "off limits item" at camp. Using the command of "NO", point at the goat and back it up with a squirt or small pine cone if necessary. BE CONSISTENT; don't let a goat get away with any negative behavior without correction being made. Remember don't chase a goat away. At night the food should be pulled into a tree in a "bear proof" manner. If there are no bears in your area then put the food inside the tent or out of tie-down range of the goats.

Tents - As far as the tent is concerned never allow any goats inside. Goats enjoy being inside and once in, they will charge in every chance they get if the door is open. If you are sleeping on the ground without a tent, put the goats where they can see you. ALL GOATS SHOULD BE TIED OUT SECURELY AT NIGHT.

On the Trail –

It is normal for some goats that are hiking loose to stray 10-15 yards back to eat while you travel they will run to catch up, only to stop and nibble a tasty plant and let you get ahead again. They will rarely let you get out of sight though. This eat and run behavior will decrease as trip excitement wears off, the goat tires after a couple of miles, and their bellies get full. Most goats file in behind in front or alongside you plodding steadily along on the trail at your pace. Remember to look back regularly and count heads, both goat and human.

You will notice that they seem to compete for positions on the trail; after they get it worked out remember the hiking order. If you have to tie the goats together in a string; tie them in their proper order, attaching the carabiner to the saddle, NOT any handle on the pannier. The correct goat placement will make the difference between an orderly hike and a tangled mess.

When a goat stops in front of you to eat and blocks the trail, keep walking and go around his backside the best you can and he will then turn and start walking again just as you pass him, if unable to pass then act like you are and make the same noise like walking in place, or gently pull on his tail with a let's go. Remember if you stop they all stop. While walking some goats will push you to the side and off the trail; just step back and around the back side of the goat to the other side. He may start pushing you the other way just keep stepping to the other side. They just want to be next to you this should stop in a little while. Goats can be taught with consistent back pushes with sharply phrased "no" to not crowd you like this.

While walking up or down Switch Backs always lead the goats, they will tend to cut the corners or become confused when you suddenly change directions. Keep your group close together at all times while on the trail; you are all part of the herd and the herd stays together for safety and so that no one gets lost.

Things that would make a goat want to stop or lay down are saddle sores, rubs, injuries,

and sharp objects poking the goat from the inside of the panniers or under the saddle pad, also remember the goat is hauling most of the weight, slow your pace down or you will wear him out early. If the goat still doesn't want to go, you should take some time to make sure everything is okay before going on. Check that the saddle is not overloaded, has not shifted to an improper placement, or is forming a "hot spot" from twisted hair under the saddle. If the goat is breathing or panting excessively, slow down, or stop and rest. Goats walk at about 2-5 miles per hour depending on trail conditions. Don't out walk them. (You can get faster goats with full conditioning, but this is the athlete's exception rather than the rule for most packgoats. Unless you do a fast pace often with your goats, do not expect them to do so fully loaded.)

Trail etiquette - All livestock have right away over hikers, bicycles, and ATVs. Horses and mules have right away over goats. Most horses, mules and lamas are spooked by goats, when horses or lamas are seen let them know you are there and you have pack goats and that you are getting off the trail to the LOW side to let them pass (about 40 feet or more and stand still) while talking to the horse people as they pass so not to spook the horses (when a horse spooks it will most likely run uphill).

Goats are very social animals they like to stop and visit with other people on the trail, If you see other people coming down the trail take hold of the leach and ask the people to step off the trail lead the goats past until they are out of sight and tuck the leash back under the panniers without ever stopping, also if people are coming up from behind and need to pass it is best to move off the trail and let them get out of sight before moving on. Use good judgment, common sense and be polite.

Dogs - Have all people control their dogs as most all dogs will want to chase and bite at the goats. If this happens, and your goats are not already dealing with the issue, do what you need to too disable the dog (try using the water first then a big stick or...) be careful handling strange dogs, you may get bitten. The dog owners are responsible for their dogs and they should be on a leash at all times. Almost all public lands have a leash law for dogs. **As always, be polite if you have to remind others of this fact.**

AT ALL TIMES KEEP YOU'RE DISTANCE FROM BIG HORN SHEEP AND AVOID CONTACT AT ALL COST. This is, and will be for the foreseeable future, an ongoing legal battle. Do not add fuel to this fire by seeking contact should you happen across any Big Horn Sheep.