

# HOOF TRIMMING

If you keep goats in the Northwest, you must trim their hooves.

The side walls to the goat's hoof grow faster than they wear down and so need to be trimmed. In nature, the walls would get worn and trimmed naturally by the rocks the goat would be walking and climbing on. When the side wall grows long, it curves around and over the sole of the foot creating a place where dirt collects and rot can start. The whole point of trimming the goats foot is to keep it rot free as well as comfortable to walk on. You need to trim away all the places where dirt and rot can collect.

## How to trim a goat's hooves

Clean out any dirt with a hoof pick or the tips of your trimmers.

Trim the side walls of the hoof, and the heel down so that they are even and flat with the sole of the foot (sometimes referred to as the "frog"). You may trim the sole if necessary.

Trim slowly and carefully until you start to see pink. Once you see pink, stop, or you will cause the goat to bleed.

Trim any excess between the two heel areas, if necessary.

If you encounter a dirty pocket, or the wall of the hoof separating from the hoof, you need to totally trim this out/off until it is open and clean. Leave no dirt, or you risk "hoof rot"

You're shooting for nice, relatively flat sole with no dirty pockets.

## Tips on hoof trimming

How often you need to trim depends totally on the individual animal. You will probably need to trim at least four times a year, but be prepared to do it more often if necessary. If you give your goats a large rock to play on, they may need to have their feet trimmed less often. This rock mimics the natural land a goat would live on and helps them keep their hooves in check.

To know when you need to trim, you need to check each individual animal. To check if the hoofs need trimming, look at the back feet. The front feet wear down quicker and may not need trimming quite as soon as the rear hooves. If you just look at the front, you may miss the fact that the back feet need trimming.

The best way to hold the goat as you trim hooves is to put the goat in a milk stand. Having the goat stand on the ground and you trying to trim standing up bending over them up is crazy and will kill your back. If you have goats, you should build/buy a milk stand so you can "work" your goats properly. Give your goat a little grain to occupy him and keep him happy. If it takes a long time to trim, have someone help by distracting the animal while you work

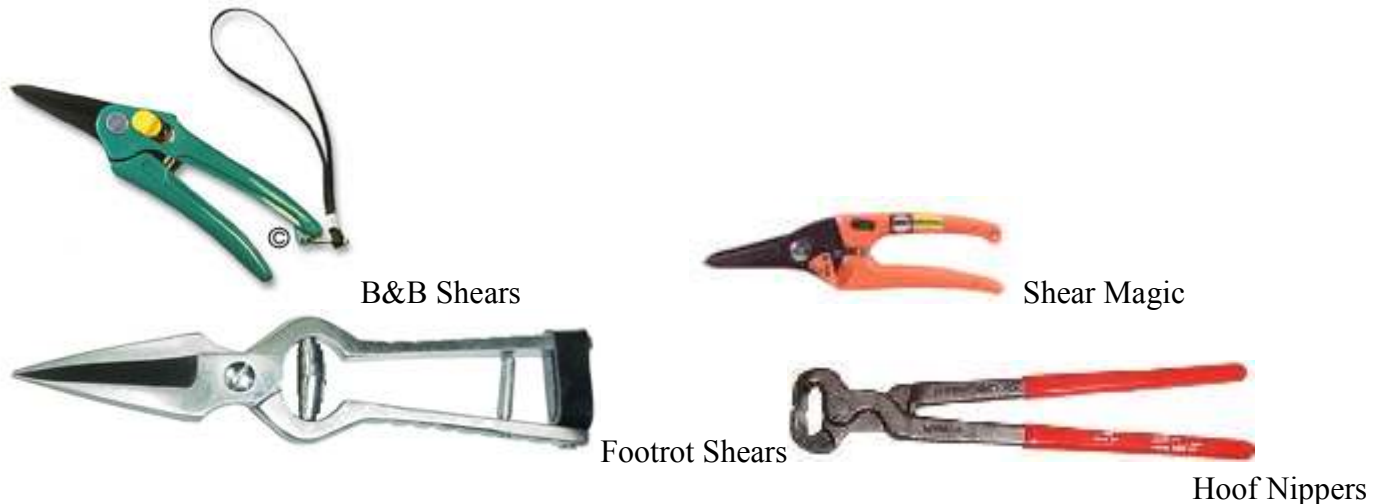
Wear gloves, or you will cut yourself and get blisters. Use a proper hoof trimmer that is sharp. I use the "orange handled trimmers". You can find them in most goat catalogs. Don't use garden shears. I have used those trimmers called "foot rot shears" on goats that are really overgrown. I also use a 4 inch grinder with a stripper pad to finish (It does a nice smooth finish).

If the goat does not want to stand when you trim her feet and tries to lay down in protest, stick a rigid bucket under her belly. This will keep her from lying down. Make sure you have lighting that is as good as possible. Take your time. Trim just a little at a time. Every goat is different and some may need less trimmed than others. Be careful to look for pink; if you see pink, you are close to causing them to bleed.

On really bad feet, it is often better to trim "as best that you can" and come back and do a little more a few weeks later. It may take a few trimmings before the feet start looking "normal".

Hoof trimming is a necessary task, especially for goats that are bound for the show ring. Goats in the show pen need to be trimmed every 21-30 days. Goats that live in rocky terrain may never need their feet trimmed. If the feet are not trimmed properly, the goat cannot stand and walk soundly.

There are a variety of different foot trimmers available designed for sheep and goats. Burdizzo and Felco probably make the best all around trimmers. The small trimmers are nice for the show box. They are great for goats that are trimmed regularly. For larger does and bucks, the Burdizzo and Felco trimmers are needed. Sometimes for large old bucks, horse hoof nippers do a good job. Trimmers can be purchased at most of the supply houses( [Nasco](#), [Jeffers](#), [Premier](#), [Wiggins](#) ) or from your local dealer. Stay away from the trimmers with the serrated edges. They cannot be sharpened.



Have a way to securely hold the goat. Either have someone hold the goat for you, or tie them to the fence. When I just have a few goats to trim I prefer to use a trimming stand. The only drawback with hoof trimming on a stand is you can not watch them move to make corrections.

Keep your hoof trimmers well oiled & sharpened. Goat's feet are usually softer after a good rain. When trimming hooves, be sure to treat foot rot. If you quick the goat, have Kopertox or iodine available to treat the wound. Hoof trimming should be done a week before the show, if you quick your show goat, it will give him or her time to heal. Better safe than sorry. Be careful when trimming - don't accidentally trim your fingers!

Start by evaluating the goat while he walks. Does he hock in? Is he splay footed? Is the goat down on his pasterns? Secure the goat to be trimmed. I like to use a trimming stand to trim feet on. The only draw back is you can't watch the animal move. Trim front feet flush. Don't forget the heels. Trim the inside toe just a little shorter than the outside toe. If the goat is splay footed (turns his toes out) bevel the outside edge of the inside toe at a 45 degree angle. This will cause the goat to turn his toes in to the correct position when he walks. Sometimes you can see results immediately, some improvement will happen over the next 24-48 hours as the ligaments and muscles are retrained.

If a goat is cow hocked (turned in at the hocks) trim the rear feet flush. Then trim the inside toe just a little shorter than the outside toe. Bevel the outside edge of the outside toe at a 45 degree angle. This will push the hocks out and the toes in as they walk.

If a goat is down on his/her pasterns make sure his heels are trimmed short enough. Long heels will cause goats to be down on their pasterns. With severe cases the rear toes actually point up towards their belly! Sometimes in Boer goats we see young goats that are down on their pasterns. They seem to be fine one day,

and then over night are walking down on their pasterns. Make sure the goats feet are trimmed properly. If they are you may want to talk to your vet about purchasing a selenium supplement. These goats grow so quickly sometimes the ligaments don't have time to catch up with the bone and muscle growth.

#### Step by Step

- Evaluate the goats gait – is there anything that needs to be corrected?
- Secure the goat – a trimming stand works great!
- Trim each side of the hoof flush.
- Add corrective touches.
- Treat areas that you “quicked” with Kopertox or Iodine.
- Walk your goat & see how he/she tracks.

This wether needs his feet trimmed. Put your show goats on a schedule and trim them every 30 days. This wether is walking with his rear hocks turned in and his front feet splayed out because his feet are in desperate need of trimming.



Large hoof trimmers (Burdizzo or Felco) are required for a job like this. This will be a difficult job with the small trimmers. Follow the growth lines on the side of the hoof to cut a straight path. Cut deep enough so the walls will be flush with the sole. Be careful not to cut too deep. Cut the sole flat, remove broken or unhealthy sole.



Trim the outside edge of the outside toe at a 45 degree angle. This will make him track wide and straight.



Notice how the hoof is level from front to back & the goat stands flat and square. Notice how the toe turns out on the hoof in the background.



Compare the way the wether stands before and after he has been trimmed.  
Notice how he stands square after he was trimmed.  
His back legs are not hocked in, and his toes point straight ahead, not out to the side.

Before



After



## Trimming Mature Goats

This doe's feet need trimmed.  
Her hooves are overgrown and affecting the way she stands and travels.  
The long toes allow for manure to collect and cause foot rot.



Large hoof trimmers are required for a job like this. Follow the growth lines on the side of the hoof to cut a straight path. Cut deep enough so the walls will be flush with the sole. Be careful not to cut too deep.



Cut the sole flat, remove broken or unhealthy sole. Make sure to trim the heels. Follow the growth lines on the side of the hoof and trim the heels back appropriately.



Make sure both toes are trimmed evenly and all dead tissue is removed. If you suspect hoof rot treat with Kopertox or Bleach.



Compare the way the doe stands before and after she has been trimmed.  
Notice how much wider the doe stands after being trimmed.  
Her back legs are not hocked in, and she is standing stronger on her pasterns.  
This doe lacks condition today, but she just had quads two weeks ago!



Before



After

Courtesy of  
CASCADE BOER GOAT ASSOCIATION  
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&  
GORGE-US BOER GOATS  
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