



All About the Pack Goat

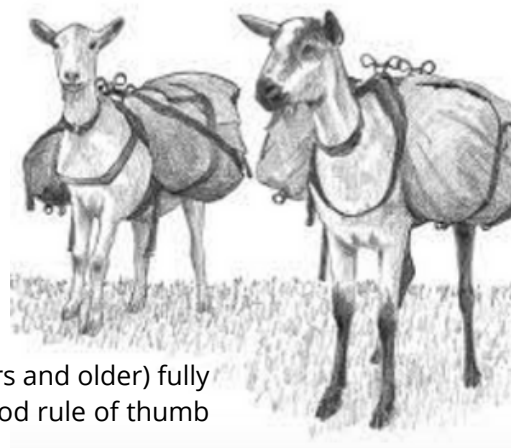
A New 4H Event at the New London County Fair, Aug. 9-11, 2024

What is Goat Packing?

Goat packing can be anything from having your goat carry your snacks on a hike from your home, having a string of goats to carry your gear for a 100-mile trek in the back country, and everything in between!

How Much Can a Goat Carry?

Goats can easily carry 10-20% of their total body weight. A mature (4 years and older) fully conditioned pack goat can easily carry 25-30% of their body weight. A good rule of thumb is: The more rugged the terrain, the lighter you pack the goat.



What Breed is a Pack Goat?

A pack goat can be any breed or crossbreed of goat. The majority of pack goats are purebred dairy goats or a cross of dairy goat breeds. Most pack goats are wethers (neutered males) because they are larger and stronger than females, there is no risk of injuring the udder, they don't experience hormone fluctuations, and they don't have the strong odor and behavior problems of intact bucks. Packing is a good job for a strong doe that is not pregnant and has a firmly attached udder. **Do not take a doe on the trail when she is in heat.** A doe in heat can be very vocal and may attract wildlife and predators. She may also be disruptive to your wethers and to your sleep!



What Do You Look for in a Pack Goat?

- Good bone size in legs and feet and good leg length
- A flat back from withers to loin (helps carry weight evenly)
- Wide across hips and shoulders (good weight bearing surface)
- Withers and croup both same distance from the ground—not going uphill or down (keeps pack from sliding)
- Rear hocks should have good angles to give better traction.
- Front legs track reasonably straight (elbows should not "wing" out — come away from the body)
- Working Goat Attitude: friendly and willing to work.

Pack Goat

Horns Versus No Horns

There is often strong disagreement between owners on whether or not pack goats should have horns. Most goats are born with horns, and because horns contain large blood vessels, they are part of a goat's natural cooling mechanism. However, horns can also be dangerous to humans and difficult to manage at home where they can get caught in fences and feeders. Some shows and fairs do not allow horned goats, so be aware of any regulations in your specific area.

Horn Safety

Horns can get caught in fences, feeders, farm equipment, other goats' collars, etc. so you must manage your property accordingly. Always be aware of where your goat's horns are and be particularly careful to keep your face at a safe distance. Wear eye protection when medicating a horned goat. Do not lead a horned goat directly by the collar because your wrist could get caught between his horns. Teaching and enforcing good manners are important for every goat, but it is especially important if your goat has horns. **Never try to lead or control your goat by the horns.** He will probably resist, and it could teach him to be aggressive. Teach your goat never to touch people with his horns even by mistake, and in return show him respect by not handling his horns.



Halters

If you control the head, you control the goat. Halters are one of the best tools for training and controlling large goats, especially if they have horns. Remove halters and collars when you are not with your goats. Goats are inquisitive and playful. Halters and collars can get hung up and cause strangulation or other injury.

Pack Goat Equipment

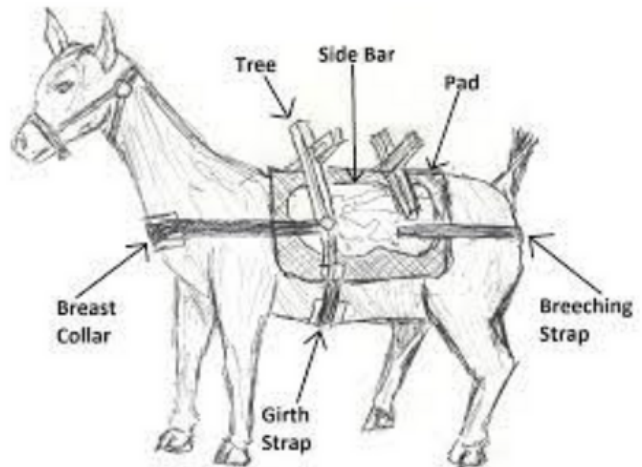
- A saddle must fit the goat properly or it will cause pain and chafing. Your goat may not tell you if the saddle doesn't fit. As prey animals, goats can be very stoic and not show weakness until they can go no further. It is up to you to inspect your goat for chafing or sore spots when removing the saddle and to watch for subtle behavior changes that could indicate pain.
- Leads and collars can be found in local pet and livestock stores. Use collars that will break under stress or remove them when goats are unsupervised.
- Goat halters must fit properly.

Pack Goat

Packsaddle

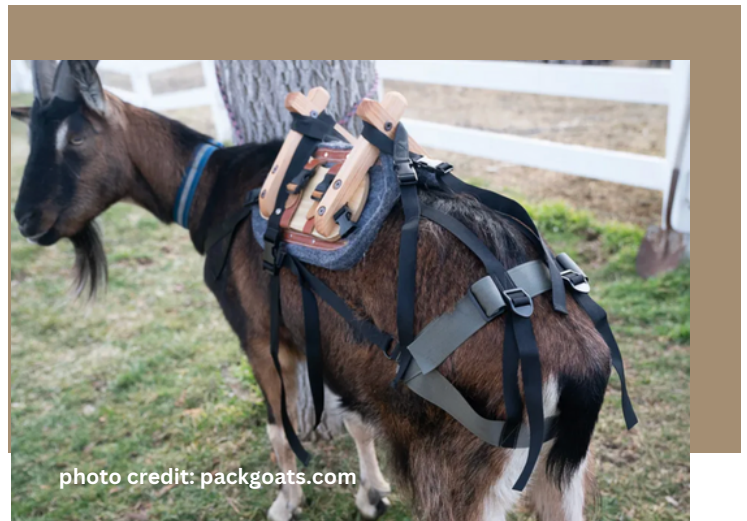
Most saddles consist of two sidebars held together by two crossbucks. The rump strap (breaching or britchin) should be adjustable and should fit comfortably around the hindquarters. The breast collar should also be adjustable and should preferably have a clip for easy placement and removal. The cinch consists of the cinch straps (also called billets or latigos) and the cinch. Many saddles are double rigged with front and rear cinches. A good saddle supports the load evenly along the goat's back on top of the rib cage, with a channel down the center that provides clearance for the goat's spine. The load should never rest on the shoulder blades, hips, or spine!

Another saddle option is a soft saddle designed for goats. Soft (or flexible tree) saddles fit any goat and have semi-rigid trees that conform to the shape of the goat's back. They have built-in support to distribute weight and keep the load off of the shoulder blades, hips and spine.



Day Packs

Day packs are small, lightweight packs without a rigid tree. Day packs for dogs can be modified to fit a small goat provided they do not put pressure on the spine or restrict the shoulders. Day packs should not be cinched tightly because they do not have a rigid tree to protect the spine. Therefore, it is extra important to make sure the panniers are balanced correctly. These packs are not made to carry a lot of weight. They make wonderful, inexpensive training packs for starting young goats and carrying small amounts of gear (such as a water bottle and your lunch) on short hikes, but they are not a substitute for proper saddles and should never be used for heavy loads or long, difficult hikes. Soft packs designed specifically for goats are a better choice than packs designed for dogs.

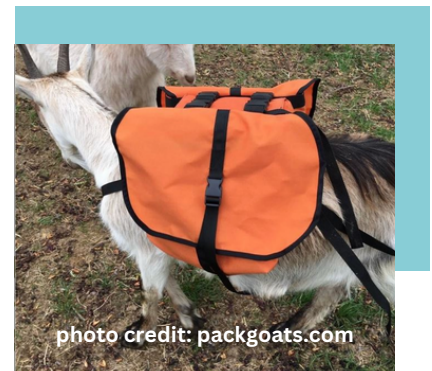




Pack Goat

Panniers

Panniers are bags made of a durable material such as canvas or nylon that go over the saddle. Panniers must be weighed after loading to assure they weigh the same on each side. Panniers with unequal weights will pull your saddle to one side, and they will cause your goat to tire more quickly and become sore from unequal pressure. Use a handheld scale to weigh your panniers. Carry the scale in your panniers so as you unload food, water or gear you can re-weigh the panniers to make sure the weight is distributed evenly.



Training

Training begins when the goat is born and progresses throughout their lifetime. Do not get in a hurry to put a pack on a young goat. A goat's body isn't fully developed until it is four (4) years old. Too much weight too early can injure a goat and/or sour them for packing. The goat's first three years are used to grow and develop. These are the bonding years that make or break a good pack goat. Young goats should be learning manners and skills such as how to behave on a leash, how to act in camp and on the trail, when to eat or not eat, when to rest, how to follow, how to cross water, etc. Once these skills are learned, packing weight comes naturally. **HINT: A squirt bottle is a cheap and effective training tool! When a goat is getting into something they shouldn't, obnoxiously getting into your space, or bullying another goat, give them a squirt or two and they will immediately stop doing it. NEVER let anyone squirt goats for fun!**



Pack Goat

Commands

The words you use to tell your goat what to do are their commands. Use the same word each time and provide positive feedback when the goat responds so he clearly understands what you are asking him to do. The following are a few examples that you can use for commands. Other words may be substituted provided they are used consistently. Treats (such as peanuts or animal crackers) are a great motivator!

- **"Come"** is one of the most important commands a goat can learn. For example, if a dog or horse is approaching, you can call "come," or "come goats" to get them to come to you immediately. You can protect your goats more easily if they are by you.
- **"Whoa"** is also one of the most important commands you can teach your goat. When you say, "Whoa" your goat should stop all four feet and stand in place. It can be used to make him stop if he moves in front of you on the trail and you want to catch him and move him to the back, or it can be used to tell him to stand still for saddling or hoof trimming.
- **"Walk"** and **"Trot"** may be used to teach your goat to go beside you on a leash at these speeds. If a goat stops in front of you on the trail, "Walk" is a very useful command! You can also use it to reinforce a command to cross a "scary" object such as water.
- **"Back"** tells your goat to back up. This is useful for making him step backwards out of your space, or for making him back out of a tight spot on a trail.
- **"Up" or "Jump"** tells your goat to jump onto or over obstacles, such as jumping into a truck bed or over a log.
- **"Give" or "Foot"** are for telling your goat to pick up his feet.



Day Hikes



- Always let someone know where you will be and when you expect to return.
- Before setting out, check to be sure livestock is permitted.
- Before and after each hike check your goat for lameness, soreness, or unusual attitude changes. Check hooves for rocks, bruising, or cracks, and if the goat has carried a saddle check their back and girth area for sore spots.

Pack Goat



Trail Etiquette

- When hiking popular trails keep your goats on a lead. You will run into people with dogs and riders on horseback. It is important to keep your goats under control at all times for their protection and as a courtesy to other hikers.
- Horses have the right-of-way on trails. Always move off trail on the downhill side when encountering horses and do not hide behind trees or bushes. Stay fully visible, alert the rider to your presence, and tell them you have goats.
- Be sure to follow posted rules. When convenient, bring garbage bags in your panniers so you can clean up trash. This is one of the ways we can say "Thank You!" to those who maintain these trails.
- You will find you are stopped frequently by other hikers and asked about your goats. Goats, like puppies, kittens and babies, are excellent conversation starters! Be courteous and take time to answer questions and educate people. It's a great way to promote goat packing!
- If you encounter a dog, make sure your goats are leashed even if the dog is under control. If the owner asks to let their dog sniff your goats, politely decline. If a dog approaches your goats, tell the owner to remove it. Domestic dogs are a goat's #1 predator at home and on the trail.

Always Carry a Whistle

The sound from a whistle will carry a lot further than your voice. Three loud, short blasts on your survival whistle, each lasting approximately three seconds. Give yourself a few seconds after you've completed the three-blast pattern, and then repeat this as long as you can to give yourself the best chance of being heard.



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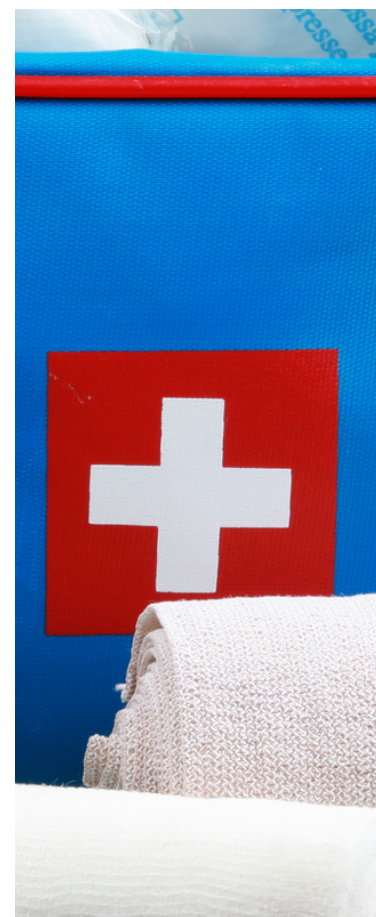
Equipment for You: The "Ten" Essentials

1. Navigation: map, compass, altimeter, GPS device, personal locator beacon (PLB) or satellite messenger
2. Headlamp: plus, extra batteries
3. Sun protection: sunglasses, sun-protective clothes and sunscreen
4. First aid: including foot care and insect repellent (as needed)
5. Knife: plus, a gear repair kit
6. Fire: matches, lighter, tinder and/or stove
7. Shelter: carried at all times (can be a light emergency bivy)
8. Extra food: Beyond the minimum expectation
9. Extra water: Beyond the minimum expectation
10. Extra clothes: Beyond the minimum expectation

Trail First Aid Kit

The book, *Field First Aid for Goats, A Portable Guide to Health Care for Your Goat* by Alice Beberness and Carolyn Eddy was used in creating this list. A trail first aid kit for your goats should always be carried whenever you take your goats on a hike. The items in your trail kit can help you get your goat off the trail and back home or to a veterinarian.

Waterproof Bag. To hold your trail kit supplies. This can be a Ziploc bag or a dry bag.	Vet Wrap. Do not wrap too tightly. You should be able to fit one finger between your goat's limb and the bandage.	Kotex pad or diaper. For wounds, bandaging or sores from the saddle, breast collar or breeching.
Pencil & paper for notes (or use your cell phone)	Mylar disposable emergency blanket.	Tampons. For bandaging material, nosebleeds, fire starters
Banamine paste. For pain and inflammation. *From your vet	Duct Tape. Multitude of uses including repairing gear	Gauze pads – 2"x2", 4"x4
Examination gloves – 1 pair	Ice pack, chemical	Bug spray
20ml syringe with tip removed or a drenching gun	Powdered or gel electrolytes. Let them drink it or drench if needed	Antibiotic cream or gel. Neosporin or Triple Antibiotic
Thermometer. Normal goat temperature is 102-103 +/-	Probios gel. To help restore good bacteria in the rumen, particularly after a stressful situation	Diaper rash ointment. For sores from the saddle, breast collar or breeching and can be used for sunblock
Gas-X tablets. Drench for bloat.	Betadine or wound cleaning swabs	Quik Clot Gauze. For packing into or pressed onto injuries to stop bleeding.
Pepto-Bismol Tablets. Drench for soothing the gut if they eat something poisonous	Activated Charcoal. Toxiban, UAA Gel (Universal Animal Antidote), tablet or pill form	Saline eye wash. Can be used for flushing eyes and wounds
Scissors, Tweezers	Wound powder. For stopping bleeding.	Benadryl tablet. For an allergic reaction, but not severe enough to require epinephrine. 25mg per 100 pounds





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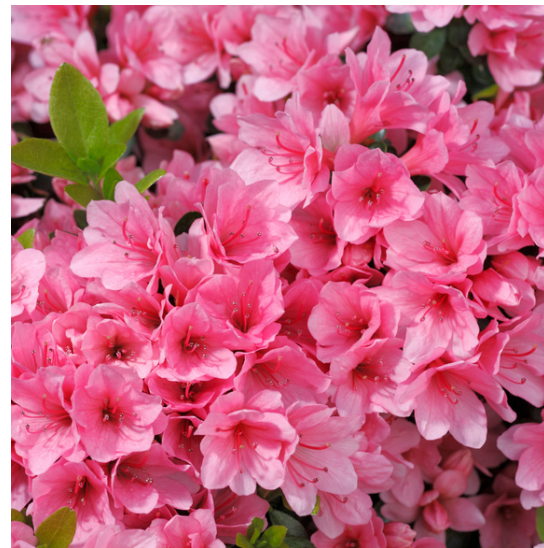
Note: This information is taken from the book *Field First Aid for Goats: A Portable Guide to Health Care for Your Goats* by Alice Beberness and Carolyn Eddy.

Poisonous and Toxic Plants

Toxins build up over time and cause damage, usually to the liver or kidneys, that may not be noticed until some time has passed. Tolerance will depend on the goat's age, weight, general health and amounts ingested at any one time. Poisonous plants will provoke symptoms almost immediately. A large dose will always result in death unless treatment is successful.

Symptoms of Poisoning

Symptoms of poisoning can occur immediately and up to 14 hours after ingestion. Symptoms can include: frothing at the mouth, vomiting, staggering, trembling, and/or crying for help.



Pitted Fruit Trees

Pitted fruit trees of the Prunus family, such as cherry (black cherry, chokecherry and fire cherry), peach and plum trees, are toxic during the time when leaves are wilting.

Common Poisonous Plants

Rhododendrons	Poison Hemlock Conium Maculatum	Yew Taxus Cuspidata
Azaleas	Water Hemlock Cicuta spp	False Hellebore (aka Corn Plant) Agrostemma Githago
Pieris Japonica (AKA Andromeda), Fetterbush, Lily of the Valley shrub	Jimsonweed (AKA Angel's Trumpet, Devil's Trumpet, Downey Thornapple, Datura spp.) Datura stramonium	Nightshade family: Common Nightshade, Black Nightshade, Horse Nettle, Buffalo Burr, Potato, Belladonna Solanum spp
Mountain Laurel Kalmia latifolia	Death Camas Zigadenus spp	

Pack Goat

References and Pack Goat Resources

- North American Packgoat Association: www.napga.org
- *Field First Aid for Goats: A Portable Guide to Health Care for Your Goat* by Alice Berberness and Carolyn Eddy
- *Practical Goatpacking* by Carolyn Eddy
- *Diet For Wethers: A Guide to Feeding Your Wether for Health and Longevity* by Carolyn Eddy
- *The Pack Goat* by John Mionczynski
- *Your Goats: A Kid's Guide to Raising and Showing Goats* by Gale Damerow
- *Storey's Guide to Raising Dairy Goats* by Jerry Belanger and Sara Thompson Bredesen
- *Goat Medicine, 2nd Edition* by Mary C. Smith

Additional 4H Pack Goat Club Resources

https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/234/40399/Pack_Goat_Handbook.pdf

<https://packgoats.com/pack-goat-4h/>

<https://extension.usu.edu/davis/images/GoatCurriculum.pdf>

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/colusa/files/322916.pdf>

Contact Information

For more insight or if you have any questions, **contact Classy Caprines Club Leader Jenn Rudtke at jenneve58.icloud.com or 860-912-9507.**

