



The Goat Source

Photography and Your Goats

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Photographing Your Goats

When photographing livestock for a sales catalog, advertising, website or an auction brochure, it is important to show the animal in an attractive manner with no background distractions. Viewers will quickly pick up on odd things in the background that you didn't see when you took the picture.

Your goats should be shown at their natural best. Make sure they are groomed - clean and shiny. Choose an appropriate background - not one that clutters the picture and distracts the viewer's attention. An open field as a backdrop is better than a dingy barn. Watch out to be sure you don't wind up with a tree growing out of the animals back or a post dangling from her ear! Make sure that shooting conditions are ideal - sunny or a brightly-overcast day. The animal must be properly positioned and posed - generally showing a full side view, or a 3/4 view, or both - looking awake, alert and alive. With milking animals, you may want to show a rear view to show off her udder attachments. The head should be high. The stance should be square and natural and the overall appearance should be alert. Feet should be placed correctly and the top line should be flat and slightly uphill.

Don't forget the handler! The animal handler should be dressed neatly, as sloppy dress shows up and detracts from the goats' appearance.

Techniques

Fill flash (or using a reflector) when the animal is backlit is often beneficial when photographing livestock, since these techniques can enhance an animal's appearance, revealing shadow detail and showing an animal's entire presentation.

A portrait lens will ensure proper proportioning, although a normal lens will also produce a satisfactory image. A wide-angle lens, however, should generally be avoided in order to prevent any distortion.

Color film is generally best. A color picture can usually be rendered satisfactorily in black and white, if necessary for a catalog or sales poster, but a B&W picture is difficult and impractical to color properly.

Digital photography has changed the field of photography in numerous ways. One of the neatest ways is the ability to view your pictures immediately. If the photo is not to your liking, delete it and try again. You may take many pictures before you get the ones you want. Patience is critical especially for young animals. If the animal won't set up properly, walk him/her out and circle back to the set up spot. Keep trying until you get the result you want. If the subject becomes bored with the whole process and grumpy, put her away and try another animal then come back when she is rested.

Setup

You will need a minimum of two people, and three is better. The photographer and two people to handle the goats works best. Find a spot that is nearly level or slopes slightly uphill. The background should be uncluttered and attractive. Keep in mind that a background with strong horizontal lines will make a dippy top line look worse. Dark animals should be against a light background and light animals against a darker or neutral background. The surface can be hard and flat (pavement or dirt) or short grass or grass like carpet. Lighting should not be

directly overhead to avoid strong shadows. Have fill lights available or flash. Use appropriate film for the conditions. If using digital photography, set the camera to adjust for the lighting conditions.

The Finished Product

Now that you have taken all of the pictures you need, be sure you identify them correctly. If they are a digital file, give them a descriptive file name. Prints should be filed with the negatives and identified. If you place them in an album, be sure you have a reference so you can look up the negative if you need more prints.

There are many ways you can use your photos, but make sure after all your hard work – put them where you can enjoy them! Enlarge that special photo and frame it, use a digital copy for your desktop wallpaper, and keep a copy in your goats' permanent record.