

# Pygora Hoof Care

Proper and frequent hoof trimming is a commitment for the health and comfort of your goats. Overgrown and unattended hooves can hobble the animal and lead to foot scald and footrot caused by bacteria. This is one reason a current annual tetanus shot is required. With a few inexpensive tools, hoof trimming is quickly accomplished to avoid painful hoof and leg problems. To adjust kids to the process, start trimming their hooves after one month of age.

The ruminant cloven or even-toed foot is composed of two toes. Each toe consists of a strong outer wall, soft inner sole, heel and two ball shaped dewclaws located above the coronary band; the division between the hoof and hairline. The goat is dependent on walking on the wall of the foot not the sole. As the outer wall of the hoof grows, it wraps under the toe covering the inner sole trapping dirt and debris.

Hoof trimming should minimally be conducted 2-3 times a year but at least every other month, especially in wet weather. Factors such as a goat's age, breed, diet, obesity, and terrain are taken into consideration with regard to frequency of trimming. Goat hooves were designed to traverse rough rocky mountainous areas wearing down the hoof as they walk. Unfortunately, most pygora farms are hilly or low-lying grassy pastures. A properly balanced diet with mineral supplements such as selenium, copper, zinc and sulfur promotes healthy hooves. High protein diets tend to grow hooves extremely fast causing joint and arthritis concerns.

To discourage hoof wall overgrowth from folding over the sole, place gravel or concrete on walkways, play areas, and where they feed and/or enter their shelter. The front hooves wear faster than the back, so check the back hoof to determine if it is time to trim. You can use a grooming stand or simply lean against the goat while tied to a fence. Goats are irritated to stand on three feet, so offering treats at this point makes it easier for the both of you.

The best time to trim hooves is a few hours after a rain or dew, when the hooves are soft. Firstly, clean off the dirt, stones and manure from the foot, especially in tip of toe and between toes with a brush, if excessively dirty, use a spray bottle of dish soap and water. I use an inexpensive tool with a brush on one side and a triangular pick on the other for the initial hoof cleaning; this tool also will extend the life of your trimming shears. I prefer hoof rot shears over the light weight hoof trimmers because they are sharper.

Secondly, use a hoof shear to nip the toe front and then carefully trim the overgrown flap away from the edge of the sole. After the majority of trimming is complete, rebrush the area and pick any remaining dirt especially from the very tip of the toe and assure the outer wall is flat and parallel to the coronary band. Thirdly, take a rasp and work from heel to toe to level the heels to same level as the soles and walls to ensure good balance during walking and standing. Anytime you see pink—quit because you know blood is close to the surface. Finally, snip a small portion of the dewclaw off, be careful this is where it can easily take too much off and draw blood.

After the trimming is done, I apply an antibacterial suave around the whole toe and on the sole; this disinfects as well as softens the hooves. I used to dip them in iodine solution after trimming to avoid hoof rot, but that can make the hooves brittle. The reason I did this was that at times I could smell a foul odor from the hoof and noticed white crud especially caught in the very tip of the toes. You will find out that every goat has different types of hooves. I have 2 females that have very narrow and

thin toe. The male's hoofs have very strong walls and were more difficult to trim that's why I now use the "Hoof Rot Shears."

Foot scald is an infection of the skin between the toes which further progresses to hoof rot, a more extensive and contagious disease of the hoof, caused by two types of bacteria brought from other contaminated land or originating from wet and filthy conditions. The diseases cause painful inflammation of toes and eventual lameness. Treatment includes hoof trimming, antibiotic sprays, or walk-through baths of copper/zinc sulfate or bleach.

