

Fitting a Boer Goat by RiverviewBoerGoats.com

It definitely takes patience... and practice. Pam and I think we have a lot to learn ourselves, but getting 60 or 70 goats groomed for the Herd Builder sale tends to provide the practice. As far as doing a full body clip, I probably wouldn't go any shorter than $\frac{3}{4}$ or 1 inch, and there are a couple places you do not want to clip at all, the triangle area behind the front leg and the triangle area in front of the hind leg. You also generally should only do a full body clip three weeks to a month prior to the show you expect to attend. The "no clip" triangle areas can be seen by examining the animal and noting where they dip inward. The idea is to try to accentuate the smooth transition from shoulder to barrel and from barrel to hind quarter. The third place you do not cut, other than to eliminate long guard hairs (use at least a 1 and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch guide) is the back of the animal from the front shoulders to the slope that starts up to the hips.

Before we start I want you to have the appropriate equipment. Minimum is a set of clippers, we prefer Andes UltraEdge (make sure you get the model with the 16 ft cord), a #10 blade (probably should have two or three of the #10 blades to cover you between sharpening) and a Medium Blending blade. A full set of guides that will clip on to your #10 blade ($\frac{1}{16}$ to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$). You should also have a grooming stand to immobilize the goat and lift it off the ground to allow you to more comfortably work on the goat. A blow dryer is necessary and expensive. Maybe you can borrow one from a friend who shows cattle. You'll also need a comb with tines to remove loose hair.

The basic clip goes something like this. Starting at the juncture of the front legs and the chest, using a $\frac{1}{8}$ inch guide on a very sharp #10 blade, and working with a very clean animal (virtually all deep-in oil washed away and the animal completely dry), you would clip upwards and just in front of the shoulder bone, then slightly angling towards the back of the animal, but still clipping upwards, you will make one clean pass, you do this on both sides of the animal to mark your work area. Each pass should meet at the back of the neck of the animal about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down between the shoulders and the horn. Once these first two cuts are made you remove all hair in between with the same blade and guide. Stop under the jaw and right up against and behind the ears and horns. It will be aggravating to get a smooth clip under the horns, but you can pull the skin up and down to shift the area of aggravation out from under the horn. As you work between the front legs, it sometimes helps to lift the leg (bent at the knee) to allow for easier access. I like to groom back slightly behind the front legs, but stay on the chest floor, do not clip up on the sides. I would use a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch guide to continue my grooming all the way back to the udder or testicles, again, not straying above the natural hair line at the bottom of the barrel.

Now you are looking at the goat and it is naked in the front with a sharp edge where we have not yet clipped. Change your guide to a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch guide and, only using half your blade width, start just below the front shoulder and make the half pass up over the neck of the goat. Do this on both sides. Now change guides again to a $\frac{3}{8}$ inch guide and do another half pass on each side. You probably need to start at the top of the shoulder, remember to stay out of the "triangle" we never cut in. If the hair length on this last pass is not close to the length of the hair on the barrel, make another pass with a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch guide on. Probably only have to do this on the upper neck part of the goat. The whole point of this stair step grooming is to transition from the smooth clip of the chest and neck to a "natural" (ha ha) hair appearance of the barrel.

We are going to leave this transition area for awhile, but will come back to it for a final groom. The top of the back hips will need attention to try to level the back and "block" the hips to enhance the appearance of thickness. We do this by starting with a 1 and $\frac{1}{4}$ or 1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch guide on your #10. Starting at the tail head in the centerline of the goat we clip forwards toward the head, stop when you get within three or four inches of the center of the back. A couple of inches before you get to your stopping point you should be gradually lifting the clippers/guide off the back of the animal. Again, trying to blend this transition

spot. If the hair is shorter than the guide, step down a size and repeat. You want a smooth clip, so might have to go over the same spot multiple times. We want to continue to use this guide, whichever size it might be based on the natural length of the goat's hair, by clipping on each side of our first center cut. The beginning and end point of each successive cut should be closer to the animals hips, meaning do not start at the tail head or go as far into the back. The last side passes should be 1 blade width below the hip bone and only three or four inches long, remembering to lift the blade at the end of the pass to blend. Also, on that final pass, and the end of each of the earlier passes that terminate on the side of the goat, angle the bottom of the blade/guide away from the goat (the side of the blade closest to the ground) again to try to blend the hair line. Once this area is clipped and appears to transition well to the natural hair coat, step down one size guide and repeat, BUT not going all the way to the edges of the initial cut, you want to go in at least one blade width. We use the same lifting and angling techniques as we start and end our cuts. The goal is to repeat this progressive step in until we get down to $\frac{3}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ inch right over the hips. To a lesser extent, we want to blend the long hair on the lower back of the neck to the point of the shoulder. Just do the back using similar techniques, but do not transition down the side of the goat.

That was hard, let's do something easier. The tail needs to be groomed. With a #10 blade and a $\frac{3}{8}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ inch guide, practice and see which look you prefer, we place the guide against the bare skin of the tail just above the anus, and keeping the guide against the tail we clip upwards to the top. Do this a couple times on each side until both sides are even and smooth. We then grasp the tail at the top and allow your thumb to extend past the end of the tail about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Cut the bottle brush hair off flat by running the blade across your thumb (you can remove the guide if you want to but do not have to). We do not want to remove the hair all the way against the tip of the tail. Great, the tail done. It is so easy to fit a goat.

While we are back here, I like to block the back of the legs from the dew claws up to the back "elbow" of the goat. Use a $\frac{3}{8}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ inch guide and, starting at the dew claws, simply clip straight upwards to the elbow. You do not do this all the way around the leg, but just on the back of the leg. This helps with the appearance of more bone.

We are pretty much done with the guides now, and it's time to switch blades. Get your "Medium Blending" blade and steady your hand. You will understand why we encourage people to practice on a goat they are not going to show. Also, groom your goat several days before the show, minor blemishes will smooth out in a few days. Also remember, even if you make a big bugger, your goat probably will look better than most of the goats because hardly anyone grooms to this level of detail.

Alright, we have our blending blade, notice how it is curved, again, designed for helping us with our transition areas. There are two transition areas to deal with - the shoulder and the neck where we have "stepped" the hair using progressively larger guides. We want to remove this "stepped" appearance. This is a delicate step and takes a soft hand. There are two ways to do this. One way is quicker, but fraught with more risk. The least dangerous but slower method is to lay the base of the blade (the flat part) against the goat, starting at the top of the goat at the first transition step, and simply pull the blade backwards down the transition "line". You will see small bits of hair flying as you pull the blade downwards. The hair is being pushed down by the base of the blade and as it gets to the clipper end it pops up into the clipper and is clipped. It will remove very little hair on each pass, this is the safety factor. You may have to do the same area several times to smooth the area. You will move in towards the longer hair as each area is smoothed until you are at the final "step" between the clipped and the unclipped area. This is the area most difficult to get to look natural. Do not over clip here, simply smooth a little bit and allow a day or two for it to grow out. It will look better then. The quicker and riskier method is to turn the clipper over and drag the points downward over the steps. If the goat moves or you apply too much pressure you will gouge the hair. Practice this method first on a goat you do not intend to show.

OK, looking good. The final transition area is that hair line from the side of the barrel to the belly. The method best used here is to sedate the goat or yourself, depending on who is most nervous. We have to use the blending blade in the most dangerous way. What we are trying to accomplish is to make that line less pronounced and straighter to draw the eye along the goat. This makes the goat appear longer. Starting behind the front leg with the tip of the blade pointing towards the goat, but just slightly into the hair, move the blade from the front to the back of the goat. In center of the barrel you might be clipping more hair than near the legs (belly hangs down a little bit). I like to see the line, some groomers strive to blend the line away, your preference should control. Take care to only shape the guard hairs in front of the hind leg. We want this veil of hair to pretty much stay in place in this location to assist in smoothing the transition from barrel to hind quarter.

The last two places of concern are the hooves and the head. On the hooves, with your blocking blade, top of the clippers toward the goat with the blade closest to the stand (upside down), pull the blade up from the bare part of the hoof over the hair line where the hoof meets the hair. We want to remove the long hair that extends over the hoof. Try not to go up on the ankle, will cause a hacked up appearance. Go all the way around the hoof and between the toes. On the back of the foot, take out the hair under the dew claws. On the head, the goal is to accentuate the roman curve. Depends on the goat where you have to clip. Normally clipping the hair just above the eye line and to the horns will accomplish this. I also clip a little around to the side of the head, and use the angle technique described in my description on how to clip the hips, to blend the sides. I usually use the #10 blade and a ¼ inch guide for the head.

Step back, look over the goat, clip any hair that sticks out, back of front legs usually has a cowlick, smooth it out. If the goat is a little narrow, use the #10 and the 1/16 inch guide and clip the inside of the front knees. If the hair beside the anus and where you finished your clip on the tail is bunched up, use the medium blending blade to smooth this area out. The goat will appear wider if this appears flat. Do not clip to deep.

After the clip is done, blow out all hair and review the goat again for stray hairs that need to be clipped. We use hair product in a silver aerosol can called Proclaim Professional Care Moisturizing Oil. This product is available at hair salon supply stores and, I have been told, at Wal Mart in the Health and Beauty section. Before the goat enters the ring (5 or 10 minutes before) use this product to spray on the horns, provides a shine, and spray over the entire body of the goat, brush in.

Good luck. You need to get proficient at this. My first Reserve Grand Overall was with a goat that I had shown for a year and a half and maybe won a class or two. A professional groomer took pity on me and did a “quick” clip on the doe. She looked like a completely different animal, and the results were obviously different than what I was used to.

Final comment, your job will be immensely easier and more professional looking if the animal is COMPLETELY CLEAN AND DRY. It is not uncommon for Pam and I to wash an animal TWICE for the first clip of the season. It helps to blow the animal out before the wash to remove dust and dirt. Send us photos of the first clip.