

PYGMY GOAT FAQ

Are all small goats Pygmies?

No. Pygmy Goats are a specific breed with a very detailed breed standard that describes their ideal characteristics. Real purebred Pygmy goats are far rarer than most people think. Many of those people selling pet or grade Pygmies (grade basically means unregistered and of unknown lineage) do not realize that the goats they have are not Pygmies. They bought so-called Pygmies and just assumed that small goats are Pygmies. To be sure you are getting a real Pygmy buy only from a reputable breeder of NPGA or AGS registered Pygmy goats.

What is their purpose?

Pygmy goats are ideal for many small homesteads. They can be bred year round, unlike dairy goats which are seasonal breeders. They are suited for most of the US as they are naturally parasite resistant, unlike some goat breeds. They give very rich milk and, since they are heavily muscled, they are economical providers of meat. Like all goats they are great for clearing woodlots of brush and can help maintain pastureland by eating weeds that other livestock pass over.

They can be taught to pull carts and carry packs.

Of course, they are great pets and show animals. The NPGA sponsors over 250 shows around the country.

What about mini-Pygmies, extra small Pygmy goats?

There should be no such creature. In actuality, the breed standard for Pygmy goats has a minimum height of 16 inches at maturity. Most show Pygmies are 1 to 2 inches taller than this, but are well below the maximum height of about 23 inches. They do not reach full height until 2 years for does and nearly 3 years for bucks and wethers. Goats in general do not reach full mature size until about 3.5 to 4 years old; the same is true for Pygmies.

There are inherent problems with trying to make a small breed even smaller. Just because a goat is small, does not necessarily mean it is genetically small. It may be small due to being stunted by poor nutrition or inadequate feed, even from being deficient in certain minerals when growing. It may be small due to chronic illness, or a genetic defect. It may be small due to being young or slow to mature. Small goats do not necessarily produce small kids. Very small does have trouble carrying multiple kids to term, and multiples are the norm for all goats. Then they have trouble passing the kids at birth.

What is a wether and why do they make better pets?

A wether is a castrated goat (or sheep). Castration prevents the development of the secondary sex characteristics of male goats that make them less than desirable as pets. These are the strong musky odor, their desire to urinate on themselves to increase that odor, and the strong drive to breed and the aggression that accompanies it.

They are better than does in many ways too. Does also have a drive to breed, they come into heat every 18 to 22 days year round and are often quite vocal about it. Some does become very good escape artists and will try to find a buck to mate. Some does, especially those that are never bred, can develop hormonal imbalances that can adversely affect their health and longevity.

Wethers do not have the raging hormones that cause does and bucks to have behavior issues. They tend to have more mellow and stable temperaments.

Wethers do have certain nutritional needs to keep them healthy, and especially, to avoid bladder stones. Mainly this is to avoid overfeeding, and to keep their diet balanced in regard to calcium and phosphorus.

Can I keep a Pygmy goat in my apartment?

Even if your apartment complex rule would allow it, this is not a good idea. You might (and it is doubtful) be able to teach a goat to pee on a pad or go outdoors, but goats, after they mature, tend to defecate almost constantly and without be conscious of it. This is due to their very high fiber diet. This can not be changed by limiting their diet. They also seem to have a deep desire to get to the highest perch possible. Finding your goat on the top of your fridge is likely, and training this out would be nearly impossible, too. Goats love to chew, and without adequate natural forage would elect to chew upholstery, walls, books, clothing, and other valuables. Even though they are small, Pygmy goats are still livestock.

Goats will eat anything, right?

Actually goats have very particular tastes, and at the same time they are very adaptable. Goats are often kept on land and in conditions where almost any other livestock would fail because of this. They get the "eat anything" reputation from their habit of tasting almost everything as a test for palatability. Goats can tolerate a greater variety in their diet and may not be as susceptible to plants that are toxic to other livestock.

They have the strange reputation for eating tin cans because many like the taste of paper and glue, or will eat paper when there is nothing better, so will eat the labels.

Will they mow my lawn?

Goats are not reliable lawn mowers. Goats prefer to browse on leaves, tender twigs, weedy pasture, briars, vines, and bark that is at least 8 inches from the ground. Because of this they are ideal for clearing brushy and briary overgrown pastures and woodlots. They will eat grass if forced by hunger. When kept in small enclosures they will soon kill small and medium sized trees by girdling (eating the bark off all the way around), but may let the grass grow quite tall.

Can you teach them tricks?

Goats are very smart, smarter than many dogs. Most are very treat motivated. They can easily be taught to walk on a lead, pull a cart, or carry a pack. They can be taught to negotiate an obstacle course, like a dog agility course. While they do not naturally sit or fetch like a dog, pretty much they can learn to do anything a dog or pony can do.