

# Market Goat Showmanship from Start to Finish

## Introduction

Showmanship may be the single most important quality necessary for success in the show ring. A goat showman is responsible for presenting his/her goat in a manner that promotes the animal's strengths and disguises its weaknesses. Many times, goats of lesser quality place higher in a class because they are exhibited by an excellent showman who understands the goat's strengths and weaknesses. Concentrating on the development of proper showmanship skills will improve your chance of success.

The combination of a high-quality showman and a high-quality goat makes a very competitive team. Some youth have a natural talent for showing animals while others develop the skill of showing livestock. Showmanship is not learned or developed overnight. Hard work goes into becoming an experienced showman. Time must be spent with a goat at home, months before the show, to identify its strengths and weaknesses and to properly train the animal to lead and brace.

Showmanship should be fun and exciting for exhibitors. This is your opportunity to do everything possible to make your goat look its best. A great goat showman is aware of everything surrounding and involving the person/goat team. The showman must

maintain awareness of him/herself, the goat, the judge, ring steward(s), other showman, other goats, areas in and outside the show ring. In addition, the showman watches for other unknown details that could develop unexpectedly. Performing at the highest level every time you enter the ring will allow everything else to fall into place. In this guide, you will find information that will help you learn to become a more skilled showman.

## Animal Selection

One of the key ingredients for a successful showmanship effort is to select a good animal, free of structural defects. While any animal may be shown, remember that it is always easier to show a high-quality animal free of major faults. Selection will be discussed in detail in another publication.

## At Home

### ***Collar/Halter-Breaking***

The real work of showmanship begins once goats have been selected and placed on feed. Begin training goats by teaching them to lead with a collar and halter. Collars and halters are available on the commercial market or can be handmade from a 26-inch chain dog collar, one small snap, two small quick-links, and a short piece of rubber tubing. The tubing helps prevent a hand injury from a twisted chain. Complete assembly of this collar is shown in Figure 1. A properly fitted prong or pinch collar may also be used. Fine, 2 mm links are ideal for market goats. Most prong collars only need three to five pronged links (Figure 2). Be aware that some shows have



Figure 1. Chain collars can be purchased or handmade.



Figure 2. Fine 2 mm pinch collar.



Figure 3. Proper halter placement.

one correct way on the goat's head. Put the halter on the goat correctly at each training session (Figure 3). Notice that the piece running across the animal's nose is not adjustable. The nose piece is used only to hold the halter in proper position. Pressure comes from the portion of the halter leaving the left side of the goat's jaw, running behind the goat's ears around the head, to the right side, and returning under to the left side of the jaw. The halter applies pressure to the back of the head encouraging the animal to move forward. At the same time, pressure is applied under the jaw, encouraging the goat to keep its head held high.

Goats often fight the chain and halter at first, but will soon adjust to the restraint. Starting them on a halter reduces the risk of the animal becoming choked and is safer than starting them out using a collar and not having an easy way to release the animal in a dangerous situation. When using a halter, allow a small amount of slack (4 to 6 inches) in the lead rope so the goat can stand with his head parallel to the

rules regarding collar types allowed.

Halters can be made using either braided 3/8-inch nylon or cotton rope. For the animal's safety and comfort, the lead rope should slide easily through both sides of the nose piece. Halters are designed to fit only

ground without heavy pressure under his jaw. Never allow enough slack in the rope that the animal can put its head down or get its foot over the lead rope and become entangled (Figure 4). Always tie animals using a slipknot. This knot will allow for an easy, quick release for the showman or if the animal is in danger. As the animal grows accustomed to being tied with a halter, begin tying it with the collar. This process allows the animal to grow accustomed to the chain while being tied to the fence.

If you want to start goats immediately using collars, watch them very carefully until they grow accustomed to the collar. When starting with a chain collar, use a "quick-link" to adjust collar size to fit the goat so the chain will not slip over his head. Initially, secure the goat to the fence with a snap and chain at shoulder height with no more than 6 inches of slack (Figure 5). Four-inch double snaps work well to tie the goat to the fence.

As the goat learns to stand with little or no resistance to restraint, tie it to a fence or overhead structure with its head held above its shoulders. This way, the goat begins to learn how to hold his head up in the show ring. As goats grow accustomed to the chain/halter, tie them a little higher in each training session until they appear as if they are standing at attention (Figure 6). Do not tie a goat any higher than his head would be held in a show ring. This is uncomfortable for the goat and does not teach him anything. Goats tend to climb, so it is best to tie them to an overhead structure or a fence with a smooth, solid bottom. Goats that tend to resist standing



Follow these steps to train your goat to hold his head up in the show ring. Figure 4. Tie halter low with slack. Figure 5. Attach collar even with top of goat's shoulder. Figure 6. Attach halter high to keep head up. Figure 7. Attach collar to overhead structure to keep head up.

with their head elevated may be tied to an overhead structure using a bungee cord to improve their posture (Figure 7).

An additional training aid would be to tie goats using a bungee cord, rope, or chain to a ring that slides on an overhead cable or heavy wire similar to a clothesline. The ends should be 15 to 30 feet apart with the overhead cable at 6 feet. The cable should be high enough to keep the showman's head safe and the goats from jumping over it. Be sure to have solid ends made of plywood or fencing that will prevent goats from being jerked to a stop by the chain and potentially causing an injury to the animal. This exercise allows goats to walk between the two structures where the overhead cable or heavy wire is tied (Figure 8). This allows for some self-teaching on how to walk with their head up at the right level. It is best to tie only one goat at a time or use a series of these overhead structures for multiple animals.

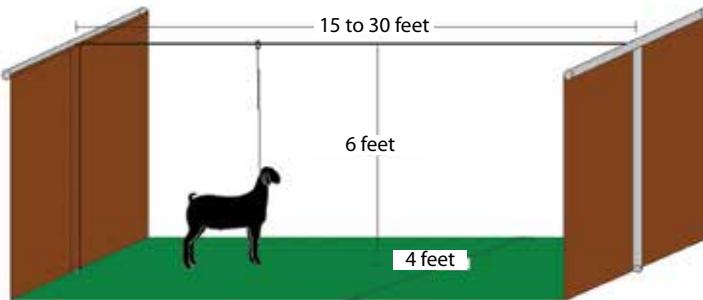


Figure 8. Clothesline training tool.

*Never leave tied goats unattended. Goats should be haltered and tied daily – or as often as possible – for a minimum of 20 minutes. If an exhibitor has several goats, practice leading and bracing an individual goat for 5 minutes while leaving the others tied. After an individual training session is completed, re-tie that goat and work another until all goats have been trained to lead and brace. During hot weather, work goats early in the morning or late in the evening to avoid heat stress on both the showman and goat. The more time you spend training goats, the more successful your experience will be when you and the goats enter the show ring.*

Repeated work with each goat is critical. Spend time teaching the animal to lead using the collar/halter and eventually without the halter. At first, goats will resist the collar/halter by pulling backward, lying down, and sometimes trying to run away. Be patient. Goats tend to be much more vocal than other species. They may make sounds like you are hurting them, but do not be too alarmed. This could be compared



*to a child whining at his parents because he does not want to do what he is told. Remember the showman is boss and must train the animal and not let it have its way. Pull the goat forward with steady pressure, and when it takes a step or two forward, immediately give it slack in the lead rope or collar. Goats may need to be encouraged to move forward by applying slight pressure to their tail (Figure 9). Eventually the animal will rarely pull backward and will lead easily along the showman's right side as the halter/collar is held from the animal's left side.*

At this point, goats are ready to start leading without the halter, using only the collar. Smaller showmen may leave the halter on the goat as a security measure, but they should use the collar as the primary means of training. Showmen should hold the collar using their right hand palm facing upward and toward the goat's head (Figure 10). Showman should let their left arm and hand relax at their side. There is no need for the showman to place their left arm behind their back. This often appears unnatural and can be a distraction. If you must encourage the goat to lead by pulling its tail,



Figure 10. Hold the collar with your right hand palm up.

change hands and hold the collar with the left hand, lightly pull the tip of the goat's tail with the right. As the goat begins moving, change your hands to their original position. When goats lead with ease, halters will no longer be necessary.

Showmen naturally present the goat from the left side of the animal. A situation could arise in the show ring that may require leading the goat from its right side. A good showman must be prepared when that time comes as it may be critical to presentation of the animal. Therefore, goats should lead easily from either side.

### ***Positioning the goat's feet***

When teaching goats to lead, stop them regularly and set their feet in the correct position. Most goats will learn to correctly place their feet each time they stop. A goat's feet should be placed on the four corners of its body, and the goat should not stand too wide or narrow on either the front or the back legs. On the profile, goats should not have their hind legs pulled forward too far underneath them or stretched backward too far behind them. Correct foot placement can make a huge difference in the animal's appearance. Therefore, it is extremely important to devote a good portion of training sessions to establishing correct foot placement. Most goats do not like having their feet and legs touched, so you may have to spend extra time picking up their feet and legs so they are used to being handled.

### ***Bracing***

To prepare to be competitive in any situation, goats should be taught to brace. Some shows, by rule, may not allow bracing. Certain judges may or may not allow showmen to brace their animals. If a show has no rules against the practice and a judge allows showmen to present their animals on a brace, do not be surprised to see the animals that are braced stand at the top of the class. Therefore, showmen should train goats both to brace and stand in place so they will be able to show their animal either way depending on show rules and how the judge allows them to show.

Readers may question the practice of bracing. This publication covers the practice as many shows allow bracing. Because most goats do not weigh more than 115 pounds, bracing has become a relatively easy technique for smaller showmen to master, and it provides the most level playing field when showing against bigger, stronger showmen. Many

goat showmen, and especially those who started with market lambs, are actually overdoing the job when bracing. Goats do not require the same amount of brace as lambs do in the show ring. A small amount of pressure applied correctly to the front of the goat will make the animal feel much better than his counterparts that are not braced.

After goats have learned to lead without a halter and to place their feet correctly each time they are stopped (some minor adjustments may still be necessary), you are ready to begin training your goat to brace. In the braced position, the goat's muscles (primarily its topline) are tensed and its body feels firm, not soft. A firm handling goat is more desirable because softness may indicate that an animal is fat and it may be perceived as having less muscle.

While training your goat to brace, remember there are times he may look his best when he isn't bracing. Many times goats look better on the profile when they are not braced. This is why identifying your goat's strengths and weaknesses is important. If your goat is strong and level topped, you may not need to brace to provide the desired appearance. If they have a tendency to be easy in their top, brace them a bit to level their topline.

Some goats naturally brace when pressure is properly applied to the chest, but most goats tend to move backward. To properly brace an animal, the showman's hands, knees, and feet must be positioned correctly. This may differ based on the showman's size and what feels natural (Figure 11). Use the combination of hand, knee, and foot positioning that works best for you and the goat. Techniques may change as the showman becomes taller and stronger.

The most effective way to brace a goat is to use what feels most comfortable to the showman while getting



*Figure 11. Bracing leg placement.*

the best possible brace from the goat. The goat's front feet can be lifted slightly off of the ground to set them or cue the beginning of a brace. All four feet should remain on the ground while bracing (Figure 12). Holding an animal off of the ground can be uncomfortable for the goat. In addition this technique often makes a goat look worse structurally because the animal will usually have a "dip" in front of its hip, causing it to lose loin shape.



Figure 12. Bracing profile perfect.

At any time you are showing, be careful not to choke the goat or hinder its breathing by applying too much pressure directly behind the goat's jaw or down the middle portion of its neck. If a goat begins to pull its head downward or seems to be trying to cough, immediately remove all pressure from its neck. Some goats may begin to tremble slightly, but will return to normal in a few seconds without harm.

The most effective way to teach a goat to brace requires a combination of techniques. First, the goat's feet should be positioned properly on the corners of its body. Second, the showman's hands, knees, and feet also must be in the correct positions. Third, apply pressure by placing the knee into the goat's shoulder and chest. Never pull the goat forward. Always push toward the goat.

Teaching a goat to brace requires time and patience. It is natural for the animal to move away from pressure, not toward it. Never try bracing a goat heading downhill. Instead, position the goat so he is on level footing or facing uphill to practice bracing. It is more natural for the animal. At first, the goat will probably step backward. If that happens, apply enough

pressure to the goat's tail to make it move forward. Allow the animal to take several steps forward, then stop and repeat the process. This exercise may require the help of another person to have the greatest effect, but should be the most effective. Continue practicing until the goat begins to respond by bracing against the pressure applied by the showman.

Some goats may not respond to pressure to their tail. If the goat steps backward when you apply pressure with your leg, try backing the goat in *quick* circles. Often the goat will try to stop and start forward to avoid having to continuously walk backward. At this point, let the goat lean into your leg to create a brace so his top feels firm. Let him walk forward a few steps and repeat the procedure.

Another training method involves placing a goat on a platform just high enough so he thinks nothing is below him. A trimming stand works well for this method. Some showmen may choose to set the stand in an inclined position. Brace the goat, and as he steps backward and cannot feel solid ground, he will tend to push against the showman. When he does this, allow the goat to move forward, and repeat the steps until he does not step backward. Make sure the platform is high enough to be effective, yet low enough to assure the safety of the goat and showman.

Do not "over" brace your animal. The goat should brace against you just hard enough so his top becomes firm and more defined (similar to a human flexing a bicep). Do not worry as much about the leg muscles flexing. Most judges do not handle or touch the goat's leg because it makes the goat tuck its tail and squat, taking away from its appearance. Bracing too hard can also cause the animal to squat and look worse.

Bracing is one of the most critical parts of showmanship, so showmen must make sure goats learn to brace. Just as people are right- or left-handed, goats are right- or left-dominant. Determine which is the dominant side, and use it to your advantage when bracing your goat. Bracing goats for an extended period will increase the endurance of both goat and showman. Practice bracing for 5 seconds, 10 seconds, 15 seconds, building up to 30 to 45 seconds. Seldom will a good judge demand steady bracing for more than 30 to 45 seconds.

Exhibitors should learn to lightly brace and fully brace their goat. A light brace refers to just enough pressure to improve the appearance of the animal. A light brace may sometimes help keep a goat still and in place. A full brace adds more pressure and results

in the goat “flexing” its muscles. A light brace is often used on a profile view while the full brace is used only when the goat is being handled by the judge.

### **At-home practice**

As goats begin to master the training, showman should practice show ring techniques. Ask parents, siblings, friends, or volunteer leaders to act as “judges.” This will allow you and your goat to test your skills as a show team. Practice working with goats in an area familiar to the goat but out of sight from its pen mates. Goats need to learn to work on their own. At a show, they will be taken away from the animals they are familiar with and need to feel calm when on their own. A goat should be comfortable when handled by a judge, so the more this can be practiced at home, the less likely that the goat will misbehave in the show ring.

Practice moving the goat from one location to another. Master the ability to change from one side of the animal to the other at the appropriate time to keep the animal between the showman and judge. Refer to the section *“Moving around the show ring”* (page 7) for details on specific showmanship techniques.

Other tips or recommendations may include the use of a large mirror in the barn so an exhibitor can see how the goat appears to the judge. Video cameras can also be useful. Videos from shows or taken during practice sessions can be used as teaching tools.

## **Show Time**

### **Preparing for show**

Preparing for a show involves attention to many important details that may vary depending on the show. Always consider the basics of animal food, water, and shelter. Calculate the amount of feed required while traveling and at the show. Use a container that is easily transported and will keep the feed clean, dry, and fresh. Carry a little extra feed in case of a spill. Collect measuring devices, buckets, and feed troughs that will be needed at the show.

Take water from home to ensure the goat will drink at the show. Animals can detect differences in water, just as humans can, and could refuse to drink strange water. This will cause the animal to become dehydrated, and it will hurt its performance. Some exhibitors use a flavor additive to attempt to mask the differences in water. If you try this method, begin adding the flavoring to the water at home at least two

weeks before the show. Teach goats to drink from a bucket at home a couple of weeks before the show, and use that bucket at the show. Goats are creatures of habit, and they become stressed when habits are broken. Try to maintain stability in their routine by using the same water buckets and feed troughs used at home.

If you know what goats will be bedded on while at the show, expose them to the same materials starting a few days to a week before the show. If you will be using muzzles, use them at home before you leave. If your goats have never worn covers or socks, you may consider using them before the show as well. These practices may help reduce stress on the animal.

After arriving at the show, allow goats to drink. Halter and walk goats for 10 to 15 minutes to familiarize them with the environment and help them relax. Some shows have restrictions on where animals are allowed, so be aware and follow rules and signs that designate restricted areas. After walking the goats, place them in their pen, and allow them to lie down and relax. When possible, try to minimize traffic through the area to ensure the animals’ comfort.

Feed goats at the same time they would have been fed at home. Walk them 10 to 15 minutes every three to four hours to keep them healthy and energetic. This schedule may be altered according to the weight and condition of the goat. If they are kept in a barn, take them outside so they are exposed to fresh air. If rules restrict leaving the building, take them to an open doorway. If goats are kept in their trailer during a show, be sure to keep them cool in hot conditions.

### **Shearing for show**

Numerous clippers are available on the market today that are safe for both the exhibitor and animal. These clippers allow exhibitors of all ages and experience levels to be active in the preparation of their animals. An experienced person may need to assist and touch up areas after an inexperienced person has clipped an animal. This is how inexperienced showmen gain experience and experienced showmen learn leadership skills.

Keep washing to a minimum because it reduces the natural oils in the skin that protect the animals from various skin conditions, including fungus. Goats may appear to be pretty clean once they have been shorn. Most goats may be “blown out” using a commercial blow dryer to remove dirt and debris in the hair before shearing. When washing, use a shampoo that

will minimize the loss of oils in the hair but still remove the dirt. Then use a conditioner and rinse.

A cover-cote blade may be used to shear an animal within one to three days of a show. Otherwise, a medium blade may be used to shear an animal and allow for some hair growth three to seven days before the show. Shear the animal at a uniform length all over their body with the exception of below the knee and hock and the tail switch. Never use a surgical or super surgical blade when shearing a goat. Hair length of 1/4 to 3/8 inch is ideal.

Put a cover on the goat after shearing to keep him clean and warm. In cold weather, you may also put a sock or tube on the goat for added warmth. Several minutes before entering the show ring remove the cover and/or sock then touch up dirty spots with a towel and waterless shampoo. In some cases, it may be necessary to wash the goat again. Be sure to allow time for the goat to dry before entering the ring. Before going home, spray goats down with one of the many commercially available anti-fungal products to minimize the likelihood they contract a skin disease at a show.

#### **Appropriate dress**

Goat exhibitors do not have to follow a specific dress code unless an individual show requires a certain type of dress. Following are recommendations for appropriate dress in the show ring:

- Dress neatly and professionally. Dress comfortably, yet appropriately for the show ring.
- Wear a long-sleeved, collared shirt or blouse. In extremely hot temperatures, a short-sleeved shirt is permissible. Button-front shirts often provide an additional degree of professionalism. Button-front or collared polo-type shirts are preferred but not mandatory and appear more professional than a collarless shirt. The shirt should be tucked in.
- Shirts made of brightly colored or uniquely patterned fabrics may be chosen as show shirts. A unique color or print allows a judge to mentally connect an animal to a shirt and helps him or her remember a specific goat or goats in a class – because most goats appear similar at a glance.
- Wear clean nice pants or jeans with a belt.
- Spaghetti-straps, low-cut tops, blouses or T-shirts, and heavily worn or ripped jeans are inappropriate in the show ring.
- Wear clean, nice-looking shoes or boots. They should be chosen for comfort, practicality, and traction and should protect the showman's feet

while allowing easy movement around the show ring.

- Hair should be combed neatly. Long hair may be held in place with a braid, clip, ribbon, etc. A unique, yet professional, appearance might help make a positive impression on a judge.
- Hats and caps should not be worn in the ring, but some extreme circumstances exist where this may be acceptable.
- Do not chew gum in the show ring.
- All grooming equipment should be left at the animal's pen or in a showbox.

#### **Moving around the show ring**

Showmanship is a mental game. An outstanding showman should be at the peak of his/her game from the time just before entering the show ring to just after leaving it. As mentioned before, a showman must be completely aware of him/herself, the goat, the judge, ring steward(s), other showmen, other goats, areas in and outside the show ring, and situations that might develop unexpectedly. Showmen must maintain mental focus on each of these factors while appearing calm and moving easily around the show ring.

Showmen should watch the first class or two (unless he/she is participating) to identify the judge and the pattern the judge is using to evaluate the class of goats. Most judges establish a pattern within the first two classes and use that method to evaluate animals throughout the day.

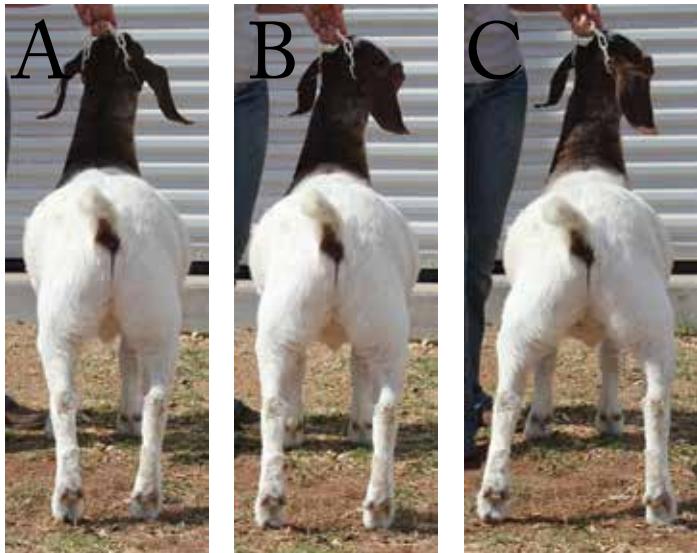
While waiting to enter a class, showman should begin to focus on the job to be done when entering the show ring. Exhibitors should locate the judge immediately upon entering the ring and make eye contact, which tells the judge he has the showman's attention. The showman should walk his/her goat with its head held high. Goats should be moved slowly and easily around the ring, allowing the judge to evaluate each animal before moving to the next goat. The showman should look ahead and determine where they are going, then return focus to the judge.

A ring steward will generally assist exhibitors and their goats into the show ring in a pattern that has been set by the judge. It is important to locate the ring steward and follow his/her directions while maintaining eye contact and focusing on the judge. The ring steward will generally guide showman into one of two formations: head-in/rear-view or profile/side-view/head to tail. In either position, be careful not to get covered up or "lost" in a corner of the ring. Leave plenty of room around the animal to maneuver

the goat out of a bad situation. Showmen must anticipate where to stop or locate the goat to give the judge the best view.

#### **Head-in/Rear-View**

When exhibitors are leading goats into a rear-view, the judge wants to analyze all animals from the rear for structural correctness and degree of muscling down an animal's back and through its hind legs (from stifle to stifle). Therefore, the hind legs should be set into the correct positions immediately after the showman has stopped the animal side-by-side to the next animal in line (Figure 13). Set front legs after



*Figure 13. Correct leg position, rear-view. A = legs too narrow, B = legs perfect, C = legs too wide.*

rear legs are in good position to balance the animal. There is no need to spend a great deal of time on setting the front legs perfectly because the front end is not visible. If permissible, the goat should be slightly braced anytime the judge is evaluating it from a rear-view. In this position, goats can be braced from either side of the animal. If the showman is positioned correctly in the front of the goat, changing sides may not be necessary when the judge changes position. Figure 14 demonstrates correct and incorrect spacing between goats.

#### **Profile/Side-View/Head to Tail**

Exhibitors might be asked to present their goats on a side-view to allow the judge to analyze the goat's profile. When walking on the profile, make sure to stop the goat 2 to 3 feet behind the goat ahead of him, leaving plenty of room for the showman to work. Goats should have their back feet placed first. Then when rules allow it, you may choose to brace the animal or present him naturally based on his strengths



*Figure 14. Animal spacing, rear-view. A = too close together, B = perfect spacing, C = too far apart.*



*Figure 15. Leg placement, profile. A = legs too close together, B = perfect leg placement, C = legs too stretched.*

and weaknesses. As previously mentioned, a goat with a weak topline may benefit from bracing on the profile, but a strong-topped, attractive goat may look good shown in a natural pose. Animals should always be kept in a straight line. Do not push your goat out of line toward the judge in an effort to be seen. The judge will find the goat he/she desires.

A showman should remember to check the goat's feet. Always make sure goats are set correctly whenever they are viewed by the judge (Figure 15). If a foot is significantly misplaced while the judge is evaluating the animal, it must be corrected immediately.

If you are participating in a large class, allow your goat to relax when the judge is not evaluating it. If the goat moves a foot out of place, do not move the foot back immediately. Instead, wait until the judge is about to evaluate the goat again and then correctly reset its feet. Overworking or constantly resetting a goat's feet may lead to an aggravated, uncooperative goat. Figure 16 demonstrates spacing.



*Figure 16. Animal spacing, profile. A = too close together, B = perfect spacing, C = too far away.*

## Front-View

A judge may choose to walk around in front of the goats to get a front-view and evaluate each goat on structural correctness and muscling through the front end of the goat. Stand beside the shoulder opposite the judge and face the same direction as the goat (Figure 17). Correctly place the goat's front feet so he does not stand too wide or narrow; hold the goat's head so a straight line could be drawn from nose to tail (Figure 18). Use the right hand to place the right foot and the left hand to place the left foot. Smaller



Figure 17. Perfect spacing and stance, front-view.

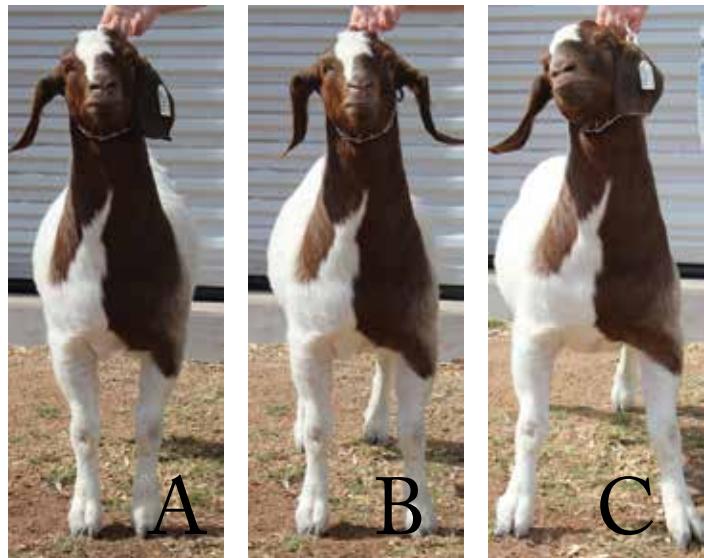


Figure 18. Foot placement, front-view. A = legs too narrow, B = legs perfect, C = legs too wide.

showmen may find this difficult until they can reach over the goat. Do not step away from the animal because some control over the goat will be lost, and the showman's movement tends to pull the goat's head out of proper alignment with its body. Hold the goat's head high as the judge analyzes him.

The showman should stand straight and tall when presenting a goat. Bending over decreases control

over the goat and will cause strain on the showman's back. If the showman chooses, he/she should wait until the judge passes the goat and centers his attention on the next goat before slowly moving to the side opposite the judge. There is no big rush to move. Moving any sooner may distract the judge and block the view of the goat if the judge wants to compare animals. A showman should be prepared to brace his/her goat as the judge returns to the rear-view of the goats.

Goats' ears should always remain in their natural position. Some may feel that raising the ears gives an illusion of a longer neck, but anything other than a natural look distracts from the animal's appearance (Figure 19) and offers no advantage.

Moving goats from one point to another is just as important as correct positioning of their feet and bracing (Figures 20.1-20.9). When a judge asks a showman to move to another location, take the most direct path available. Goats should be turned slightly and pushed out of line if on a rear-view or pushed out of line before proceeding to the desired location with the goat between the showman and judge. Do not push the goat straight back or it will think you are signaling it to brace, and it will not move backward as desired.

The showman should maintain eye contact with the judge while occasionally looking at the desired destination. When the showman is required to change sides, he/she must move around the front of the goat always facing the animal. Never change hands behind your back. Do not step behind the goat. The showman may move between the goat and judge for a brief moment to position himself on the correct side. The goat should not be turned completely around just to keep the animal between the showman and judge. By moving quickly yet smoothly between the goat and judge, a showman will not block the judge's view long enough to create a problem. Instead, he/she is able to move the goat more quickly and easily than by



Figure 19. Do not raise the goat's ears.

turning the goat around.

If a judge asks to have a goat moved toward and away from him, the showman should make sure to walk the goat in a straight line in both directions. Goats should not be moved in half circles or offset from the judge because this will not present the desired view. Showmen should never quit showing their animal until they leave the show ring. It is just as important to show the animal while the judge gives his reasons, and this is actually appreciated by the judge. Do not leave the ring until the judge has finished giving reasons on your goat or you are directed out by the ring steward.

While exhibiting a goat, squatting or kneeling should be kept to an absolute minimum. At one time, the idea of kneeling or squatting was used when exhibiting sheep to level a topline, give the animal the appearance of being taller, or to keep a tall showman from making an animal appear smaller. Control by the showman is sacrificed when the exhibitor chooses to kneel or squat. In addition, it may be distracting to a judge because the showman is constantly up and down rather than standing throughout the duration of the class. A slight brace can help level the topline, and no control over the goat is lost. Be courteous in the ring. Do not crowd other showmen or their goats. Try not to cover or hide another showman's goat.

### **Coaching**

Ideally, once inside the show ring, everything outside it should be blocked. Parents, siblings, volunteers, or others who may be trying to coach the showman should have confidence in the youth, and youth should have faith in themselves that preparation for the show was completed at home in practice sessions. Excessive ringside coaching can be distracting to the judge and may interfere with the showman's presentation of the animal. A showman's primary focus should be on the judge.

### **Showmanship Classes**

As mentioned previously, showmanship may be the single most important quality necessary for success in the show ring. Just as the market classes focus on which animal offers the most quality, showmanship classes are designed primarily to test the youth's ability to show a goat to its greatest potential and to some extent understand animal and carcass evaluation. Consider every class a showmanship class and strive to do your best every time the ring is entered. After all, the only difference between the market and

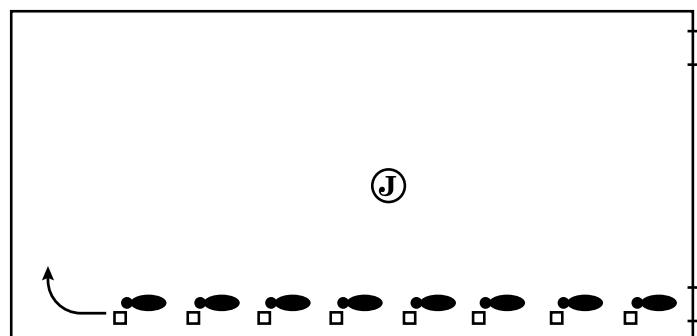


Figure 20.1. Animals entering the show ring on a profile. Notice the animal is always between the showman and judge.

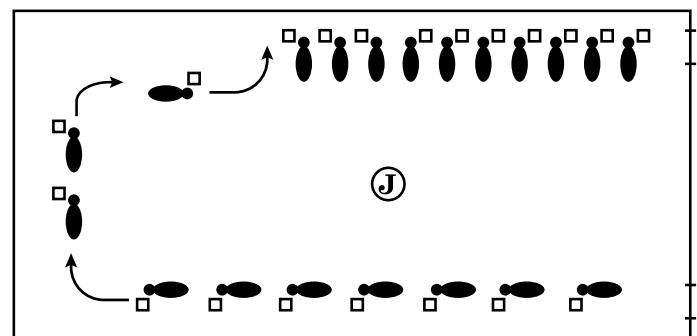


Figure 20.2. Animals entering the show ring and line up on a rear-view. Notice the position of the judge and showman.

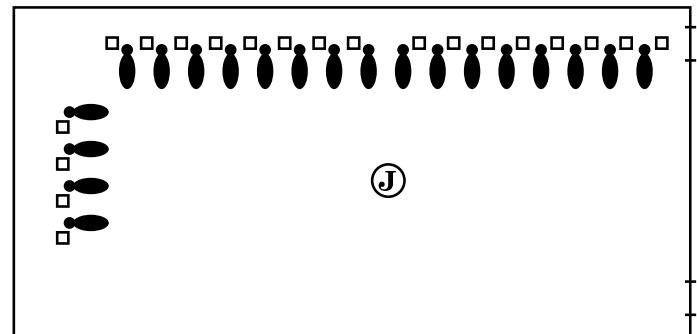


Figure 20.3. All animals lined up on a rear-view.

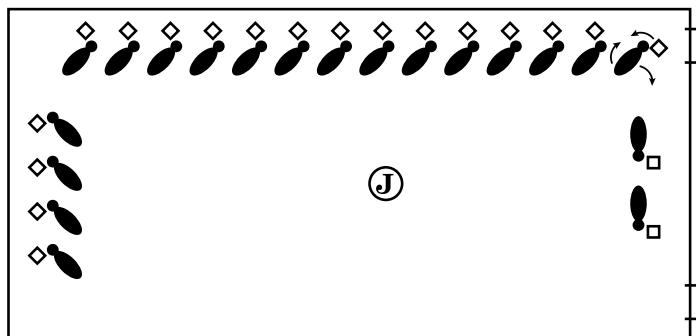


Figure 20.4. All animals begin to move to a profile or side-view. Move to the animal's left side, push their front end away from you, and follow the goat in front of you.

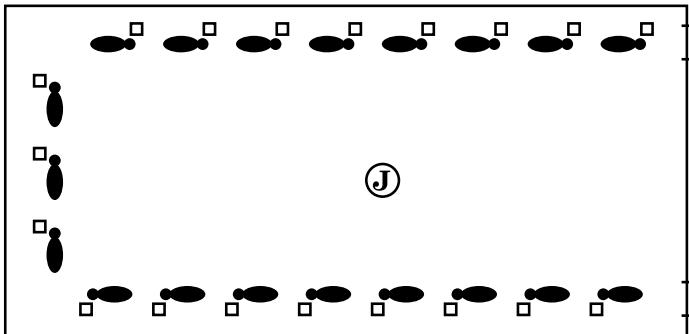


Figure 20.5. All animals lined up on a profile or side-view.

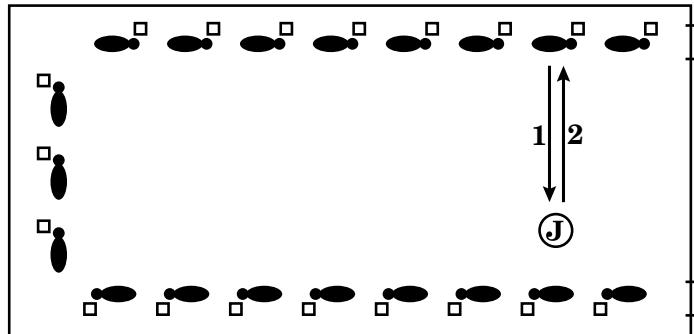


Figure 20.9. Move animals directly to and from a judge. Do not move in half circles or out of line.

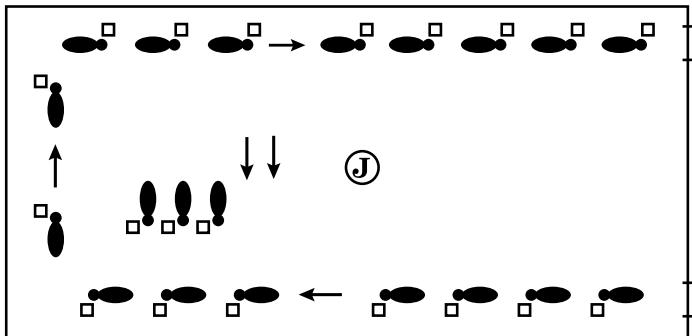


Figure 20.6. As animals move out of line to another location, move animals forward to fill gaps.

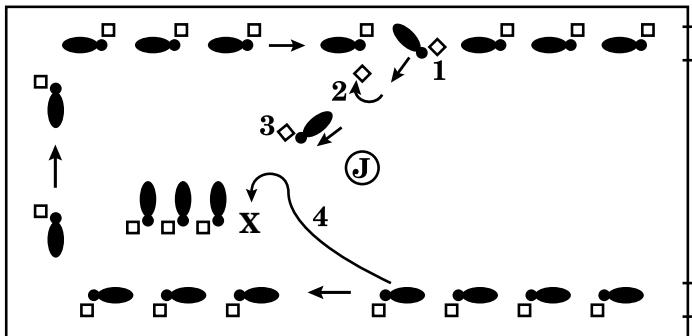


Figure 20.7. Showman 1 (top) 1) Push the goat out of line, 2) move around the front of the goat to change sides, and 3) proceed to the designated location.  
Showman 2 (bottom) 4) Push the goat out of line and proceed to the designated spot in line.

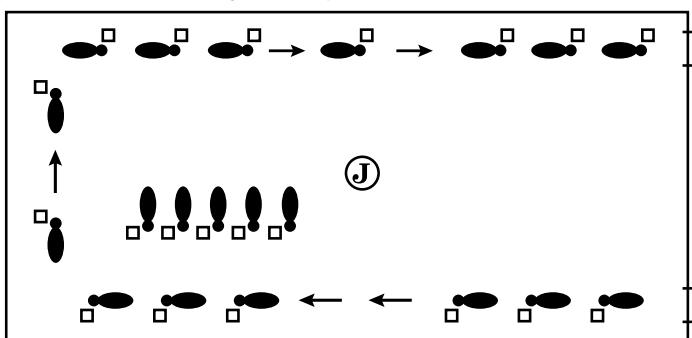


Figure 20.8. Completed moves from Diagram 7. Arrows show the need to fill gaps that have been left by the goats in the middle.

showmanship class is who the judge is critiquing.

#### **Questions by judges**

Judges may or may not ask questions during a showmanship class. Many showmanship and/or preliminary showmanship classes are judged from ringside without any direct interaction with the showman by the showmanship judge. Judges who choose to ask questions (difficulty typically increasing by age division) usually use this as a tool to separate the showman at the top of the class. Showmen should know the animal's weight, body parts, along with their physical strengths and weaknesses. The showman should understand how to enhance the goat's strengths while disguising its weaknesses.

While most questions will relate to the topics mentioned above, the showman must recognize there is no approved list of questions. Judges may use a wide range of questions that may include topics such as nutrition, health, marketing, record keeping, etc. Learn as much as you can in order to be best prepared for any question you may be asked.

#### **Judge's other evaluation technique**

Some judges may ask you to change animals with another showman. Approach that animal as if you were starting to train him. Judges will be looking to see how the showman handles the new animal and how the animal responds to the new showman. If you take a goat that has been causing another showman trouble and present it better than its owner, you will most likely be rewarded for your efforts. After all, that is the mark of a true showman.

#### **Attitude and Emotions**

Upon entering the show ring, a showman must be mentally prepared and focused on the task. Smiles are good when they are not fake. A judge can determine if a youth is having a good time in the show ring

without having to see a big smile. Sometimes showmen begin to focus on smiling instead of showing the animal. An intense face is not necessarily a negative as long as the showman does not appear to be angry. Exhibitors should appear to be intense and focused, yet friendly and polite.

If a goat begins to jump or misbehave, the showman must maintain his/her composure, not become irritated with the goat, and not lose patience. A calm, composed showman with an uncooperative goat can still do quite well in showmanship. However, if a showman loses his/her patience, goats will usually act worse, leading to a battle between the showman and the animal that neither will win.

When a showman enters the ring, he/she must understand there will only be one class winner, and the odds of winning every class entered are very slim. Showman should always go into a class to do their best, but should not be discouraged if they do not win. They may be disappointed, but the placing must be accepted, and the showman should move on to his/her next goal. The showman should not get upset with the judge, another exhibitor, their parents, or their goat because they did not receive the expected placing. Judges are humans hired for their honest opinion, and are frequently paid very little for the job they perform. Most judges enjoy working with youth and the challenge of evaluating good goats. Criticism of the judge is inappropriate. While an exhibitor may not agree with the judge, he must respect the judge's opinion. If he/she is not willing to do so, then he/she should stay at home.

Showmen who become angry, pout or curse at a show should not be allowed to participate until they can manage their emotions and attitude. Tears are shed in times of joy, at the conclusion of a first-year project, in times of disappointment, and at the conclusion of a showman's career. However, a tear should never be shed because a showman is angry. Following these principles will lead to a much more enjoyable showmanship experience.

Judges are sometimes approached immediately after a show with comments and questions. A judge should never be approached with questions such as, "What did you not like about my goat?" or "Why didn't my goat do better?" Chances are the judge will not remember each individual animal after completing his judging responsibilities. When possible, whether you had a successful day or not, thank the judge for his/her time and remember to

maintain a good attitude.

Parents, volunteers, agriculture teachers, and agents/educators should encourage their youth to continue to work hard, promote good sportsmanship, and be seen as positive role models for our youth. Remember the big picture: *Trophies, plaques, buckles, and other awards can tarnish and collect dust, but our youth will be the true test of success of our livestock projects. Make our youth the forever shining result of a successful show career that will lead to a bright future.*

Adults should keep in mind that the livestock program is designed as a tool and a learning experience for turning youth into responsible leaders of the future.

## Conclusion

This guide aims to provide the inexperienced showman a basic roadmap for developing fundamental showmanship skills. Experienced showmen may also benefit from it. Inexperienced showmen are encouraged to work closely with more experienced showman in an effort to gain skills and knowledge. Experienced showmen should take responsibility and exercise leadership to help inexperienced showmen learn. View success as a shining mirror. Helping others succeed is a direct reflection of your personal success. You should strive to make the reflection of other's success shine brighter than your own.





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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

MF3064

November 2012

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