

Showmanship Skills

Success in the showing derives from hard work and practice at home. Showmanship is the ability to present you and your animal in the best form possible, in front of a judge. It is the look, the presentation, and knowledge of your animal and the beef industry.

PREPARATION

Showmanship begins with the exhibitor, and a professional look creates a solid foundation. The American Angus Association requires all junior members in NJAA-sponsored shows to wear a collared, tucked-in shirt in the showing. It is recommended to wear boots or closed-toe leather shoes — no tennis shoes — black or dark-colored jeans, and a belt.

Show participants will receive an exhibitor number or back tag, which coincides with the show program or posting sheet, to be worn in the showing.

A show harness is worn to display the number, and can be purchased at a show-supply store. It is essential to buy a correctly-sized harness for a professional appearance and comfort. Exhibitor show harnesses are recommended but entry number belt clips are also available.

Other showing equipment includes a showstick and a comb. Showsticks come in a variety of sizes and colors, use a 54-inch or longer showstick to present the animal; showsticks relate to the size of the animal, not the height of the showman.

The showstick is a valuable tool to help correctly place the cattle's legs in the showing. Before the show, practice at home to maximize potential to impress the judge. At home place their feet with their head held high. After setting their feet, scratch their underbelly with the showstick to help them remain calm.

Other equipment an exhibitor needs is a comb, placed in the back pocket. When showing market animals, the judge will often feel the animal's ribs for fat coverage. After the judge has moved on, use the show comb to smooth the hair back into place.

IN THE SHOWRING

Before a showman can present their skills, they evaluate the showing. Look for the gates, the levelness of the ring, and the flow of cattle. It is recommended that an exhibitor allow time to observe how the ring stewards and judge are lining up the cattle.

In the showing avoid the slopes and holes, and do not place the front feet of an animal in a hole, as the animal will appear downhill. Instead, use the holes as an advantage — stopping the animal with the back feet in the hole.

In the ring, hold the showstick on the left-hand

side parallel to the body. Do not drag the showstick on the ground, or hold the showstick too high, as if to ask a question. An exhibitor can also position the showstick in front of the animal's nose as a guide to control the speed of the animal. If your animal misbehaves or walks too fast, a slight tap on the nose will correct their behavior to slow down or stop the animal.

Walk the animal into position to look more natural, rather than adjusting each foot. Work on stopping your animal in their natural state, and use the showstick for minor foot changes. If the animal appears unnatural or is unfixable to set up, gently pull forward on the halter to move up a step. This is often easier than resetting them.

No matter where you are in the showing, always allow extra space between animals exhibited; this creates a workable space to reset your animal. When pulling in for a rear view, the controlled space is on the left side.

Once the animal is set, switch hands with the showstick and halter — now having the halter in the left hand, and the showstick in the right hand.

Remember, always be aware of the location of the judge in the ring, to watch for when the judge pulls your calf in, and keep an eye on your animal's feet in case one moves out of place.

While keeping an eye on the judge, a showman should have a collected facial expression. Each showmanship judge has a different take on expressions, but the important thing is to portray confidence — be serious, but have fun.

ADDITIONAL SHOWMANSHIP TIPS

A judge may also evaluate an exhibitor's beef and industry knowledge; so an exhibitor should always be prepared with answers before they enter the showing. When answering, stay confident and collected.

A list of expected questions follows:

- What is the animal's birth date?
- Who is the animal's sire?
- How much does your bull/steer weigh?
- Is your heifer pregnant, and when is she due?
- What do you feed your animal and how much?
- What is the current market price of beef in your area?

