



BASIC SHOWMANSHIP

for meat goats

Showmanship is the art of exhibiting your animal to the best of its ability – emphasizing its virtues while minimizing its faults. It is imperative that you maintain a proper attitude about showmanship. Showmanship is not deceit, neither should it be thought of as an attempt to ‘trick the judge’. It is simply giving your goat the best possible chance, but in a thoroughly honest and friendly manner. A major portion of showmanship is comprised of courtesy to the judge. When every exhibitor shows their goat the same way, using the same techniques, and possessing a good attitude, the judge is able to concentrate on evaluating the goats.

As with any art, showmanship is a little skill and a lot of sweat, and is not something that can be learned overnight. Below are a few tips we have compiled to help you get started.

PREPARATION:

- Begin working with your goat at least a month before the show, preferably as soon as you get it. Practice walking your goat and setting it up. Use a choke chain for dogs (NOT on choke); however, you may have to start out with a halter. A goat that has been worked with is much easier to handle at the show, and a judge can tell the difference between a goat accustomed to being handled and one that has just been dragged out of the pasture.
- Breeding goats usually are not clipped before showing, but be sure to check the show’s rules. Most does look better with their hair on, but some people will trim long hairs and smooth up the head, neck, legs, etc.
- Wethers are nearly always clipped. Clipping 7-10 days before the show is considered ideal, as it allows time for the hair to grow a little and the clipper streaks to even out. Usually the entire head and body are clipped with a ¼” blade, leaving hair below the knees, below the hocks, and a square tuft at the end of the tail. The areas where hair is left are often touched up to trim long hairs and make the goat look neater.
- Trim your goat’s hooves about a week before the show. If you trim hooves the day of the show, the goat may be tender on its feet, and lead the judge to think that it is lame.
- Wash your goat the day before the show using regular shampoo. The next morning, and before you walk into the show, you can just use baby wipes to touch up. Be sure to clean under the goat’s tail!
- Brush your goat down before you walk into the ring (it is good to do this on a regular basis anyway). A little light oil in a spray can, such as Show Sheen, before you enter the ring really helps the goat’s coat to look glossy and healthy.
- Know your goat. Many times the goats will want to know your goat’s name, age, birth date, how much it eats, and other such common facts about your goat. Many judges also ask you to point to parts of the goat.
- Groom yourself. Dress nicely – a pressed, long-sleeve shirt and long pants such as pressed jeans are appropriate. Wear leather footwear (no flip-flops or sandals), leave your hat outside the ring, and don’t forget to brush your hair!

IN THE RING:

- Be bright and alert. A smile always helps.
- Always keep the goat between yourself and the judge – you’re showing your goat, not you!
- Lead the goat on the left side (the goat will be on your right). The only time you lead your goat on the right side will be when the judge moves to look at the left side of your goat.
- When you switch sides, always move around the goat’s head – *NEVER* around its rear end.
- Always keep your goat’s head up. Set its legs squarely beneath it, straight down. Place the legs as far apart as possible, but not spraddled. Make sure the hocks are straight in the rear, and are not turning in.
- Wethers should *NOT* be picked up and braced like lambs – not only does it destroy their pasterns, but many judges dislike it. They may be braced, however, when the judge comes to feel them by placing your knee against their chest (training them to push against your knee is necessary in most goats). Bracing helps to tighten their muscles.
- When you turn your goat, make wide, smooth circles. Tight turns ‘kink’ your goat, and tend to make it look less attractive.
- Be attentive. There are 3 things you need to look at, and another that you need to be aware of: keep an eye on the judge, an eye on the ring man, an eye on your goat, and be aware of the exhibitor and goat in front of you. Follow the judge’s or ring man’s instructions promptly and quietly.
- Set up your goat quickly and quietly. **ALWAYS** set your goat up, even if the judge is not looking at you. Don’t show off, but rather always be standing there with a smile on your face and a calm, properly arranged goat.

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