

Lincoln/East Adams County Weekly 4-H Article



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Article 3

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Beef Cattle Showmanship (Part III)

Show Day Preparation

Show day is finally here! There are many things that you will need to consider, now that you have spent months in preparation. All your hard work in selecting, feeding, managing, and training will finally be realized...TODAY!

You should be able to find out the show day schedule a day or so before the actual "show day". Check to see which class you are showing in so that you can proceed with your agenda accordingly. On show day make sure your calf's stall is clean and that they are fed and have time to finish eating their feed/hay.



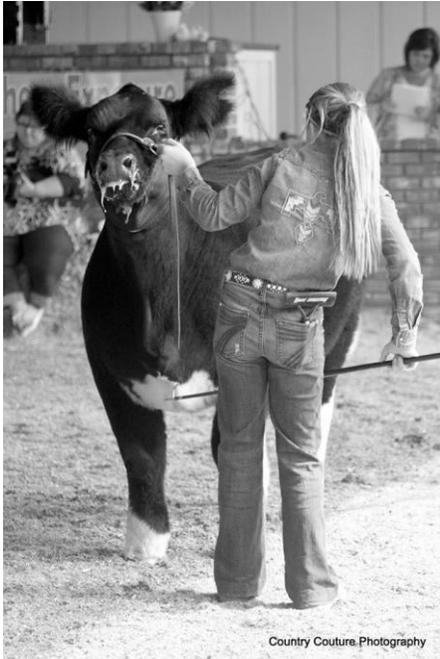
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TIMING is a big factor here! You will need to plan your day so that you have allotted enough time to wash, blow dry, and fit your calf in time for the line-up prior to entering the show ring. Unfortunately, I have witnessed a few disasters, whereby, the exhibitor did not allow enough time to successfully prepare and was forced to enter the show ring with a wet calf or one that was not adequately fit. It is possible to fit "too soon" prior to your class being called. This may cause your calf to get tired while standing in the grooming chute making it a challenge for him to look fresh and show well.

In addition, give yourself plenty of time to change from your work clothes to your show attire. Dress professional! You should look the part of a youth livestock exhibitor. Dress neatly and wear appropriate jeans or slacks. Wear a nice button-down or polo shirt that will make you look sharp! In some areas youth wear 4-H logo shirts that are attractive. Hats are generally not a good idea and not recommended for the show ring. "Dressing for Success" will give you a sense of pride AND will improve performance.

Enter the show ring promptly when your class is called and have the proper equipment. Be sure to have the correct exhibitor number, show stick, show halter, and scotch comb. Know where to line up and how the classes will move through the show ring. If you are not in the first class, I would highly recommend you watch a class or two to learn specific techniques or show style the judge prefers. The advanced exhibitor is able to adapt to any situation and provide the judge with exactly what he/she is looking for on that particular day.

Generally cattle are lined up side by side to start a class. When pulling into line, look where you will be and head into that position. Do not simply follow the person in front of you as this usually ends up in an "S" configuration. You can end up brushing against the calf that was in front of you as you pull into line. When pulling into line, "check" your calf a few feet before reaching your destination to slow the animal. To "check" your animal, simply lift up slightly on the halter so that the animal knows you are about to stop.



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As you enter the ring follow the ring steward's directions. If you are third or fourth in the ring, line up even with the other calves, leaving three or four feet on both sides of your animal. This allows ample room for all exhibitors to set up their calves. Smoothly, yet quickly, get your calf set up as discussed earlier with the head held high. Be alert, keep a close eye on your calf, keep the feet set square, and know where the judge is located. If your calf is not set square and the judge is nearby, set your calf up. Most judges will wait for you to present your calf to its optimum. Always allow the judge to see the view he or she is seeking. Try not to get between the judge and the animal.

When it is time to walk the cattle –

Move as the judge or ring steward instructs. Most likely you will pull your calf up to the rail, turn left, and follow right behind the tail of the other cattle in the side-by-side line.

Assist the exhibitors in front of you in moving a calf if they are having trouble. Tap the calf's rump with your stick, or preferably put your show stick in your right hand and twist the tail of the calf

in front of you with your left. Let your calf walk out freely. Move at an easy pace, not too slow or too fast. Being courteous to others is a must!

When it is time to stop on the profile –

- **Stop in a straight line head to tail.** Avoid positioning your calf too close to the rail. Remember to "check" the calf and then stop by lifting the head. Allow 4 to 6 feet between your calf and the one in front. This allows the judge space to move freely around the cattle and helps to prevent calves from mounting or disturbing others in the line. Get your calf relaxed by scratching them with the show stick.
- **Position the feet as discussed earlier; keep the top line level and the calf's head up.**
- **Locate the judge and wait calmly.** Do not "saw" your calf in half with rapid stick movement while waiting for the judge. Use slow deliberate strokes with the show stick. Do not make noises or rattle the chain of the halter.

The judge may handle the cattle and ask a few questions. As the judge moves around your animal, move a half step back to allow the judge the full view. Be prepared to answer questions about your animal: weight, birth date, breed, pregnancy status if showing a breeding age heifer etc. Answer questions correctly and with confidence.

If your animal has not moved and the judge has gone to the next animal, use the scotch comb to fix the hair that has been messed up. If the animal has moved or gotten out of line, pull your animal out in a clockwise circle in the ring and move the animal back into line. Set the animal up and then fix the hair. It is more important to first have the animal set correctly and looking its best as the hair may be minor compared to how the animal is standing. Try to avoid continually moving your calf out of line. As a judge, the profile view is the most important view I can have to evaluate cattle. Moving out of line too frequently makes the judge's job more difficult.

Be alert and aware of the judge. Look for a sign or motion to be pulled into line for the placing. This may be another profile line or side by side. As the judge pulls cattle from the profile line, empty spaces will occur. If space between cattle becomes empty, move forward in line. Remember to allow proper distance between

calves, and set the calf up at its best. By moving forward and filling the empty spaces, it becomes easier for the judge to make comparisons.

When turning an animal --

Always turn to the right (clockwise) unless the ring steward gives other instructions. Pushing the calf's head away from you prevents the possibility of the calf stepping on your foot, causing harm to you or the calf. Most of the time cattle will respond favorably by PUSHING, not PULLING!

Once led into a side by side line you are nearing the end of the class. Pull into the side by side line as discussed earlier, and set the animal up. Be alert as sometimes positions may be switched.



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On occasion, you may be directed to change positions. Note that you pass back through the same hole you left, then to the proper position. If positioned up to a rail, do not turn around in the line. Back the calf out by pushing back on the halter with your left hand and applying pressure with your right at the point of the shoulder. Pull into the line at the instructed position.

When the judge starts his reasons continue to present your calf and listen to the judge's critique about others performance as well as your own. Depending on the show you may be "called back" for division finals. By carefully listening to the judge you may be able to pick up helpful advice for your next time in the ring. Leave the ring in an orderly manner as instructed by the ring person and pick up your awards.

Final thoughts...

Exit the ring as instructed and in a professional manner. Congratulate others in the class. Remember, showing cattle is competitive, just like many other events in life. You are exposing yourself to the public and are on "display" for all to witness. The impression you leave with others (the judge, show personnel, competitors, 4H leaders, family, and friends) can be positive OR negative.

I would strongly suggest that you treat others with RESPECT and that you WIN or LOSE graciously.

Showing cattle is a privilege that few young people have the opportunity to experience. YOU should be honored to be so blessed!

Reference cited: *Beef Showmanship Guide-The Judging Connection.com*
http://www.thejudgingconnection.com/pdfs/Beef_Showmanship_Guide.pdf

Additional resources from WSU publications related to 4-H Beef Projects:
<https://pubs.wsu.edu/ListItems.aspx?CategoryID=280>
Curriculum for 4-H Beef Project: <http://www.4-hmall.org/Category/beef.aspx>

<http://www.4-hmall.org/Product/beef/exploring-cattle-health-and-husbandry/08455.aspx>

Next week: Swine Showmanship

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