

## Lincoln/East Adams County Weekly 4-H Article



By Randy Williams, Lincoln/East Adams 4-H Program Coordinator

Article XI

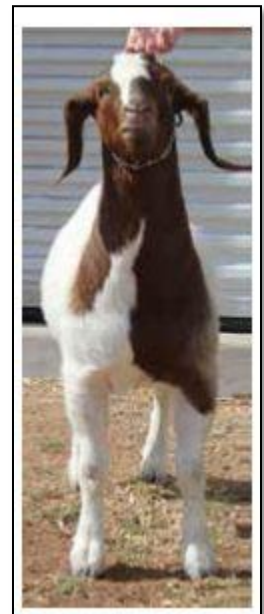
August 5, 2016

### Market Goat Showmanship (Part III)

#### *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. Animals can detect differences in water, just as humans can, and could refuse to drink strange water. This will cause the animal to become de-hydrated, and it may hurt its performance. Some exhibitors use a flavor additive (kool-aid etc.) 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 prior, 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 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 (except during extreme warm summer months). 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.

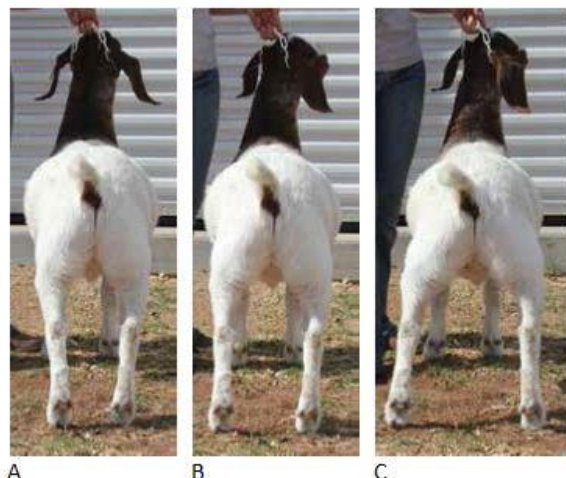
### ***Moving around the show ring***

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 rearview, 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 1). Set front legs after rear legs are in good position to balance the animal.



*Figure 1. Correct leg position, rear-view. A = legs too narrow, B = legs perfect, C = legs too wide.*

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 rearview. 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 2 demonstrates correct and incorrect spacing between goats.

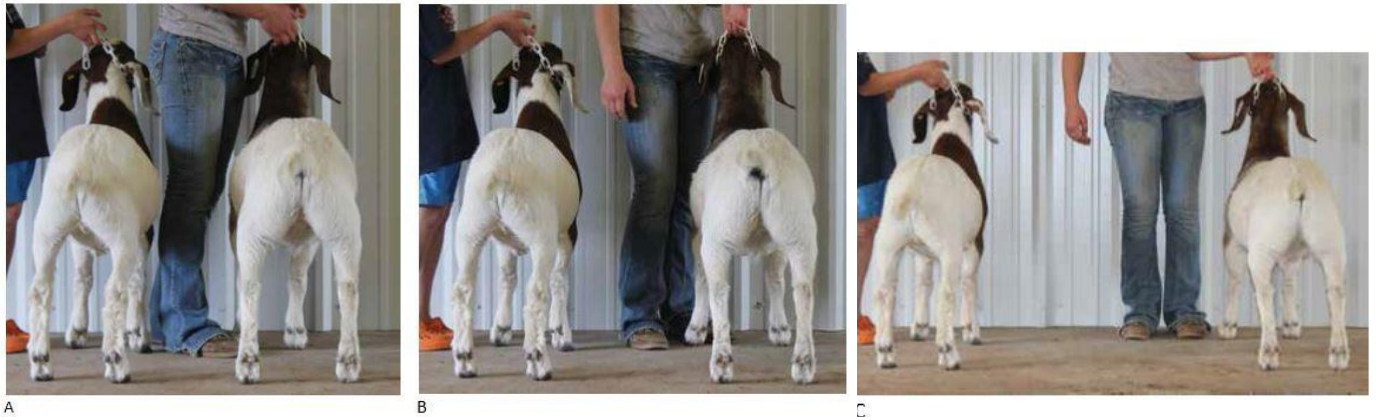
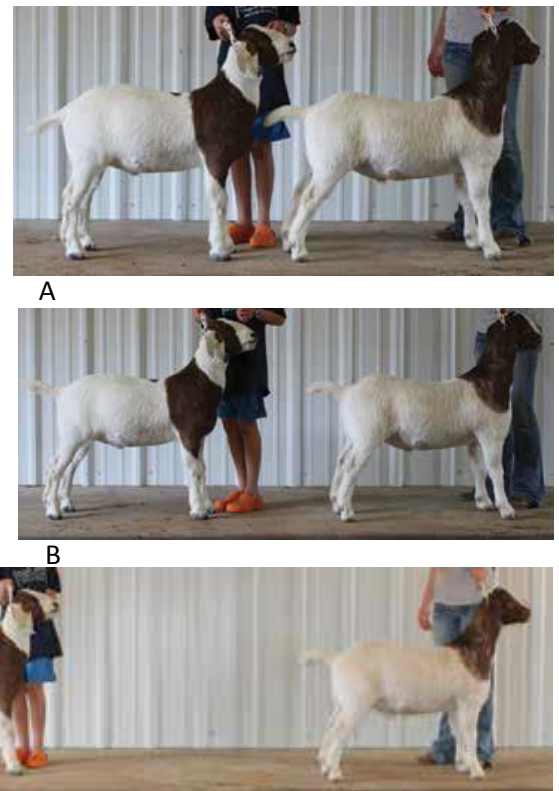


Figure 2. Animal spacing, rear-view. A = too close together, B = perfect spacing, C = too far apart.

### 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. Figure 3 demonstrates spacing. 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 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. 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.



C  
Figure 3. 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 4). 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 5). Use the right hand to place the right foot and the left hand to place the left foot. Smaller 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.



Figure 4. Perfect spacing and stance, front-view.

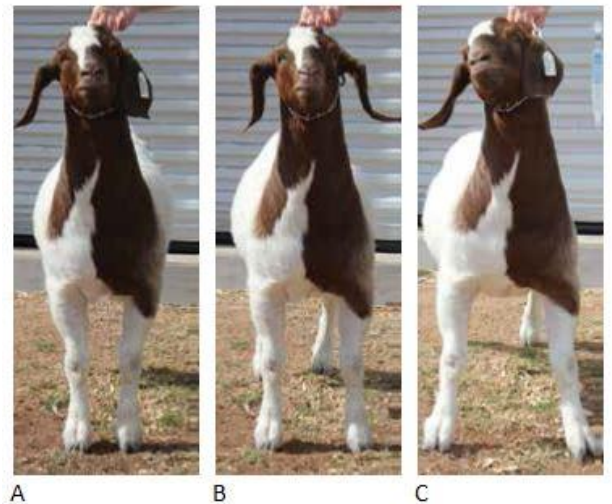


Figure 5. Foot placement, front-view. A = legs too narrow, B = legs perfect, C = legs too wide.



Figure 6. Do not raise the goat's ears.

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 6) and offers no advantage.

Moving goats from one point to another is just as important as correct positioning of their feet and bracing. 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 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.

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 top line, 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.

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.

### **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 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.

### ***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 not be showing.

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 4-H 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 article 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.

## **Credit:**

*Brian R. Faris, Ph.D., Market Goat Showmanship from Start to Finish, Kansas State University, November 2012.*

## **Additional resources related to 4-H Goat Projects:**

<https://pubs.wsu.edu/ListItems.aspx?Keyword=goat>

<http://www.4-hmall.org/Category/meat-goat.aspx>

<http://www.4-hmall.org/Category/dairy-goat.aspx>

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