

Lincoln/East Adams County Weekly 4-H Article

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Article VIII

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Market Lamb Showmanship (Part III)

Time to Show...

Appropriate dress

Lamb exhibitors do not have to follow a specific dress code unless an individual show requires a certain type of dress. Following are some suggested ideas for dressing for the show ring:

- Dress neatly and professionally. Dress comfortably, yet appropriately for the show ring.
- Wear a long-sleeved, button-front shirt or blouse. In extremely hot weather, a short-sleeved, button-front shirt is permissible. It is more professional than a polo-type shirt. The shirt should be tucked in.
- Wear clean dress pants or jeans with a belt.
- Spaghetti-strings, low-cut tops, blouses or T-shirts, and worn, ripped, or faded jeans have no place in the show ring.
- Wear clean, nice-looking shoes or boots. They should be chosen for comfort and practicality 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 will make a positive impression on a judge.
- Hats and caps should not be worn in the ring.
- All grooming equipment should be left at the animal's pen or in a show box.

Moving around the show ring

Showmanship is a mental game. An outstanding showman is 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 lamb, the judge, ring steward(s), other showmen, other lambs, areas in and outside the show ring, and situations that might develop unexpectedly. Showmen or exhibitors must maintain mental focus on each of these factors while appearing calm and moving easily around the show ring. An experienced showman will 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 lambs. Most judges establish a pattern in the first two classes and use that method to evaluate animals throughout the day.

While waiting to enter a class, a 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 lamb with its head held high. Lambs should be moved slowly and easily around the ring, allowing the judge to evaluate each animal before moving to the next lamb. The showman should look ahead and determine where they are going, then return focus to the judge.

Once inside the show ring, everything outside it should be blocked – except potential distractions to the animal that might impair the showman’s ability to present it. Examples are high-traffic areas, a crowd of people along the edge of the show ring, or anything that might cause the lamb to become excited and stop showing properly. Parents, siblings, volunteers, or others who may be trying to coach the showman should have confidence in their youth, and youth should have faith in themselves that preparation for the show was completed at home in practice sessions. No additional coaching is required. Ringside coaching is distracting to the judge and interferes with the showman’s presentation of the animal. A ring steward will generally assist exhibitors and their lambs 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 lead exhibitors into one of two formations: head-in/rear-view or profile/side-view/head to tail (Figure 1). In either position, be careful not to get covered up or “lost” in a corner of the ring.



Figure 1. Head-In/Rear-View (left) or Profile/Side-View/Head to Tail (right).

Head-In/Rear-View

When exhibitors are leading lambs 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). 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. The lamb should be braced anytime the judge is evaluating it. In this position, the lamb can be braced from either side.

Profile/Side-View/Head to Tail

Exhibitors might be asked to present their lambs on a side-view to allow the judge to analyze the lamb’s profile. Lambs should have their back feet placed first and immediately start bracing. Maintain a slight brace when animals are on a side-view. Animals should always be kept in a straight line. Do not push your lamb out of line toward the judge in an effort to be seen. The judge will find the right lamb. Showmen should remember to check the lamb’s feet. Always make sure lambs are set correctly whenever they are being viewed by the judge. If a foot is

significantly misplaced while the judge is evaluating the animal, it must be corrected immediately, and bracing should begin again. If you are participating in a large class, allow your lamb to relax when the judge is not evaluating it. If the lamb moves a foot out of place, do not move the foot back immediately. Instead, wait until the judge is about to evaluate the lamb again and then correctly reset its feet. Overworking or constantly resetting a lamb's feet may lead to an aggravated, uncooperative lamb.

Front-View

A judge may choose to walk around in front of the lambs to get a front-view and evaluate each lamb on structural correctness and muscling through the front end of the lamb. Stand beside the shoulder opposite the judge and face the same direction as the lamb (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Front-view positioning of lamb and showman.

Correctly place the lamb's front feet so he does not stand too wide or narrow; hold the lamb's head so a straight line can be drawn from nose to tail. Do not step away from the animal because some control over the lamb will be lost, and the showman's movement tends to pull the lamb's head out of line from its body. Hold the lamb's head high as the judge analyzes him. The lamb's ears may be held parallel or lifted slightly above parallel to the ground, but should not be held erect or pointing straight up as this distracts from the animal's appearance.

The showman should stand straight and tall when presenting a lamb. Bending over decreases control over the lamb and will cause strain on the showman's back. If the showman chooses, he/she should wait until the judge passes the lamb and one or two more before slowly moving to the side opposite the judge. Moving any sooner may distract the judge and block the view of the lamb if the judge wants to compare animals. It is not mandatory that a showman change sides. If the showman is positioned correctly, the front of the sheep can be seen by the judge without any interference by the exhibitor, regardless of the side chosen. A showman should be prepared to brace his/her lamb as the judge returns to the rear-view of the lambs.

Moving lambs 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. Lambs should be turned slightly and pushed out of line before proceeding to the desired location with the lamb between the showman and judge. Do not push the lamb straight back or it will think you are signaling it to brace, and it will not move correctly. The showman should maintain eye contact with the judge while glancing at the desired destination. When showmen are required to change sides, they must move around the front of the lamb. Do not step behind the lamb. Showmen may move between the lamb and judge for a moment to position themselves on the correct side. The lamb should not be turned completely around just to keep it between the showman and judge. By moving quickly, yet smoothly, between the lamb 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 lamb more quickly and easily than by turning the lamb around.

If a judge asks to have a lamb moved toward and away from him, the showman should make sure to walk the lamb in a straight line in both directions. Lambs 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. While exhibiting a lamb, never squat or kneel. At one time, the idea of kneeling or squatting was thought to make the animal appear taller or to keep a tall showman from making the 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.

Be courteous in the ring. Do not crowd other showmen or their lambs. Try not to cover or hide another showman's lamb.

Show Summary

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, 4-H Volunteers, Agriculture Teachers, and 4-H Extension Directors should encourage their youth to continue to work hard, promote good sportsmanship, and be seen as positive role models for other 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. Don't do anything that will tarnish kids. Instead, make them the shining result of a successful show career that will lead to a bright future." Adults should always 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.

Credit:

Brian R. Faris, *Market Lamb Showmanship from Start to Finish*, Kansas State University, July 2008.

Additional resources related to 4-H Sheep Projects:

<https://pubs.wsu.edu/ListItems.aspx?CategoryID=288>

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

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