

Lincoln/East Adams County Weekly 4-H Article

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



Article 1

March 3, 2016

Beef, Sheep, Swine and Goat Showmanship

This is the first of several articles to follow that will address many of the current issues and events relative to your involvement as a 4-H Program Volunteer or 4-H Member.

I have been involved in the youth animal industry as a 4-H and FFA member, a father of three boys who showed steers, lambs, and hogs, an Agriculture Teacher and a Beef Cattle Judge in the Pacific Northwest for many years. The information forthcoming is simply material that I have acquired through observation of professionals and junior showman from all over the country, from the Fort Worth Stock Show, to the American Royal in Kansas City to the National Western in Denver and many other breed and market shows across the United States.

I have chosen to begin a series of these topics by sharing with you important aspects of Youth Animal Showmanship, namely Beef, Sheep, Swine and Goats, to better prepare YOU for success at upcoming spring livestock shows.

Feel free to share!

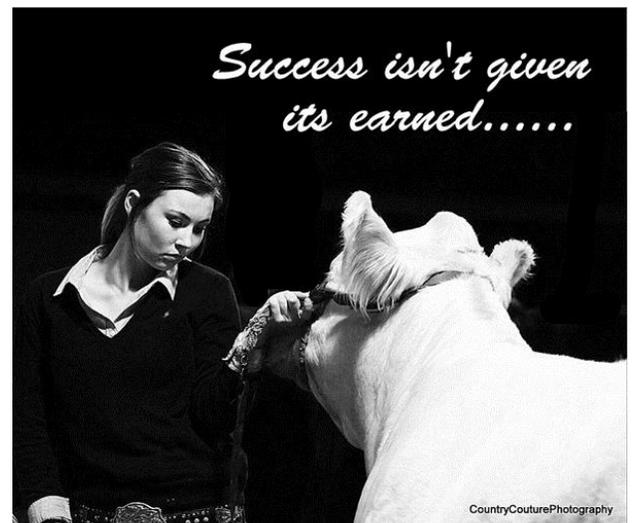
Beef Cattle Showmanship (Part 1)

A good showman is a person that has a sense or knack for an effective presentation of an animal.

Showmanship is the one area of exhibiting beef cattle over which you have the most control. In showmanship, you are judged on your abilities to control and present your steer or heifer to bring out its best characteristics.

Advanced planning and hard work are the keys to becoming a good show-person. Showing beef cattle not only generates enthusiasm and competition in the show ring, but also teaches valuable lessons that can be used in day to day life. These lessons include responsibility, learning about work and

determination to reach a goal, winning graciously and losing with dignity.



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Start Early

Success in beef cattle showmanship starts at home. The first step is to halter break your calf. Properly put a rope halter on the calf and allow the lead rope to drag on the ground for two to three days. This makes the calf aware of the halter. You may want to pad the halter around the top of the nose and chin to avoid injury.

Next, tie the calf for an hour, working up to three to five hours a day. I feel it is best to tie your calf's head up relatively high to a rail fence with a very short lead. This will train your calf to keep his head up and not allow him to have too much freedom at the end of the rope. It will allow YOU to have and maintain better control of your calf in and around the barn, wash rack, clipping chute and most importantly, in the show ring! Note: YOU MUST STAY WITH AND MONITOR YOUR CALF WHEN TIEING HIGH ON THE RAIL FOR THE FIRST FEW TIMES!! During this time, brush and talk to your calf. This will assist in calming the calf and allow it to become accustomed to you. Trick! With some cattle that are not really all that gentle in the initial stages I have had a lot of luck with using a common leaf rake to stroke the animals side, back, and legs. This allows you to touch them without by being too close and can avoid YOU getting stepped on or kicked.

Training your calf to walk, stop, and set up easily will take time and patience. First, try to lead the calf in a small, secure area. Then begin leading the calf around the barnyard. Eventually you can train your calf to profile and respond to the show-stick.

Practice in several short segments, not long drawn out sessions. After the calf is used to being walked and set up, practice having another person move in close to handle the calf with you at the halter. This will allow the calf to remain calm under a judge's close inspection. TRICK! Have someone else hold your calf while you stand back to observe him so that you can see exactly how your calf will look on the profile. Some cattle look better if you stagger their back feet a little more than normal, especially those that are a bit high in their hip. Each animal is just a little bit different.

Using the Halter

VERY IMPORTANT! You should be using a GOOD rope and show halter. By good I mean one that is commonly used by professionals. Sullivan's Supply (not endorsing this company...there are others) is a great resource that many of my former students used. They provide the industry standard for all necessary show equipment for all species.

The halter should be properly placed on the calf's head with the lead strap on the calf's left side. The halter strap that crosses over the muzzle or nose of the calf should be approximately

two inches below the eye. Rope halters and show halters can be adjusted for proper fit. Do not have the halter too big so that the nose cross piece is down by the mouth.

When leading, you should be on the calf's left side with the halter in your right hand. Your hand should be six to ten inches from the animal's head. With show halters, this is usually at the junction of the chain and leather strap. Firmly grip the lead so your thumb is up and toward you with your little finger nearest the chain. Your wrist is stronger this way and provides better control over the animal.

The strap length should be long enough for control, but not long enough to touch the ground. If the strap of the show halter can touch the ground, you or the calf may step on it and it becomes awkward to switch hands.

DO NOT wrap the halter strap around your hand or fingers in order to prevent any injury. It is acceptable, however, to hold a longer strap in the left hand as your leading the animal around the show ring. I would suggest even cutting excess off so that a resulting shorter strap provides a more "professional look" for you and your calf.

Next week we will talk about:

Rinsing Your Calf and Working Hair

Using the Show Stick

Setting Up Your Calf

Showtime

Walking Your Calf

Setting Up on the Profile

If you have any questions or hints of your own to share, feel free to contact me,

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