

Market Lamb Showmanship

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Introduction

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 livestock showing over which the exhibitor has the most control. In showmanship you are judged on your abilities to control and present your lamb to bring out its best characteristics. Advanced planning, practice and hard work are the key to becoming a good exhibitor. Lamb showmanship not only generates enthusiasm in the show ring, but also teaches many 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. This will take practice at home and having someone act as a judge by handling the lamb as if at a show.

Appropriate Dress

Dress neatly. Leather boots should be worn for safety and appearance. If the lamb steps on your foot, the lamb's foot will slip off a leather boot much easier than a tennis shoe. Wear clean jeans or slacks.

Wear a neat button-down or polo shirt. No camouflage shirts or T-shirts should be worn. The shirt should be tucked in. Wear a belt for neatness. Leave hats, wool cards, and other grooming equipment back at the grooming area. Hats, may distract the judge's concentration. Wool cards are very dangerous, especially in crowded areas around the show ring, so the final touches on the lamb should be done before it is time for your class. Your planning and neat appearance will help make a positive impression on the judge.

Showtime

Before the show, walk over the show ring to find the high and low spots of the show ring surface. This will help make sure the lamb is set up going uphill and not in a hole.

Be sure to enter the show ring promptly and that the lamb is led from the left hand side. Small exhibitors may use a halter. However, more advanced exhibitors should lead the lamb with their left hand under its chin in place of a halter.

Quickly yet smoothly, set the lamb up so that all four feet are at the corners and the lamb's weight is distributed evenly over its legs (Figure 1). When setting up the lamb, do not get down on your knees because you will have less control of your lamb. Small exhibitors may stand and use

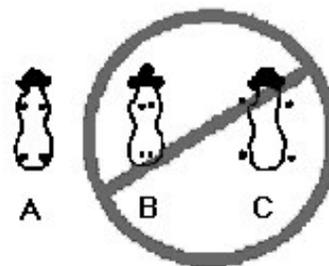


Figure 1. Figure A shows the lamb's feet squarely placed beneath the lamb. Figures B and C are incorrect.

their feet to set the lamb's legs. Larger exhibitors may use their hands to set up the lamb. Set the rear legs first and then set the front legs.

Once the lamb is set up, be sure the head is held up. Then locate the judge. Remain standing in front of your lamb when the judge is viewing the lambs from the rear (Figure 2.A). Never place your hand on the lamb's back or the base of the neck; this will obstruct the judge's view of the lamb's top. As the judge moves around to the right side (Figure 2.B) and around in front of the lamb, move to the left side of the lamb, so it is between you and the judge (Figure 2-C).

When the judge is in front of the lamb, remain on the lamb's left side, so the judge can see the front view. Be sure to keep the head high and in line with the lamb's body. You may hold the head up with the halter or with your left hand under the lamb's jaw. As the judge moves to the left of the lamb, move back to the front of the lamb to give the judge a full view of the entire animal. Do not move to the right side of the lamb (Figure 2.D). When in front of the lamb, you have more control and this position will provide the side view that the judge seeks.

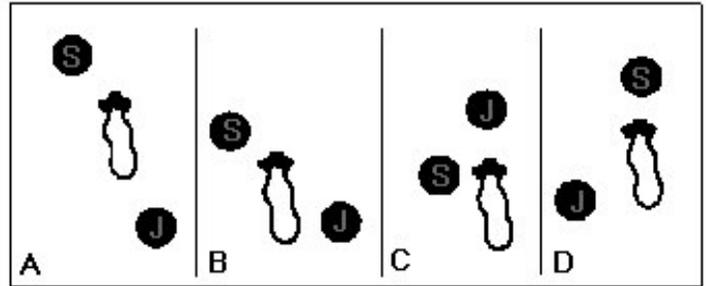


Figure 2. Provide the judge with a clear view of your lamb.

Handling the Lamb

Be ready for the judge to handle your lamb. Train the lamb to brace or push against your knee. When the lamb braces, its muscles tighten up to make it feel firmer and the muscles appear larger and more pronounced.

To brace the lamb, stand in front and hold it securely with its nose pointing upward (Figure 3). Gently push back on the lamb with your knee placed in the lamb's breast and shoulder area. When bracing the lamb, all four feet should remain on the ground. Do not pick the lamb up so that the front feet are off the ground. This does not give you an advantage. It is an example of poor showmanship. After the judge finishes handling the lamb, set it up in line with the others.

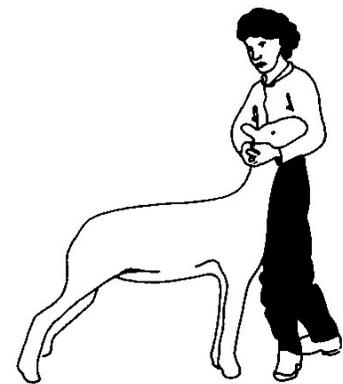


Figure 3. Brace your lamb by pushing back on its breast and shoulder area with your knee or leg.

Moving the Lamb

After handling the lambs, the judge will indicate what is to be done next. Most likely the judge will want you to walk the lamb. Be sure that the lamb is under control and is between you and the judge. If your lamb does not lead, gently reach back and lift up on the lamb's dock (Figure 4). If an exhibitor ahead is having problems, help that person. Never whip the lamb with the halter rope or grab the lamb by the skin.



Figure 4. Lift the lamb's dock to encourage your lamb to walk.

Once the judge requests that you stop for the side view, set your lamb up as discussed earlier. Small exhibitors should stand in front or on the lamb's left side to keep control. Older, larger exhibitors may squat or stand on the lamb's left side. Standing is preferred. Do not put your knees on the ground; squat so you may get up quickly and maintain control of your lamb. Stay alert; the judge may handle the lamb again or motion to move to another line. Once you are pulled to the placing line, remember the class is not over. Be sure the lamb is set up and looks its best.

The judge may decide to place the lambs differently after one last look while all lambs are lined up side by side. If you are asked to move in the line, Figure 5 shows what should be done for different situations. Be sure to line your lamb up in a straight line from the first lamb set up, as illustrated in Figure 5.

Once the judge starts giving reasons, the class is over, but exhibitors should continue to work hard and display good sportsmanship. Congratulate the class winners and those who stood ahead of you. Ask if you can handle the lambs that placed above you. This will allow you to learn what to look for in your next lamb project.

Finally, remember this is a learning experience. Leave the ring knowing that you have given this project your best effort. Learn from your mistakes, watch other exhibitors, and improve your skills for the next show.

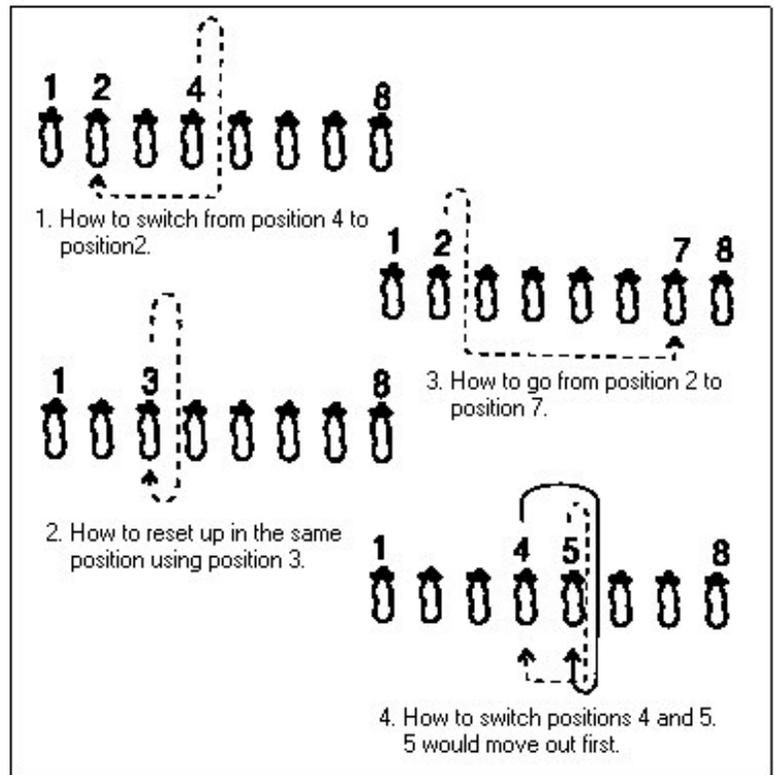


Figure 5