

# SHOWMANSHIP —

## Getting the most out of your goat

By Judy Kaye

Showmanship is a class offered at most shows, but more than that it is showing your goat and yourself so that the judge can see your animal always looking its best. How is this done? Here are some Steps that have proven to be very successful over the years.

**Step 1. Picking your goat.** A goat that is structurally correct and up headed is an easier goat to show. A goat with flashy markings will catch the judge's eye. You also need a goat with an easy going personality, although "bottle babies" are difficult to show. This is because it is "all about them" and a showmanship goat needs to be a team player.

**Step 2. Get to work.** The main ingredient to showmanship is hard work and lots of it. 99% of the work is done at home before you even go to the show. You and your goat need to be a team and work together.

- First he must lead. Actually he needs to walk with you. I like to teach a goat to lead on the halter first. This is also helpful during show season because he will then be used to the halter and being tied up. Your wether may need to be tied many times during the show and tying your goat up with a halter is also the best way to teach him to lead. NEVER leave a tied animal alone; NOT even for a minute.
- When you first start halter training him and have the halter on him brush your goat with your hand all over his body. This will calm him down.
- Then lead him a couple of steps over to his feed pan. I like the kind of pans that hang or clip to the fence. Keep moving the feed pan a few feet further away making a longer walk. Then walk him back to his pen. It is best with a young goat to do this several times a day.
- After he is accustomed to being led by halter then you can start training him to show with a chain.

**Step 3. Practice showing.** Once your wether has learned to lead, you can head out to the practice yard.

- Practice daily walking around the ring pretending you are in class.
- Get your wether used to you handling his feet and legs.
- Keep his head high; this will help him not to move.



*Walk with your goat. Hand is palm up. Chain is as high as it will go. Goat's neck is straight up. Walk in a straight line, while keeping an eye on the judge.*

- Set the hind legs squarely first then adjust the front legs. In an actual class you will set the legs closest to the judge first. If the judge is coming down the front of the line make sure his front feet are set. If the judge is coming down from the rear then set the rear legs first.

- Practice changing sides and work with your goat on the off side. Then he won't freak out when you do this in the ring.

- If possible practice showing with other students and goats. This will help your goat get sensitized to the show ring atmosphere. There are generally many showmanship practice sessions available before fair-time or ask your 4-H/FFA advisor to set some up.



*Line up with the first person in line, no matter what everybody in between is doing.*

- Line up with the first goat in the line. That is the one the judge stopped and where he wants all others to be. Even if everyone else is setting up crooked.
- When walking away from the judge, remember to take a look over your shoulder to make sure you are walking in a straight line and show that you are paying attention.
- Use the whole practice space. Go clear out to the corners when walking so you have plenty of room to maneuver.
- When you stop, leave some space between you and the goat ahead of you.
- And when the goat ahead of you gets pulled out of line, move forward to fill the space. Judges often place the class from last to first, so hopefully you will have to move forward lots of times!

The two things I have found most helpful to successful practicing are:

1. Place a large mirror in the barn or practice area. This way a child can see how they look and make changes right away. The child and the goat get the feel for how the right way looks.
2. The other is to have a parent or leader video tape them. The video works really good at shows. This also cuts down on arguments.

**Step 4. Know your goat's strengths and weaknesses.** A big





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part of showmanship is to show off your goat's good points and reduce his weak points. Of course we all want a perfect goat to show, but that "perfect one" hasn't been made yet. I once heard a top wether breeder and judge say in his reasons, "If you want to win showmanship under me bring a structurally incorrect goat and make him look the best you can. Anyone can make the grand champion wether look good."

- If your goat is a little weak or saggy in his top you can kneel or squat down and scratch his belly. This will bring his topline up.
- If he is a little narrow make sure to set his legs wide apart.
- We like to keep our wethers sheared in the spring and summer months. When you shear your goat you will know the color pattern of his skin. This is helpful as some wethers look better with a little more hair to cover dark spots, too much fat, or not enough cover.
- When you shear before the fair also trim his feet, delice and deworm him.

**Step 5. At the Show.** Here are a few things that have worked for us while at the show.

- Bed down his pen (use shavings if possible), hang feeders, and arrange for water. If only straw is allowed consider a piece of Astroturf or carpet to prevent him from eating the straw.



*Kneel or Squat to level the topline and set yourself apart. Neck is straight up. Fingers are scratching the belly. Eyes are on judge. Stay on balls of your feet so you can get up quickly - never put your knees on the ground.*

- Cut your goat back a little on his feed. He is going to be a little stressed and will eat better when you want him to eat if he is a little hungry.
- Check the weigh board so you know when your class is - never be late for class - never bring a wet goat to class.
- Few people think about these next items:
  - o Find out what ring you are showing in and walk that ring the day or night before the show.
  - o Find the holes, high spots and mud holes. You never want to set your goat in a hole or in mud. Find them and stay away from them.
  - o Second know who is in your class and who your competition is.

My final bit of advice is to always be a good showman. Showmanship is how you act and behave inside and outside the ring. Smile humbly when you win and congratulate the winner if you don't. Have fun. The friends you make showing will be friends for a lifetime.

If you have questions or a topic you would like me to cover, do not hesitate to Ask Judy: [wrr@jps.net](mailto:wrr@jps.net). I also have lots of Resources on my website: [www.whiterailranch.com](http://www.whiterailranch.com).

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