



# North Dakota 4-H Livestock Showmanship Guide

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Showmanship is the art of feeding, training, fitting, grooming and showing animals to bring out their best characteristics to make them more presentable in competitive exhibitions. This is not a rule book, but a guide to help youth learn the standard methods of showing livestock, specifically beef, dairy, sheep, goats, swine, poultry and rabbits.

Showmanship contests are based on preparation of the animal, the animal's apparent training, and the appearance and abilities of the showperson. Animal conformation should not be considered unless it affects the way an animal is fitted and shown.

Fine or technical points need not be overemphasized to the point they are given more weight than the effective presentation of a clean and well-trained animal. Minor infractions should not result in disqualification of an exhibitor. Example: turning the wrong way.

In any showmanship contest, the judge's decision is final. The judge may use different criteria than what is in this guide in selecting top show exhibitors.

**For showmanship videos, visit the NDSU Extension 4-H YouTube channel.**

# Exhibitor Responsibilities

Owning livestock and exhibiting livestock at shows is a privilege that comes with responsibility. All animal owners are responsible for the health, welfare and safety of their animals. Exhibitors are expected to provide adequate feed, water, bedding and housing for the comfort of their animals. Exhibitors are responsible for making arrangements for appropriate care if they are unable to be present.

The humane treatment of animals is expected, and abuse will not be tolerated. The comfort, health, welfare and safety of the animal must be addressed throughout the fair. Healthy, well-trained, non-stressed animals will perform better for the handler. Exhibitors are expected to handle their animals in a gentle and calm manner and not create undue excitement in the vicinity of other livestock or people.

4-H recognizes the value of animal projects. Some county 4-H programs in North Dakota allow leased projects so that a greater number of members can participate with animal projects. The exhibitor is responsible for understanding the lease agreement requirements, signing the lease agreement and following the requirements of the lease agreement. Check with your local Extension office to identify options available to your family in your county.

North Dakota 4-H'ers are expected to abide by the North Dakota 4-H Policy Manual as an exhibitor. Ask your local Extension agent or 4-H club leader for a copy of the North Dakota 4-H Policy Manual.

In addition, exhibitors must agree to follow the **International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) National Code of Show Ring Ethics** (first paragraph shown here):

*Exhibitors of animals at livestock shows shall at all times conduct themselves with honesty and good sportsmanship. Their conduct in this competitive environment shall always reflect the highest standards of honor and dignity to promote the advancement of agricultural education. This code applies to junior as well as open-class exhibitors who compete in structured classes of competition. This code applies to all livestock offered in any event at a livestock show. In addition to the "IAFE National Code of Show Ring Ethics," fairs and livestock shows may have rules and regulations which they impose on the local, county, state, provincial and national levels.*

Please ensure you read the North Dakota State Fair 4-H Division Exhibit book in its entirety to understand rules, ownership deadlines and other critical information.



(Photo by Leigh Ann Skurupey, NDSU)

## The Rewards of Showmanship

Showmanship not only generates enthusiasm in the show ring, but also teaches many valuable lessons that can be used in day-to-day life. Attaining goals, success and rewards take practice and a lot of hard work at home and can become a reality by working with your livestock.

Valuable lessons gained from showmanship are:

- Responsibility
- Work ethic
- Determination to reach a goal
- Winning graciously
- Diligence
- Patience
- Self-confidence
- Teamwork
- Good sportsmanship
- Problem-solving
- Accepting setbacks with dignity

## Fairs and Shows

County fairs, Achievement Days and the North Dakota State Fair may have different guidelines and rules. Make sure you read the rules for the event you are attending. We highly encourage counties to follow the rules of the North Dakota State Fair. We strongly recommend that fairs follow the **International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) National Code of Show Ring Ethics** as stated in the North Dakota State Fair 4-H book.

## Biosecurity

What is biosecurity? “Bio” means life and “security” means safety or protection, so biosecurity means “protecting life.” Practicing good biosecurity means you do your part to reduce the chances of an infectious disease being spread. This includes the implementation of measures to prevent disease introduction into a healthy population of animals and limit the spread of a disease should it be introduced. Show that you **KARE** by practicing good biosecurity measures before, during and after your event. Anytime you travel with your livestock, keep in mind the importance of biosecurity.

- Keep things clean
- Avoid bringing disease home
- Resist borrowing items from others
- Educate yourself on signs of disease or sickness

## YQCA

Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) gives youth an opportunity for positive youth development in quality assurance. The YQCA program is a national multi-species quality assurance program for youth ages 8 to 21 with a focus on three core pillars of the livestock industry:

- Food safety
- Animal well-being
- Character development

**YQCA is required for youth who show pigs, beef cattle, dairy cattle, sheep, goats, rabbits and poultry at the North Dakota State Fair 4-H livestock shows.** 4-H'ers can complete their YQCA certification on the online module at [YQCA.org](http://YQCA.org). Sign in with your 4HOnline account to ensure that your YQCA training can be retrieved and synced to your 4HOnline account. You also may have the option to take the YQCA certification at an instructor-led training near your area. You can find a location when you register on [YQCA.org](http://YQCA.org). Visit our North Dakota 4-H website for more information.

## North Dakota State Fair

Refer to the North Dakota State Fair 4-H Division Exhibit list for show rules, animal ownership/lease date requirements and regulations for your animal. As an exhibitor, you are responsible for reading the rules prior to your show. Contact your local Extension agent to learn more.



## Proper Care of Animals

Treat all types of livestock with respect. Provide good care for your animals from the time you begin working with them until they are marketed or returned to a breeding program.

- Animals must be fed and watered at regular and reasonable intervals.
- Physical abuse to animals in the pens/stalls, in the show ring or anywhere else is **never** allowed.
- Treating animals improperly may result in disqualification from that show.
- Animals showing signs of any contagious diseases, prolapses, illness, skin disorders or other problems deemed unfit to be at a show by management or DVM may be asked to be removed from the fairgrounds. Removal will be at the owner's expense and the owner is responsible for finding suitable accommodations for animals for the duration of the fair. Livestock will be monitored throughout the fair and may be asked to leave at **anytime** due to health concerns or other issues.

## Ownership and Lease Deadlines for County 4-H Shows

### For the North Dakota State Fair 4-H Livestock shows:

Animals must be owned or leased and managed by the 4-H member who enters the animal. Animals exhibited must meet rules regarding the length of management.

Market beef animals must be owned or leased with daily management by the exhibitor by March 1 of the current year.

Beef breeding animals, dairy, swine, sheep and goat exhibits must be owned or leased with daily management by May 1 of the current year. Any animal born after May 1 must be a progeny animal owned from date of its birth by the exhibitor.

Poultry and rabbits do not have an ownership or lease deadline. However, exhibitors must have the animal to be shown in their possession a minimum of 30 days before their county show or the state fair show, whichever is held first. A May 1 guideline is suggested for all rabbits and poultry, except for those animals that would not be of appropriate age at the time.

These dates are set to ensure 4-H'ers can set goals and have a sufficient amount of time to teach, feed and work with their animal before the fair.

## Start Training Early

Doing well in showmanship in all species starts at home with setting goals. The first step is to halter break your project (excluding swine, poultry and rabbits). You will need to put a halter on your animal and be sure that the halter fits properly; not too tight so it hurts the animal and not too loose so you don't have control. Do not wrap the lead around your hand because if the animal spooks and runs, you could be injured.

Training your livestock to walk, stop and set up easily will take time and patience. You can start with trying to lead your animal to water or feed in a small pen. As your animal becomes more accustomed to being on a lead, try leading it out of the pen and around the yard. If you are showing beef, be sure to practice using your show stick; do not wait until the day of the show to use your show stick.

When practicing setting up your animal, have another person move in and handle the animal. This will help the animal stay calm under a judge's close inspection. With beef and dairy, practice with the show halter before the show. Show halters may be made differently and fit a bit differently, so you will want the animal accustomed to the halter prior to the show.

With your hog project, be sure to practice driving/walking with your project and using your show stick or whip to guide the hog where you want it to go so it is used to you working with it.

With poultry and rabbits, be sure to practice posing your animal so it is patient and comfortable.

Training an animal to lead, drive or pose will not happen overnight; this will take time, patience and practice, practice, practice!

## Cleanliness

- The best fit and most eye-appealing animals are always very clean. The animal's hair/feathers (outer appearance) should be free of dirt, dust, wood chips, straw and manure.
- Clean animal's ears; avoid getting liquid in them.
- Conditioner can protect the skin from drying out.
- Clean the hooves using a stiff brush and water.

## Grooming

- Additional credit should not be given for professional clipping.
- Refer to the grooming and fitting rules for the show at which you are going to exhibit.

## Clipping Livestock

See information under each species.

- Clipping animals correctly takes a lot of practice. Avoid trimming the animal too far ahead of the exhibition. Only clip animals in necessary areas. Incomplete clipping, such as missing spots, may affect the appearance of the animal and be factored into a showmanship placing. Professional clipping is frowned upon in 4-H shows, and extra consideration should not be given to show exhibitors who use professional fitters.

## Condition of Animal

- Proper conditioning (weight) of your animal is very important. Conditioning needs to start several months prior to show season. Animals that are over- or underconditioned do not show as well.
- Use market or breed standards when selecting your animal for show.
- Animals that have smaller and/or fewer faults usually show more competitively.

## Health of the Animal

- Monitor for signs of infection such as ringworm, warts and pinkeye. Consult a veterinarian for treatment. Animals that are infected may be rejected from exhibition.
- Control external parasites such as lice, ticks, mites, flies and mosquitoes regularly.

(Photos by Leigh Ann Skurupey, NDSU)



## Exhibitor

- **4-H Dress Code** – Dress according to show guidelines or the 4-H dress code found in the North Dakota 4-H Policy Manual, which is neatly dressed with a **solid-colored (green, gray, white or yellow) shirt and a 4-H emblem on the front**. Please refer to the North Dakota 4-H Policy Manual for more details. We recommend that exhibitors wear dark jeans. Boots/protective close-toed shoes are required for safety. Clothes and personal grooming need to be neat and clean.
- Exhibitors should have a basic knowledge of their project: age of the animal, breed of their project, feed ration and other general information of the project.
- Avoid bumping, crowding or hitting other animals. If your animal becomes unruly, remain calm, do not lose your temper and try not to get discouraged. Remember that **you** are a mentor to others and an ambassador to the industry.
- This is a learning experience. Congratulate winners, learn from your mistakes and remember that you are a winner by participating in something you enjoy.

## Exhibitor Traits to Achieve

- Be aware of your class schedule and when you are up for each class.
- Bring the animal into the ring promptly.
- Recognize the faults of the animal quickly and correct them.
- Work quickly but not abruptly.
- Be alert and responsive to the judge's and official's requests.
- Keep your focus inside the ring and not be distracted by people and disruptions outside the ring.

## Grievance/Protest Policy

- Differences in opinions will exist in any program. Refer to the show rules where you are exhibiting should you have a grievance to report.
- You also can refer to the *North Dakota 4-H Policy Manual* and look for "Grievances" as a guide to implement at your show.

# Showmanship in the Ring

Showing is presenting an animal in a manner that highlights the positive attributes of the animal and demonstrates the person's husbandry (animal care), knowledge and skills.

## Leading

- The animal needs to respond quickly to the exhibitor's commands.
- Never allow a large gap between you and the animal in front of you. Do not crowd the exhibitor ahead of you. Do not lead in front of other animals so that they cannot be seen by the judge.
- Exhibitors always should respond quickly and calmly when given the signal by the judge or ring steward.

## Showing in the Ring

- Train the animal so it can be moved quickly and easily into the correct position. Do not over-show. When posed well, the animal will show itself.
- Be natural. Over-showing and undue fussing and maneuvering are distracting to the judge, animal and audience.
- Do not crowd the exhibitor next to you. When you leading into a side-by-side position leave 3 to 4 feet on both sides of your animal to allow other exhibitors room to set up their animals (show ring size and number of contestants/animals will determine spacing).
- Keep an eye on your animal and always be aware of the judge's position. Try to avoid watching the judge too intently, but know where the judge is at all times.
- Be courteous and display good sportsmanship to other exhibitors. Do not block the judge's view of other exhibitors.
- Show the animal, not yourself.
- Showmanship should look effortless.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct to the judge, an animal or other exhibitors may result in disqualification.
- Keep showing until the entire class has been placed, the judge has given oral reasons, the class has been dismissed and you exit the ring.
- Enjoy the showing experience.

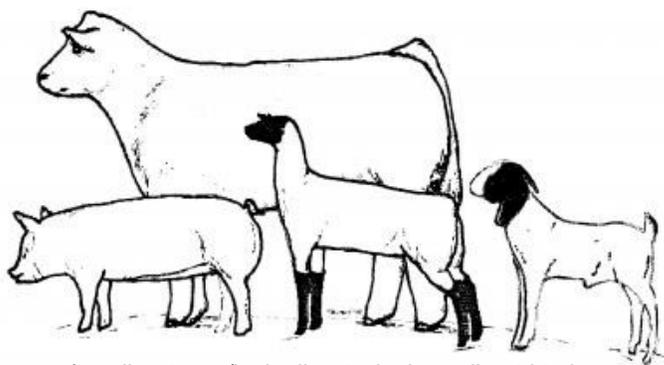
## Show the Animal to Best Advantage

- Quickly recognize the conformation faults of the animal you are leading or driving and work to overcome them.
- You may be asked to exchange your animal with another and show a different animal; treat that animal as if it were your own.



## Knowledge of Livestock

Each judge has a unique way to evaluate showmanship. Some judges evaluate solely on exhibitors' technique or skills in the show ring, while others use knowledge of the project in addition to showmanship techniques. Exhibitors should have basic knowledge of the characteristics they would like to change about the animal as well as the age, weight, breeding, basic industry knowledge, physical strengths and faults of the animal.



Source: [www.easyfreeclipart.com/junior-livestock-show-clipart.html](http://www.easyfreeclipart.com/junior-livestock-show-clipart.html)

## Fitting and Showing Beef Cattle

### Feeding the Calf



- Begin feeding your show calf a good growing ration several months before the show for proper weight gain and ideal condition. Ask someone with experience in feeding calves to help design a ration and determine how much to feed.
- Balance the calf's ration to its weight and condition for the most important shows of the season.
- Do not change feed when taking your calf to a show. Changing feed suddenly may cause your animal to become sick.
- Practice good biosecurity and avoid borrowing buckets, equipment, feed or troughs from others.
- Provide your calf with free-choice clean, cool water.

### Preparing Your Beef Animal for Show Day

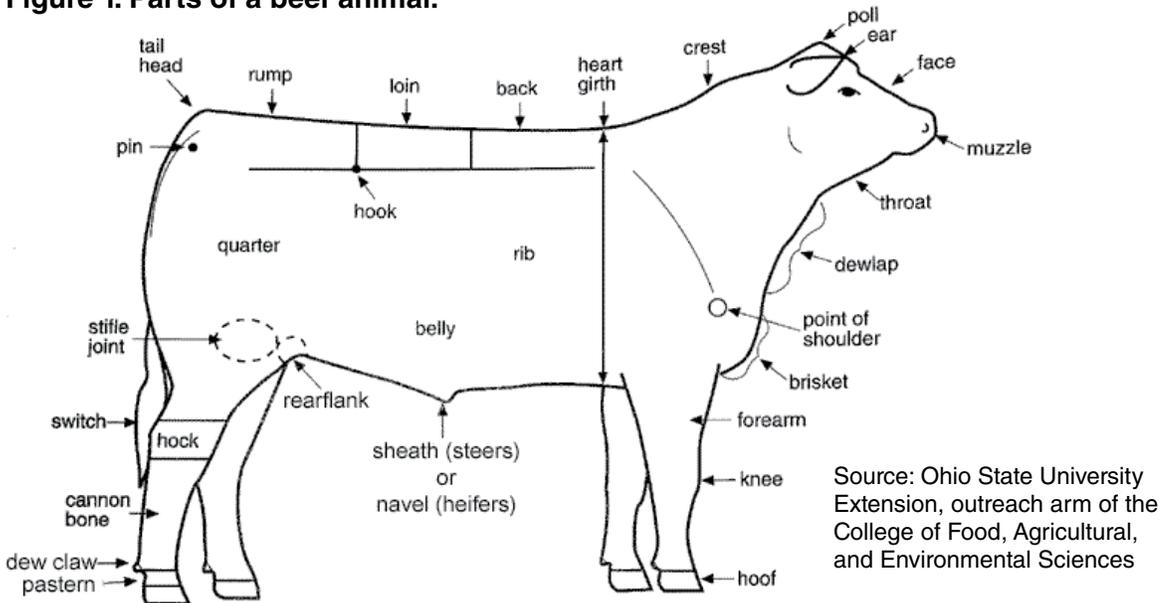
- Select a beef animal with correct conformation and breed characteristics.
- Begin training your calf with a nylon halter at least three months before the show.
- Tie calves with a slip knot for easy release if the calf needs to get free from a struggle. When halter breaking, tie your animal short with the nose somewhat up to help train it to keep its head up.
- Lead the calf on soft ground, not gravel or pavement, when training to avoid any lameness injuries.
- Lead the calf every day until it is well-trained and comfortable with being led.
- Developing a routine with your calf will help reduce stress on the animal. Excess stress on your calf could cause it to go off feed.



(Photos by Leigh Ann Skurupey, NDSU)

- After the calf is trained to lead, teach the calf to stand using a show stick. Use calm, deliberate strokes; do not “saw” your animal with rapid movements. Some animals may require using the show stick to apply pressure over the loin to drop the topline and provide a more preferred look from the side profile. Conversely, gentle pressure on the underline of the belly can assist with correcting a topline that may be weak in appearance.
- Practice with a leather show halter at least two weeks before the show.
- Slowly increase the amount of time your calf is tied. Tying the calf up during the day with appropriate rest and letting it loose in the evening is best. This can help give animals more stamina for show day. Never leave the tied calf unattended. An unwatched calf has a greater risk of injury.
- Practice leading your calf in and out of a trailer and take your animal for a ride in the trailer, if possible.

**Figure 1. Parts of a beef animal.**



## Appearance of Calf

### Beef Calves

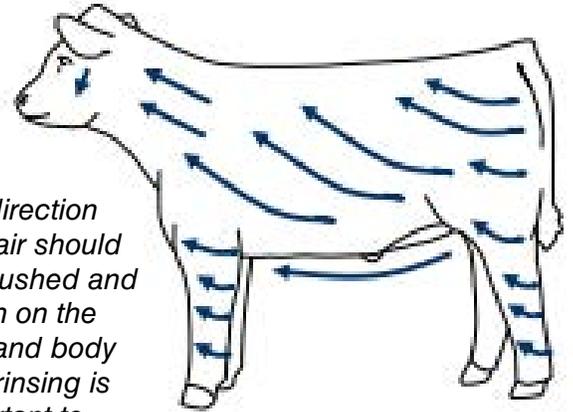
- Begin rinsing your calf several months before the show. Rinsing helps remove dull/dead hair and stimulates new hair growth. A mild soap can be used, but completely rinse the animal’s body following each use. Soap residue dries the skin, causing dandruff. Getting all the soap out is important! Washing can remove natural oils from the hair, making the hair look loose, dry and fuzzy. You may use conditioners to restore oils to the hair/skin.
- You can use whiteners to lighten tough stains. Never use bleach or other chemicals that may cause damage to the hair coat or cause irritation to the animal’s skin. You can use whitening shampoo to brighten stained areas of white hided cattle. Wash the tail several times before the show. Use a soft-bristled brush or comb to untangle the tail hair as part of your daily hair care routine. Avoid pulling out hair.
- After rinsing, use the flat edge of the scotch comb to scrape the excess water out and then brush all the hair down. This will get all the hair initially going the same direction.
- Next, begin brushing the hair forward and slightly upward to start training the hair to grow up and out as seen in **Figure 2**. A rice root brush is a good tool for training hair. Tail-head hair, as well as the hair on the rest of the body, needs to be trained forward.
- You can brush your animal completely dry or use a blower. Making sure the nozzle of the blower is not pointed at the dirt, begin blowing the calf at the shoulder, as shown in Figure 2, blowing hair forward and slightly upward as you move to the rear of the animal. Blow the hair in the same direction you brushed it. This will begin to train the hair.

- Trim and shape hooves to enable the animal to walk and stand naturally. Do not trim too short or make incorrect angles because this could cause the animal to go lame. This should be done at least two weeks prior to the show to ensure calves do not become sensitive and potentially lame prior to the show. Ask a professional for help because experience in this matter is very important.

### Clipping Beef Calves

- Major clipping is done one to two weeks before the show to allow time for some regrowth. This depends on breed and hair growth.
- Complete the final clipping just before the show. Smoothly blend the clipped and unclipped hair so the clipper lines do not show.
- Avoid clipping eyelashes and nose hair.
- See **Figure 3** for tips in clipping a beef animal. In general, clip from the poll forward on the head of your animal and then from the base of the ear toward the jawbone, blending this down into the dewlap and brisket. Some breeds may have specific standards. Steers usually have their heads clipped completely.

**Figure 2. Direction hair should be brushed and blown on the legs and body after rinsing.**

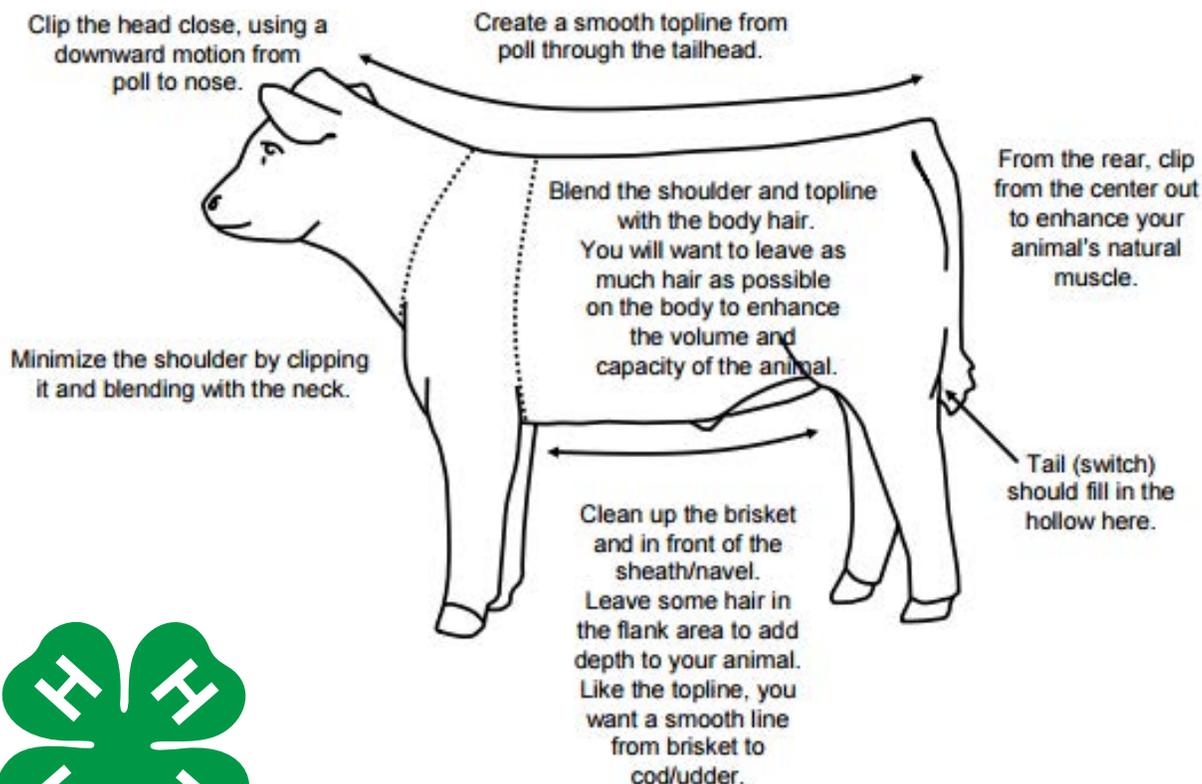


*The direction the hair should be brushed and blown on the legs and body after rinsing is important to consider. Be consistent in blow drying. Start drying from the front of animal and work your way back.*



Source: Illustrations used with permission from Celina (Johnson) Phillips, Chico State University

**Figure 3. Clipping a beef animal.**



# Showmanship in the Ring

## Leading

- Lead the calf from the left side; hold the lead strap in your right hand at the height of the calf's head. Hold the strap about 4 to 6 inches from the head to have good control of the animal. Do not coil the strap or wrap it around your hand for safety reasons. Holding the show stick in your left hand when walking.

Figure 4. Proper show stick position.



Photo A is the incorrect position of the show stick and hand placement (palm facing down), while photo B is the correct way to hold a show stick and hand placement (palm facing up).

Do not tuck a show stick under your arm because this could become unsafe if the animal were to bolt forward. The stick could injure your ribs, arm, etc.

(Photos by Leigh Ann Skurupey, NDSU)

- Hold the show stick in your left hand and point it downward while on the move. If the show stick is held in front of the calf to aid in control of the calf, be sure you have control of the show stick and do not create a safety issue to others in the show ring. The show stick should be pointing down when leading and when the calf is cooperating.
- Lead the calf at a comfortable pace with the animal's head held high enough for impressive style, attractive carriage and graceful walking. Watch your animal to understand what its "normal gait" is and try to lead your animal at that pace. Leading too fast or too slowly could indicate lack of control and present your animal in an undesirable fashion.
- For a show, you will use a beef show halter that is fitted properly. A beef show halter is usually leather with a chain on the lead. The noseband must fit across the bridge of the nose midway between the eyes and muzzle. Practice with the show halter a couple of weeks before the show to get your calf accustomed to the chain lead.
- Striking the animal in the ring is **never** permitted and may result in disqualification.

Figure 5. Side profile in beef showmanship.

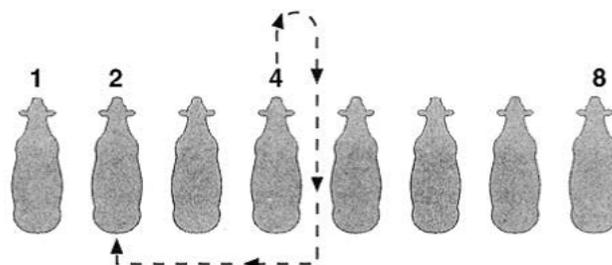


(Photo by Richard Schmidt, NDSU)

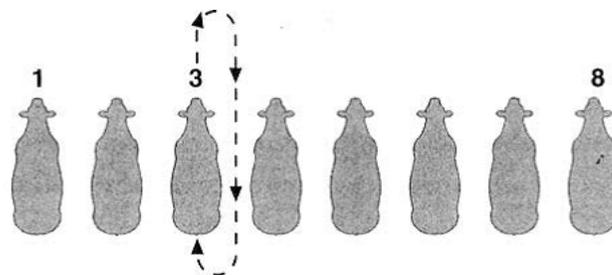
## Posing in Ring

- When pulling into line, leave about 3 feet between you and the calf to your left.
- Face the calf, switch the lead strap to your left hand and the show stick to your right hand. Stand to the side, not directly in front of your calf and never cross the face of your animal.
- The show stick or your foot may be used to set the calf's feet correctly. To avoid injury to the showman do not use your foot to set up the calf if this method has not been practiced prior to the show.
- Keep your calf's front legs even. They may be square or offset with the show side farther back while in line. The side profile look should always have the show (right) side with the rear leg farther back and the left side slightly underneath the body cavity. This provides a more composed topline levelness from the side profile. Your calf should not be overstretched because the topline will drop and legs underneath itself will show a roached, or uneven, topline look. These posing positions will require practice before the show. Get your calf used to the show stick several weeks before the show.
- Always move quickly and smoothly to your new position when given the signal by a judge or ring steward.
- When moving your animal into a new position, lead the animal forward then come back through the same spot, toward the rear of the line, turning into your animal (**Figure 6**). When you are turning to the right, turn into your animal. Never pull the calf toward you unless you are moving left. You can pull the calf toward you when you lead into the new position from the rear of the line.
- After the judge handles the calf, use a scotch comb or flat plastic comb to reposition the hair on the calf. Then put the comb in your pocket or holster. If you are using a scotch comb, keep the teeth turned inward to ensure the calf is not spooked unnecessarily or harmed.
- A successful showperson will have a well-trained calf that poses in the ring without unnecessary movement.
- Always follow the directions of the show superintendent, the ring steward and judge while in the show ring and during the show.

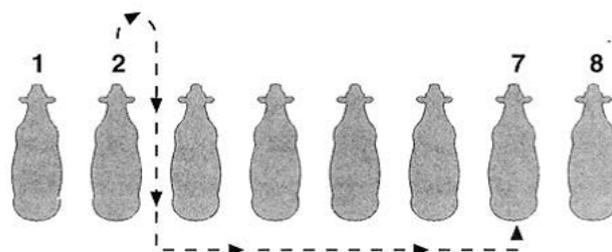
**Figure 6. Moving animals to new positions.**



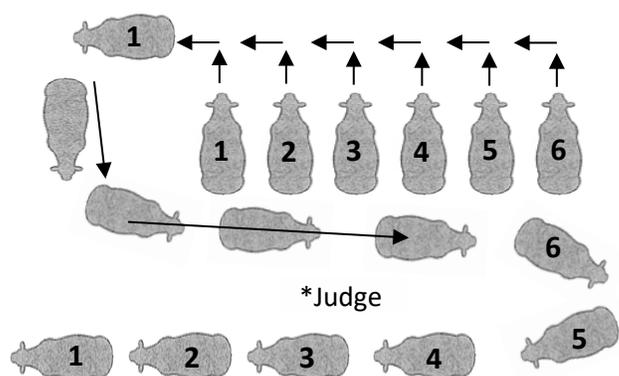
How to switch from position 4 to position 2.



How to reset in the same position using position 3.



How to go from position 2 to position 7.



**Serpentine Motion:** Pull forward out of line, following in order. Lead directly behind the line you were just in, keeping your animal between you and the judge. Make a circle around the judge. Everyone will follow in order. Line up head to tail following the directions of your ring steward.

Source: Mississippi State University; edited by NDSU

# Exhibitor as a Showman (Beef, Sheep and Goats)

## Review

- Animal – The animal must be set up at all times.
- Judge – Know where the judge is at all times.
- You – Look like you enjoy being in the show ring.

**Figure 6** (on page 12) shows how to move your animal in a line for beef, goats and sheep.

During showmanship, the exhibitors should keep the animal between the judge and themselves.

## Patterns of Position

The pattern is determined by the judge and/or show management and may differ from those shown here. Pay attention to your judge and your ring steward. Watch other classes ahead of your class to learn from 4-H peers as the judge moves animals within each class to gain an idea of what pattern the judge is using for that day.

## Patience in Line

Once animals are in line, either side by side or head to tail, do your best not to move unnecessarily. Animals that fidget or cannot stand still are signs the animal is not well trained. Practice standing still to gain patience for you and your animal while at a show.



(Photo by Leigh Ann Skurupey, NDSU)

Youth are evenly spaced. The red bovine on the end could be pulled up to finish the line more evenly.

# Exhibitor

- Equipment needs to include a properly fitted beef halter, flat plastic comb or a scotch comb in your pocket (teeth pointing inward), and a solid show stick appropriate for the size of the exhibitor. Your show stick should be long enough to reach and adjust rear legs, but excessively long sticks can be a nuisance and hard to handle for young exhibitors.
- 4-H Dress Code – see Page 6.
- Exhibitors should have a basic knowledge of their project: age of animal, cattle breeds, breed of the project, feed ration and other general information on the project.
- Be courteous to other exhibitors.

Basic pieces of equipment that may be used for training and showing your beef animal include:

## Necessary

- Steel curry comb
- Electric clippers
- Nylon training halter
- Beef show halter
- Show stick
- Scotch comb
- Soft-bristle brush
- Hard-bristle brush
- Mild soap
- Pail for water
- Hay
- Feed
- Hose
- Show box

## Optional

- Blocking chute
- Fans
- Fitting products
- Rubbing alcohol
- Mineral/baby oil
- Adhesive-remover
- Soap

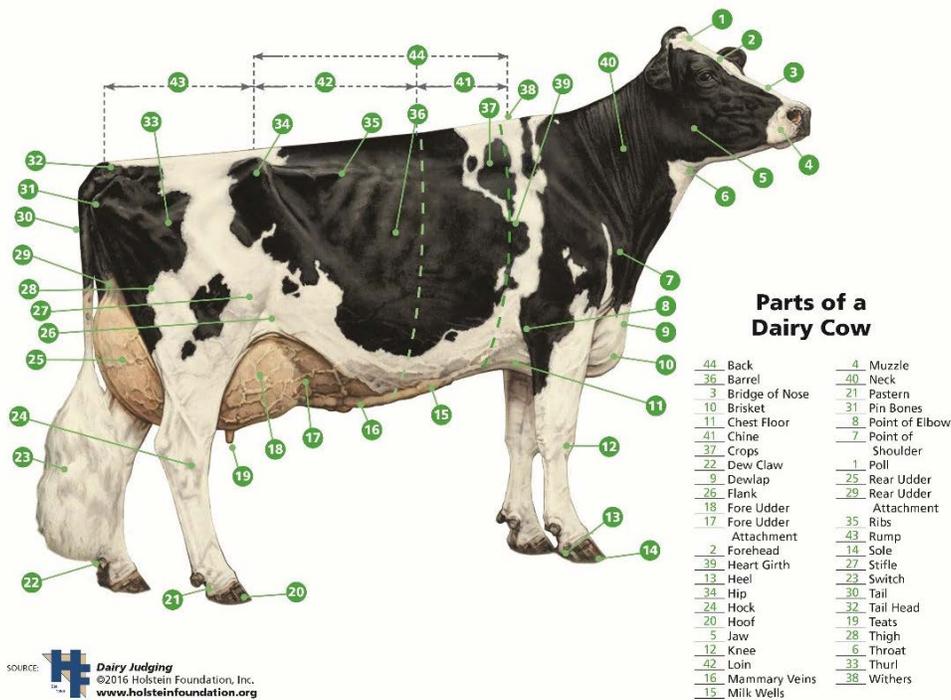


# Fitting and Showing Dairy Cattle

## Preparing the Dairy Calf for Show Day

- Select your show calf several months before the show. Begin halter breaking and put the calf on a feed program to make it look its best. Animals that go off feed before a show will look faint or lethargic and not show well.
- Shelter the animal from the hot sun and control flies several weeks before the show. If possible, keep heifers inside during the day and outside at night.
- Begin rinsing the animal several weeks before the show. This will help remove the dead/dull hair. Be sure to rinse thoroughly because leftover soap can appear as dandruff. Also, washing too often may cause the hair to be dry.
- Clean the ears with a damp or wet cloth.
- Always brush dairy cattle with a rubber curry or long bristle comb, never a steel curry comb. Start brushing/grooming your heifer at least three weeks before the show.
- Avoid overconditioned the animal. Dairy cattle that get fleshy do not show as well and may be faulted.
- Hoof care is important to keep the dairy animal sound. Hoof trimming should be done by someone with experience. Ask a professional for help, if needed.

Figure 5. Parts of a dairy cow.



Source: Copyright 2016. Holstein Foundation Inc. – Dairy Judging workbook, [www.holsteinfoundation.org](http://www.holsteinfoundation.org)

## Appearance of the Calf

(See general appearance of all animals – Page 5)

### Grooming Dairy Calves

- Each breed may be different, so check the breed manual for other clipping instructions.
- In North Dakota, do not body clip from October through April.
- Most dairy cattle will be body clipped except for the topline and tail. When body clipping, take long, slow passes. You may blow the topline and get the hair to stand up before clipping. This will help determine where to stop so enough hair is left to finish the topline correctly.
- Trim the topline to give the dairy animal a sharp appearance. Position the animal's hair straight across its top before trimming topline.
- Clean dirt/dust and manure from the hair.
- Clip the head, neck, ears, tail, udder (on cows) and elsewhere as needed. Begin clipping at the point of the shoulder to the top of the neck. Blend all clipper lines. If you are not body clipping your heifer, begin clipping at the point of the shoulder to the top of the neck. If you are body clipping, leave a couple of inches on the topline to work with. This will improve the look of a straight topline.
- Clip in a well-lit area so you can see your work clearly. Once you start on one side of the calf, make sure to finish that side before moving to the other.
- Clip hair inside and outside the ears.
- Clip front and rear legs to give the appearance of greater flatness of bone and to remove stains.
- Clip withers to a sharp point to improve angularity.
- Clip the tail from about 4 inches above the switch (long hairs of the tail) and blend into the tail head (where the tail lies between the pinbone).
- Trim the hooves at least two weeks before the show, if needed. This may require professional help.

## Showmanship in the Ring

(See all animals – Page 7)

### Leading

- Use a dairy show halter that is fitted properly. A dairy show halter is usually leather with a chain on the lead. The noseband needs to fit across the bridge of the nose midway between the eyes and muzzle. A leather halter with leather or chain lead is preferred in the show ring. Train the calf using a nylon halter. Practice with the show halter a couple of weeks before the show to get your animal accustomed to the chain lead.
- Enter the ring walking forward and leading at a natural pace around the ring in a clockwise direction. Walk on the left side, with the left hand on the halter. Do not wrap the lead strap around your hand.
- Once all animals are in the ring, you will lead by walking backward slowly, facing the animal. Hold the lead strap in your left hand with the remainder of it neatly, but naturally, gathered in one or both hands. At all other times, walk forward at a quicker pace. When given the signal to pull into line, move quickly to that position in the ring. Lead at a comfortable pace with the animal's head held high enough for an impressive style, attractive carriage and graceful walking.
- Position the animal with the halter as much as possible. You can apply pressure on the lead strap and point of shoulder to back the animal. This is essential to walk your animal into place with only minor adjustments necessary.
- Respond quickly, but natural to the judge's or ring steward's commands.
- Practice setting up your heifer at home so that you can maneuver easily in the show ring.
- Striking the animal in the ring is **never** allowed and may result in disqualification.
- Grabbing the skin of the throatlatch of the heifer will showcase a trimmer, cleaner throatlatch to the judge. Do not pull hard or it could make the heifer uncomfortable.



(Photo courtesy of Katie Coyne)

# Posing in the Ring

- When posing and showing an animal, stay on the animal's left side. Stand facing at an angle to the animal's front shoulder in a position far enough away to see the stance of the animal's feet and topline.
- Pose the animal with the front feet placed squarely. When showing heifers or bulls, the hind leg nearest the judge is posed slightly back or behind the other leg. On heifers, this will show fore udder development and scrotal development on bulls. When showing cows, the hind leg nearest the judge needs to be far enough ahead of the other to allow the judge to see the fore and rear udder.
- When the judge is observing the animal, let it stand well posed. Be calm and confident.
- If possible, face the animal uphill, with its front feet on a slight incline. Always move quickly and smoothly into line when signaled by a judge.
- Do all showing with the halter lead strap and by pushing on the front left shoulder. You may use your foot to stop the front left foot of the animal, but be discreet.

## Exhibitor

- 4-H Dress Code – See Page 6.
- Equipment should include a properly fitted dairy halter.
- Exhibitors should have a basic knowledge of their project: age of animal, dairy breeds, breed of their project, feed ration and other general dairy information.
- Be courteous to other exhibitors.

Basic pieces of equipment that may be used for training and showing your dairy animal include:

### Necessary

- Electric clippers
- Nylon halter
- Dairy show halter
- Soft-bristle brush
- Comb for tail
- Rubber Curry comb
- Pail for water
- Hay
- Feed
- Show box

### Optional

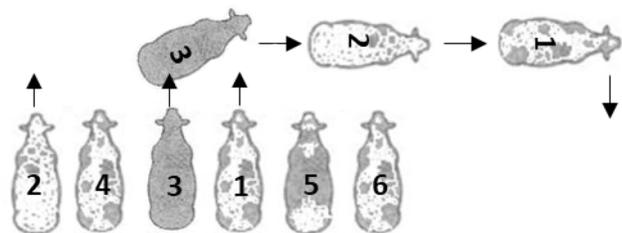
- Show adhesive
- Hair conditioner
- Baby powder
- Baby oil

**A) Leg placement on a heifer: rear leg back. B) Leg placement on a cow: rear leg forward** (Photo by Richard Schmidt, NDSU)

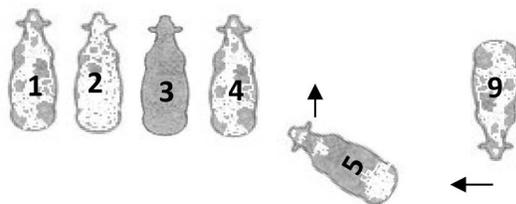


### Moving dairy animals to new positions.

Animals will walk clockwise into the arena. Exhibitors walk into ring facing forward until all animals are in the ring. Once all animals are in, exhibitors turn toward their animal and start walking backward. Once all animals are in, the judge will line up animals side by side. The first animal pulled into line determines the line you will follow. When pulling into line, leave about a foot distance between you and your fellow exhibitor. Set the legs on your animal.



The judge may place animals in line. You then will lead out of the line in the order of placing. The placings then will form the new line.

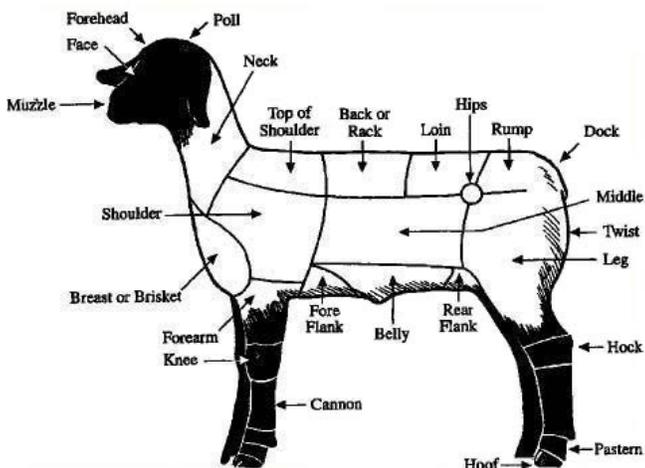


# Fitting and Showing Sheep

## Preparing Your Sheep for Show

- Begin feeding your lamb with a complete show feed at least two months before the show. An early transition to show feed is preferred. You may want to visit with a local nutritionist or feed consultant to determine a ration that fits your goat's needs.
- Feed your lamb a ration to target your animal's weight for the first show. Lambs will gain .5 to 1 pound per day, depending on the diet and genetics. The minimum weight for market lambs is 90 pounds.
- Modify feed type as little as possible if the lamb is consuming adequate rations.
- Provide adequate fresh, cool water at all times.
- Begin training the sheep several weeks before the show. Practice walking with and without other sheep, if possible.
- Practice having your market lamb brace against your leg. The lamb's front feet must remain on the ground when braced. The feet may be lifted slightly to set the front legs only.
- Do not slap your lamb to get the lamb to brace. Your actions represent the industry, so be a positive role model.
- Never tie your lamb up and leave it unattended.
- Use your own feed pans/troughs and pails; do not share with others. This prevents contamination of equipment and reduces disease transmission.

Figure 6. Parts of a sheep.



Source: Ohio State University Extension, outreach arm of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

## Appearance of the Animal

### Cleanliness

- Sheep need to be free of straw, wood chips, manure and other foreign matter.
- Meat breeds are washed several times before the show. Roughly carding or currying the sheep just after washing can save a lot of time carding after the sheep is dry.
- Wash the wool early enough so it is thoroughly dry. The wool should not be wet when showing.
- Wool breeds are not washed. This washes out the lanolin and impairs wool quality which the sheep are judged upon.
- Do not get water in the lamb's ears. Clean the ears and ear tags with a damp cloth.
- Wipe the face with a clean cloth before the show.
- Trim hooves three to five days before the show to ensure the lamb is not hindered from cutting them too short. Clean hooves with a hard-bristle brush and water. Polishing is optional.
- Legs should be free of stains or manure.
- Blankets may be used on breeding and market lambs to keep them clean.

## Carding and Clipping

### Breeding Sheep

- Begin carding and clipping breeding sheep at least two weeks before the show. The more you card and clip them, the better the sheep will look.
- As an exhibitor, your animal's fitting should be completed approximately three days before the show. The final touches can be done the day before or day of the show.
- The length of the wool on breeding sheep is set by the breed association. Refer to specific breed standard information. Meat breed sheep should be clipped tight, specifically on the front third of the body. Wool breed sheep can have 1 to 3 inches of wool to show wool quality for judging. Southdowns, Shropshires and other breeds may be shorn to represent accepted breed standards.

- Slick shorn sheep are now more accepted in the show ring. You can make the decision for meat breed on sheep that accentuates its positive attributes.
- Carding (for fitted sheep) is the most important action to ensure a nicely fitted sheep. Card until all the wool has been neatly carded, then clip off the long wool and shape the sheep to how you want it to look. You are the artist and may shape sheep to accentuate the strong points and minimize weaknesses. This process may be done several times before the wool has a tight, smooth set and is shaped to your expectations. You cannot clip a sheep neatly without good carding.
- Professional fitting is discouraged.
- Using latex paint of a natural wool color is acceptable in wool breed breeding sheep to give the sheep a more unified color/look after clipping.

## Market Lambs

- Market lambs should be slick sheared one to two days prior to the show.
- Paints or similar products used to change the color of the animal or misrepresent the animal are not allowed.
- Do not slick shear the legs. Shaping the fuzz or leg wool will give the lamb the appearance of having more bone.
- Blending of the appropriate leg wool, specifically at the knee and hock, is important to provide an attractive look of the animal.

## Showmanship in the Ring

### Leading

- Working with your lamb regularly is important so it responds quickly, calmly and smoothly to your prompts and cues.
- Enter the ring leading the animal in a clockwise direction, walking beside the head on the left side of the animal.
- Your left hand should remain on the chin, not the throat. Place your right hand behind the point of the ears when the sheep is leading well. You can use the dock to help move the sheep when it is being stubborn.
- Always keep the lamb between you and the judge. If the judge is on the left side of the lamb, calmly switch sides around the front of the lamb. Never go behind the lamb to switch sides. Place your right hand on the jaw and the left hand behind the ear.
- Move the animal at a comfortable pace with its head held high enough for an impressive style, attractive carriage and graceful walking.

**Exhibitors are bracing market lambs appropriately for a side profile view.**



**Exhibitor has the neck held up perpendicularly to the spine and braced for rear view of a market lamb.**



(Photos by Travis Hoffman, NDSU)

## Sheep Halters

- Cable halters are utilized in the showing for those that would like to have some more control over the lamb or to just give the animal a more natural look.
- To be successful using a cable halter, the showman must be aware of where the halter is at all times from the minute they lead or pull into brace.
- When utilizing a cable halter, make sure you hold the cable high enough to maintain tension on the halter to prevent the lamb from escaping. Walk with the cable halter above the lamb's head to show off their front-end design as well as to keep pressure on their head as you lead.
- When stopped and bracing, attention should be focused on head and neck placement. Do not let the halter be a distraction for yourself, the lamb, or the judge.
- When the judge circles around the animal, utilize the cable halter to get off the lamb to show off the front view of that animal. When the judge maneuvers around your lamb to the side profile, begin bracing your lamb and use your hands to secure the animal's head.



Notice proper head placement with the neck coming straight out of the top of the shoulder at a 90-degree angle, ears propped up and nose angled forward and down for bracing (left) and without bracing (right) for side profile.

## Posing/Moving

- As the judge studies your animal, make sure the animal's head is raised and the animal is positioned correctly. Ensure legs are placed squarely and directly under the animal.
- Market animals are braced; front legs may be lifted slightly and quickly to position the front feet. Bracing lambs should have rear legs set squarely from behind (shown in picture).
- **NEVER** slap your market lamb to make it brace.

Market lambs are braced to enhance muscle expression. Over-bracing results in a break or weak hip/loin junction of the lamb.

- The neck should come out perpendicular to the topline. Pressure can be put on the back of the ears. Allow the nose to drop down to a comfortable position.
- **Sheep showmanship:** When exhibitors are required to change sides, they must move around the front of the sheep, always facing the animal. Do not step behind the sheep. Exhibitors may move between the sheep and judge for a brief moment to position themselves on the correct side. The sheep should not be completely turned around just to keep it between the exhibitor and the judge. When switching sides, do so naturally, not abruptly.
- Breeding sheep may or may not be braced. Slick shorn meat breeds such as Southdown, Shropshires, Hampshires, Suffolks or Dorsets are commonly held with a brace.
- Wool breed sheep and fitted meat breeds are not braced. Their feet should be set comfortably at all corners. To set the legs squarely under the sheep, place the hind left leg parallel with the right and set the front legs by reaching over the sheep or under the sheep. Setting the legs with your hand is always preferred, but young show people may use their feet, if necessary, to square up the animal.



The photo to the left shows placing pressure on the back of the ears so that the neck comes out the top of the shoulder at a perpendicular angle.

(Photos by Travis Hoffman, NDSU)

- Exhibitors of breeding sheep should keep their body about 6 inches away from the sheep when standing in line.
- Lifting (keeping the front feet off the ground), striking or abusing an animal is **never** allowed and may result in disqualification. Exhibitors are role models for the industry and must show respect and appreciation for their animals.
- Avoid crowding/bumping into other animals in line. Leave adequate space between your animal and the animals around you, but do not leave too much space.
- Avoid overshadowing and unnecessary maneuvering of the animal. Your attention to detail can become distracting for the judge.
- Recognize conformational faults of the animal and learn how to show your animal to minimize those faults.
- See Figure 6 on page 12 for diagrams on how to change positions in line. Remember to always place the sheep between you and the judge so the judge has a good view of the sheep's entire body at all times. When the judge steps in front of your sheep, open the view by lifting its head and stepping off to the side so the judge can see the chest and leg structure. Once the judge passes in front of your animal and is two or three sheep past, naturally move to the opposite side without hindering their front view of the sheep.



**ABOVE: Perfect positioning of neck, head and nose on the side profile. Also, notice legs are set squarely underneath the animal. TOP RIGHT: The head can be properly held with one hand under the jaw and one at the back of the poll. BOTTOM RIGHT: When the judge steps in front of your animal, exhibitor can put the palms of the hands on each cheek for a front presentation.**



(Photos by Travis Hoffman, NDSU)

## Exhibitor

- 4-H Dress Code – see Page 6.
- Always be attentive to the judge and ring steward/help and follow directions.
- Exhibitors should have a basic knowledge of their project: age of animal, sheep breeds, breed of their project, feed ration and other general sheep information.
- Be courteous to other exhibitors.

Basic pieces of equipment that may be used for training and showing your market and breeding sheep include:

### Necessary for Market Sheep

- Electric clippers
- Training halter
- Feed pan
- Pail for water
- Hoof trimmer
- Feed
- Tack box

### Optional for Market Sheep

- Sheep stand
- Spandex blanket
- Blower

### Necessary for Breeding Sheep

- Cards
- Hand shears
- Hoof trimmer
- Halter
- Feed pan
- Water pail
- Feed
- Tack box

### Optional for Breeding Sheep

- Blower
- Blankets
- Electric clipper
- Curry
- Sheep stand

# Fitting and Showing Swine

## Preparing Your Pig

- Feed the pig a balanced ration several months before the show season begins.
- Select a pig that will reach market weight by the time of your most targeted shows. If a pig is to be shown at 250 pounds, a 60-pound pig will need 100 to 120 days to reach that weight. A pig's typical growth rate is between 1.55 and 2 pounds a day. Preferably, your pig isn't over- or under-conditioned at show time.
- Avoid leaving your pig for long periods in hot sunlight. Pigs do not sweat and they sunburn easily.
- Be sure that they have plenty of fresh, cool water at all times.

## Cleanliness

- The hair coat must be completely clean and free from stains and dandruff.
- Clean ears, face, feet and legs.

## Grooming

- Brush the hair in the direction that it naturally grows.
- You may use several hair products to give your pig a more attractive, shiny appearance.
- Oil-based skin conditioner may be applied if skin is dry and flaky.
- Misting a pig with water on warm days is appropriate.
- Clipping around the ears, face and tail is recommended. Body clipping is common, especially with breeding hogs. The hair on the pigs should appear fresh, which may require clipping several days before the show (consult show guidelines as they may change from one show to the next).

## Showmanship of Swine

### Showing

- Enter the ring with the animal at a slow walk.
- Use appropriate equipment: a whip 36 to 48 inches in length that suitably fits the showperson and a small brush. Standing at the hip of the hog, the showperson should be able to reach the jaw of the animal with the length of the whip.



**Presenting swine in showmanship.**

(Photo by Richard Schmidt, NDSU)

- Keep the pig between you and the judge. Leave 10 to 15 feet between the pig and the judge.
- Keep the pig moving, but at a slow pace; it never should run.
- Avoid slapping the pig from the shoulder to the ham.
- Restrain the pig from fighting with others, if possible.
- As the judge studies your animal, make sure that it is on the move and relaxed.
- When turning the pig, step up in front and turn the pig's head toward you by placing the bat/whip on the opposite side of the head. Sometimes turning may require moving the pig away from you.
- Avoid using the whip excessively.
- Only use a whip to guide the pig; avoid using your hands or legs.
- If your pig happens to get dirty during showing, utilize your brush to remove any debris or dirt, and return the brush back into your pocket.
- If the pig defecates, remove any fecal material from the back end of your pig with your brush.
- Avoid letting your pig crowd. The pig will show better when it is on the move and in open space. This allows judge to see the whole animal.
- If the judge has questions for you, let the pig go, answer the questions, then return to your animal and resume showing.
- If your pig takes off in a run, do not chase it, but continue to walk calmly until it settles down.

# Exhibitor

- 4-H Dress Code – see Page 6.
- **Never** abuse or aggressively hit your animal.
- Be courteous to other exhibitors.
- Be knowledgeable about your project: know breed, feed rations, weight and other important information about your project.
- Work with your animal regularly so that it responds to commands or cues promptly in the ring.

Basic pieces of equipment that may be used in training and showing your swine project include:

## Necessary

- Bat/whip
- Brush
- Waterer
- Feed pan
- Feed
- Small soft bristle brush (for showing)
- Shampoo

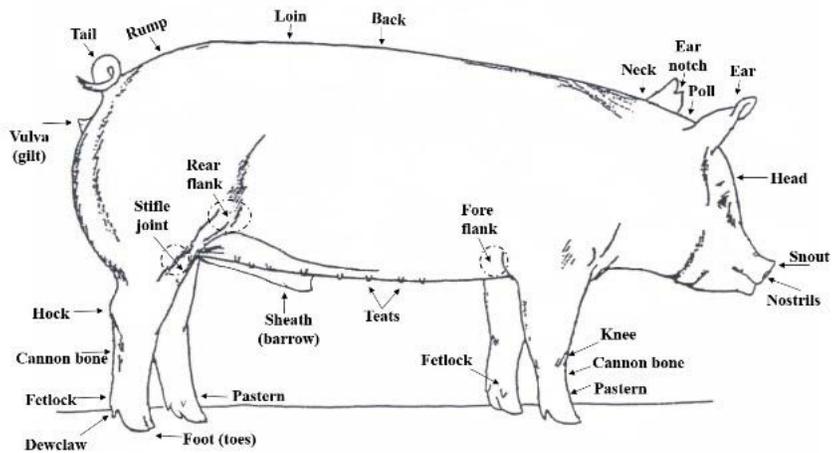
## Optional

- Electric clipper
- Hair conditioner
- Water spray or misting bottle
- Pig board
- Hair conditioner

**Proper guidance with the show stick. Showmen should use the show stick only in specific areas such as the jowl, neck and shoulder area and the side. This exhibitor is also in the correct position, being at the hip of the pig.**

**Figure 7. Parts of a pig.**

Source: University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment



**Remember to practice good sportsmanship at all times, regardless of what species you are showing. Help those around you to grow and be a mentor to those around you.**



**Keep your pig between you and the judge at all times. Find the open space in the showing that allows your pig to move and be seen.**



**Keep your eyes on the judge. This shows confidence. More importantly will help you and your pig be in the proper position in the showing.**



**Make sure you do not touch your animal. Touching can indicate lack of control or it may put pressure on the animal, causing it to stop moving.**

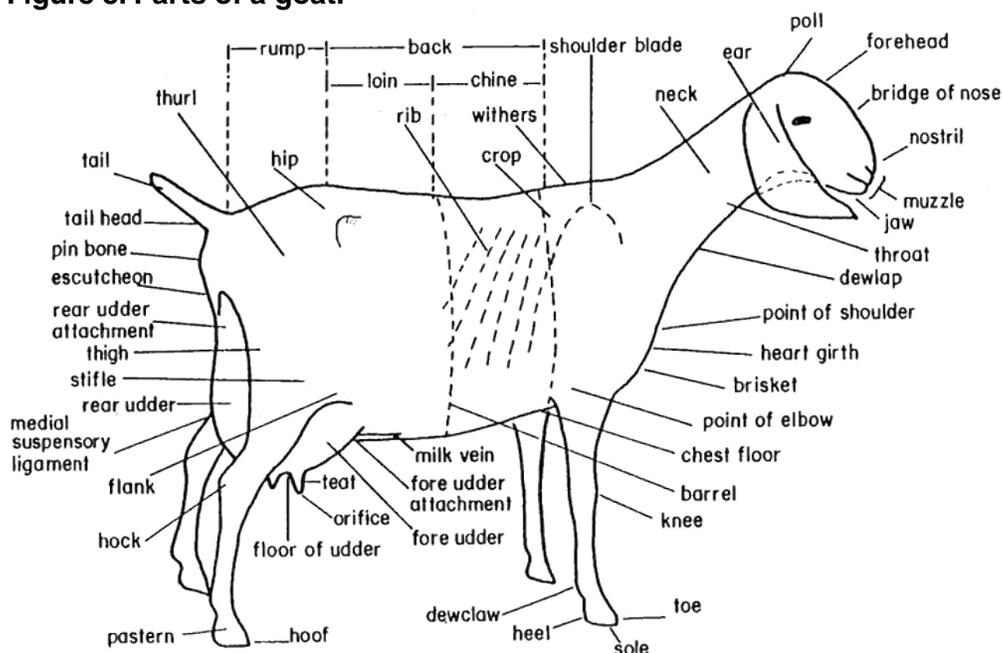
(Photos by Brian Zimprich and Leigh Ann Skurupey, NDSU)

# Fitting and Showing Goats

## Preparing Your Goat

- Select your goat and begin training several weeks prior to the first show.
- Begin feeding your goat with a complete show feed at least two months before the show. An early transition to show feed is preferred. You may want to visit with a local nutritionist or feed consultant to determine a ration that fits your goat's needs.
- Do not change feed rations unless you have a problem with palatability or consumption.
- Goats will gain between .25 and .50 pound per day, depending on feed and the goat's genetics.
- Provide fresh, cool water at all times.
- Get your goat accustomed to leading with a halter, collar or chain. This will take some practice. When you begin training, having your goat follow a trained goat may help speed up the training process.
- Be gentle when training. You may pull on the tail gently to assist in moving the goat.
- Avoid long periods of direct sunlight on slick sheared goats to avoid sunscald.
- Goats may be "blown out" using a commercial blower to remove dirt and debris. Cleaning and blowing the animal's coat helps keep clippers sharp and provides a more even fit job.
- Clip the goat several days (or about one week) prior to the show to allow some hair growth and lessen the visibility of clipper marks.
- Clipping diagrams are available to help determine hair length on different areas of the goat. Hair is left on the head and legs in market and breeding classes.
- Do not leave the goat tied up when unattended.
- Goats should be washed thoroughly with a mild soap and rinsed thoroughly before fitting.
- We recommend that you use a conditioner after washing to replenish body oils.
- Do not get water in the goat's ears.
- Market goats are usually slick sheared except for the legs a few days prior to the show.
- Meat breeding goats are fitted. Take the front one-third tight and blend to the rest of the body that can be fitted longer throughout.

Figure 8. Parts of a goat.



Source: GBG091 Goat Showmanship Manual

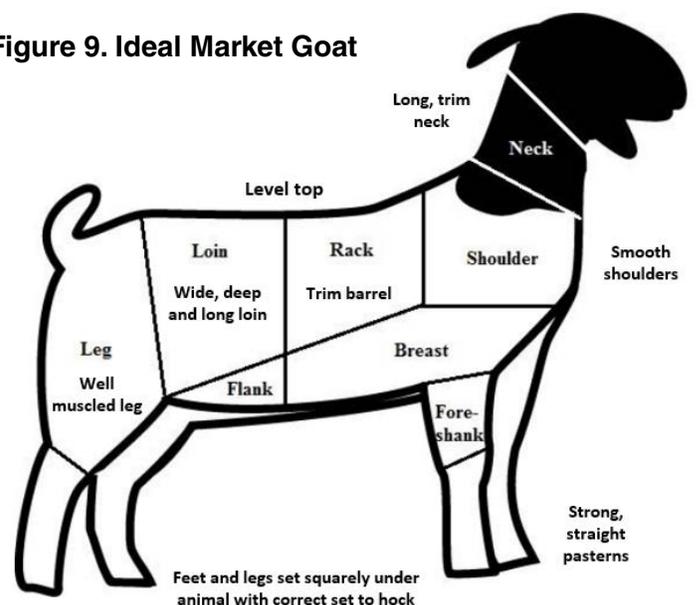
# Showmanship of Goat

- In goat showmanship, use a choker chain or collar; some chains may have a size-adjustment clip. A properly fitted chain/collar will not slide over the horn/head when the animal is exhibited.
- **Never** Lift (front feet off the ground), strike or abuse your animal. This may result in disqualification.
- Enter the ring leading the goat in a clockwise direction. Keep the goat between you and the judge at all times.
- Move the animal at a comfortable pace with head held high for impressive style.
- Never move around the backside of the goat when switching sides.
- When the judge studies your animal, be sure that the goat's head is raised and the goat is set squarely on all four corners/legs.
- In goat showmanship, you may move your goat and lead from the left or right side, always keeping the goat between you and the judge.
- Hold the head of the goat up with the chain/collar as pictured to the right. The goat can push into the chain/collar. Do not brace the goat by grabbing the head/neck and lifting.
- Breeding goats should be shown without bracing. Keep the goat's feet set squarely.
- Exhibitors should keep their body about 6 inches away from the goat when in line, and when not bracing.
- Avoid overstretching the goat because this causes a change to the topline.
- Reach over the goat to position the legs. If for some reason you cannot reach over, then you may reach under to position legs. Handle the goat between the hock and knee when repositioning the leg. Do not use your feet to move the goat.
- If the judge handles your goat, evaluate the animal to see if you have any need to brush the animal.
- See page diagrams (Figure 6 on page 12) on how to change positions in a line.



**Presenting to the judge in goat showmanship.** (NDSU photo)

**Figure 9. Ideal Market Goat**



# Goat Halters

- Cable halters are utilized in the showing for those that would like to have some more control over the goat or to just give the animal a more natural look.
- To be successful using a cable halter, the showman must be aware of where the halter is at all times from the minute they lead or pull into brace.
- When utilizing a cable halter, make sure you hold the cable high enough to maintain tension on the halter to prevent the goat from escaping. Walk with the cable halter above the goat's head to show off their front-end design as well as to keep pressure on their head as you lead.
- When stopped and bracing, attention should be focused on head and neck placement. Do not let the halter be a distraction for yourself, the goat, or the judge.
- When the judge circles around the goat, utilize the cable halter to get off the goat to show off the front view of that animal. When the judge maneuvers around your goat to the side profile, begin bracing your goat and use your hands to secure the animal's head.

# Exhibitor

- 4-H Dress Code – see Page 6.
- Do not abuse or aggressively hit your animal.
- Be courteous to other exhibitors.
- Be knowledgeable about your project: know breed, feed rations, weight and other important information about your project.
- Work with your animal regularly so that it responds to commands or cues promptly in the ring.

Basic pieces of equipment that may be used in training and showing your goat project include:

## Necessary

- Choke chain or collar
- Hoof trimmer
- Water pail
- Feed pan
- Goat feed
- Small soft-bristle brush
- Tack box

## Optional

- Electric clipper
- Blower
- Blanket for goat

Showman in this photo is providing attractive side profile of the goat. He is bracing the goat, legs are square and neck is coming straight up and perpendicular to the back. Also, the goat fit job is good with legs pulled up, blended and a smooth finished look.



These three ladies have their goats braced on side profile. All have the legs set, and there is slight differences in how they are holding the head with ears down (left), ears straight (middle), or ears up (right). Work with what makes you comfortable, and makes the goat look the best. Practice to see what works for you.



(Photos by Travis Hoffman, NDSU)



As the judge approaches from the front, step back off your goat as seen in this photo. Keep the animal between you and the judge, and keep the head up. Do not step too far away. Practice this to ensure your animal stays in one spot.



Young does or miniature goats can be presented by squatting down. Notice the attention to still keep the head and neck up when exhibitor is in the squatting position. Part of being a showman is continuing to show off your animal whenever possible.



The older breeding does are generally not braced. The 4-H'er may place their hand underneath the chin of the doe to keep the goat's head up and top line posture correct.

# Poultry Selection and Preparation

## Classes of Poultry

There are many different standardized poultry breeds you can enter into a show, including chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, pheasants, pigeons, doves, quail and guinea. Currently, 79 breeds and 200 varieties are available. Knowing the standard requirements for the breed you choose to raise and show is critical to your success in the show and during showmanship. “The American Standard of Perfection: A Complete Description of All Recognized Varieties of Fowls” by the American Poultry Association and the “Bantam Standard” by the American Bantam Association are great investments to learn about your breed and others.

When showing, you always show according to your breed standard and color. Each breed and variety (color) has its own requirements, which are assessed by the judge assigned to that class. For example, you may have a breed that you prefer, but the color of your is not recognized by that breed standard. Therefore, that color would not meet the breed standard. As a result, some colors may be grounds for disqualification for that breed.

The most important consideration is type. This is best defined as a silhouette of your bird (what that breed “should” look like). Think of a Volkswagen Beetle and a pickup truck; they both have very distinct silhouettes. Each breed of poultry has its own silhouette, and this shape is the prime consideration of the judge. Following type is the condition and color, and finally overall body condition of your bird. If you do not have a good understanding of the breed standard, you cannot select or grow your best birds.

### ■ How to Handle Your Bird

When you are preparing your bird for a show, ensure you are holding and carrying the bird correctly. Move your dominant hand underneath the bird and place your middle and ring fingers between the legs. Place your index and pinky finger around the outside of the legs for support. Your thumb should wrap around the bird to stabilize your hand and the bird. Place your opposite hand on top of the back and wings to support the bird safely.



- **Grooming** is all about attention to detail. Grooming includes washing and drying, cleaning feet and shanks, cleaning around the vent area, cleaning and shining the combs and wattles, trimming the toenails and beaks – everything that helps make a bird look its best. Touch up grooming may be done at the show just before judging.
- **Conditioning** is a long-term investment in your bird that starts the day it hatches from a healthy parent flock. Conditioning involves doing everything in your power to ensure we grow the very best and healthiest birds possible. Feeding high-quality feed, providing fresh water, having clean pens, not overcrowding the birds as they grow and being vigilant in checking for internal and external parasites and pests are tasks of conditioning.

## Choosing Your Bird

Whether you plan to show chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese or pigeons, keep these points in mind when choosing your bird:

- Check with your 4-H leader, county agent or knowledgeable poultry producer to see which breed is best for you. Consider which size of bird is best for your size, age and experience. Think about what the final purpose of your project will be and what you can raise safely with your resources. Think about the effects of a bird’s temperament or age for showmanship contests.
- When possible, try not to choose birds that have obvious defects or disqualifications. Check the American Poultry Association’s “American Standard of Perfection” for your bird’s breed or variety to find out about these defects or disqualifications. If you only have one bird with some defects or disqualifications to work with, there are appropriate classes available for these birds, too (Hobby class).

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- Choose your bird about eight to 12 weeks before the contest to allow ample time for preparation and training.
- Most importantly, look for a bird that will help you demonstrate your knowledge and your ability to handle it.

## Preparing Your Poultry

Prepare your bird **three to five days before the show.**

- **Banding:** All poultry going to shows and/or public exhibit, regardless of age, and *excluding doves and pigeons*, must have a safe leg or wing band. This band helps identify the bird should it escape during the event.
- **Testing:** All poultry going to shows and/or public exhibit, regardless of age, and *excluding doves and pigeons*, must come from a National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) certified *Salmonella pullorum* – *Salmonella Typhoid* (P-T) clean flock or have had a negative P-T test within 90 days prior to going to show/exhibition. A rapid plate test is a flockside test that can be used by a certified tester or veterinarian, who will need to draw blood and test it with the P-T antigen. Your Extension agent can answer questions on how to find a certified tester or might have a testing scheduled around the time of the show.
  - The rapid plate test can be used in all poultry **except for turkeys** due to inaccurate results. Blood can be sent to the University of Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory by filling out the Avian Serology/Molecular Diagnostics Test Request found on its website under “Avian”: <https://www.vdl.umn.edu/submission-guidelines/submission-forms-supplies>.
- **Lice and Mites:** External parasites such as lice and mites are extremely hard to eradicate, so prevention is key. The best prevention is to keep poultry, runs and equipment clean and dry. Always check your exhibition birds before and after taking them to a show because these parasites spread easily between birds. Frequently check your birds and housing for lice and mites so you can treat them if they appear. Check around the head, vent area, on the legs and back, and under the wings for signs of parasites. Signs can include red or black spots, blood, feather loss, lack in production, itchy or excessive preening, and a pale comb or wattles. Mites and lice require different treatment methods depending on what type is affecting your birds. Contact your Extension agent or veterinarian for treatment plans.



**Example of a poultry lice infestation on bird feathers.** (Photo by Dr. Brad Mullens, University of California, Riverside)

- **Cage Training:** Cage train your bird. Moving the bird from its original home where it is used to staying to being put into a new cage with new neighbors, different lighting, etc., puts a lot of stress on the bird. Allow your bird to become accustomed to being moved in and out of the cage to lessen stress during the show. Always put birds into and take them out of the cage head first, taking care not to catch their wings or legs on the cage sides. Keep a hand on top of the wings to keep the bird calm; this ensures the bird doesn't flap a wing and injure itself on the cage.
- Limit the amount of direct sunlight that your birds have, especially if they are light colored.



■ **Handling Birds:** Handle your birds often, especially the bird you plan to use for showmanship. Practice your showmanship routine with your bird by spreading out the wings, touching the head, comb and wattles, and touching the feet, toes and shanks. This will get your bird used to you handling it. Additionally, it will condition your bird to stand still for several minutes without lying down.

■ **Bathe your birds** two to three days before the show. First, determine how dirty your bird is to see what type of bathing is required. If your bird is mostly clean, with only some dust or dirt on the top layer of its feathers, a damp washcloth will be sufficient. If its feathers have mud, dirt or fecal material in them, a full bath would be best.

To give your bird a bath, ideally you should have two buckets or tubs. Both buckets should be filled with warm water, and one should have a very mild pet soap or baby shampoo added. First place the bird in the plain water bucket, ensuring that the feathers are damp. Then place the bird in the lukewarm soapy water. Make sure the water level is below the bird's ears so the water does not get into its ears.

Use your hands to gently wash the debris from the bird's feathers in the direction that the feathers lie. Never wash against the feathers. Wash the comb, wattles and beak with a soft cloth or cotton swab. You can use an old toothbrush or small scrub brush to gently scrub the bird's shanks, toes and feet.

Rinse the bird thoroughly in lukewarm water. You can use a towel to dry your bird or a blow dryer can be used on low heat. If your chicken has tight feathers (for example, Leghorns), blow-dry in the direction of the feathers. If a chicken has fluffy feathers (for example, Cochins), blow-dry against the feathers. If bathing during the winter, keep your bird in a warm area until it dries.

By giving your bird a bath ahead of time, your bird will have time to recondition its feathers by preening (straighten and cleaning feathers with its beak).

■ **Trimming:** Trim your bird's toenails and beak as needed. This is done with a human or dog nail clipper. Use care not to trim them too short. When trimming the nails, only trim the transparent part of the nails, a little at a time; otherwise, the nails might bleed. If they bleed, you have clipped the "quick," which is the part of your bird's nail that contains the blood vessel and nerves. Cover the nail with baking soda or cornstarch to stop the bleeding and gently compress the nail with a soft towel until it stops bleeding. You also can purchase "quick stop" from a pet store just in case.

## Show Day!

By show day, you already have washed your bird, treated it for any lice or mites, spent time cage training and handling, trimmed (if needed) and completed any required testing. Now for the finishing touches.

■ Apply a small amount of mineral oil, petroleum jelly or baby oil to your bird's comb, wattles, beak or bill, shanks and toes with a Q-tip, soft cloth or your fingers the day of the show. You will want to rub it in well to make the bird look nice and its features stand out. Be careful not to apply too much oil or jelly. Do **not** apply any oil or jelly to the feathers. For birds with feathered legs (that is, with feathers covering the shank area of the leg), apply the oil or jelly only on the toes, being careful **not** to get it on the feathers.

■ After you put on the final touches to make your bird look extra special, make sure it returns to a clean pen. Continue to keep the pen clean so the bird does not get dirty again. At the North Dakota State Fair, you also will be striving for the **Herdsman Award**. The objective of the Herdsman Award is to recognize an outstanding industry professional who excels in sportsmanship, work habits (cleaning, feeding, watering, etc. their own animal), integrity and who exemplifies leadership as a positive ambassador for the animal agricultural industry.



## Poultry Showmanship

A judge is first and foremost looking for exhibitors who are enjoying themselves, confident and excited to show their bird off. With most classes, the bird is what is being judged; with showmanship, you are showcasing your knowledge about your poultry project.

- The exhibitor should be attentive to the bird and the judge, with a pleasant demeanor and good eye contact. No chewing gum.
- Introduce yourself (name or number depending on the show; at the North Dakota State Fair, you introduce yourself with your number, not your actual name). At some shows, they might ask for your name, age, club, county and years in the 4-H Poultry Project.
- Provide basic information about **your** bird, including breed, class, gender and age. You might include the origin and another fun fact about your breed.
- Your bird should have a pleasing appearance with good grooming and conditioning, showing smooth plumage, clean and free of parasites and disease. The beak, head, feathers, legs, feet and nails should be free of dirt, mites and any other foreign matter.
- At any time during your presentation, you may have the opportunity to add other facts about your breed of bird.
- **Exhibitor Knowledge** – The exhibitor should use proper terminology as stated in a breed standard book and have confidence in handling the bird and speak to the judge in a confident voice with eye contact.



## Common Disqualifications

Each breed of poultry will have its own disqualifications, such as incorrect comb or wrong feather patterns. Some disqualifications cover all species and should be avoided when choosing a showmanship bird.

### Head area:

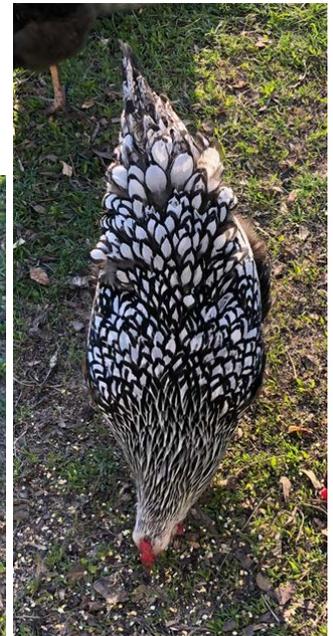
Disqualifications in the head area of a bird include frostbitten comb tips or wattles, lopped comb, crooked beak, wry neck, excessively coarse or withered wattles, or anything that goes against breed standards.



**Example of a comb with frostbitten tips.** (Photo provided by Sarah McNaughton)

### Feathers and Body:

Broken feathers, incorrect feather patterns, under- or overconditioned body.



**Example of incorrect vs. correct feather patterns in Silver Laced Wyandotte hens.** (Photos provided by Sarah McNaughton)

### Back and Rear:

Prolapsed vent, split or wry tail, missing or broken main tail or sickle feathers.

# Examination of Bird

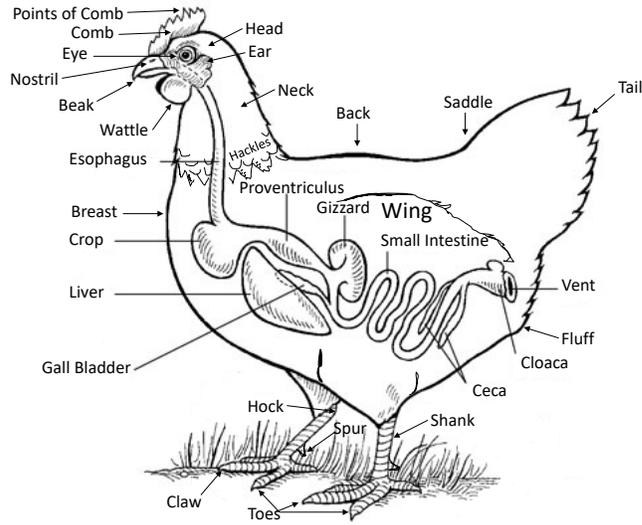
As you examine your bird, discuss with the judge what you are looking for and show how you do it. Start with the birds head and work your way back.

## Head, Wattle and More

- Present the comb to the judge, name the comb and discuss how a correct comb should look for breed character and general good health. Identify any possible disqualifications that exist in your breed.
- Present the eye to the judge and why you are showing the eye. Point out that you check the eyes for any signs of blindness, foreign material or parasites, and that the eyes are clear and the full correct color (name the correct color for your breed). Identify the color appropriate for your bird and any possible disqualifications that exist in your breed.
- Present the beak to the judge. Tell the judge about the beak of your bird. Describe that it should be clean, not crooked or distended, and the type that is normal for your breed.
- Present the wattle to the judge. Identify proper color, smoothness, roundness, and other characteristics according to your breed.
- Present the ear lobes to the judge. Identify the proper color for your breed.



**Showcasing the head area.**  
(Photo provided by Sarah McNaughton)



**Basic Poultry Diagram. Please refer to the breed standard for your poultry exhibit.**

(Drawn and labeled by Leigh Ann Skurupey)

## Wings, color pattern, condition of feathers, lice or mite damage, and vent

- Present condition and feathers to the judge. Start from the head, go to the neck and identify the hackle feathers, back and tail. Explain the color and uniformity of the feathering according to your breed. Point out any broken, missing or twisted feathers. Be sure to check for lice or mite damage prior to your showmanship presentation. Identify any possible disqualifications for your bird's breed.
- Present the wing to the judge. Fan out the wing of your bird to the judge. You can gently fan it up and down to show it is in good condition. Describe the parts of the wing. The bird has primary flight feathers (counted from the outside in – 10), the axel feathers, the secondary flight feathers (count them to the judge), the wing bow, the wing primary coverts, the wing front, the wing shoulder and the wing web. Also, present the proper color pattern. Does the bird show signs of molting or Split wing?
- Present the tail to the judge. Show the spread of the tail feathers. Identify if your bird has all of its tail feathers and the condition they are in. Identify any signs of disqualifications, including proper tail carriage.
- Present the width of the body to the judge. With your palm facing toward you and your thumb on one side and fingers on the other side of your bird right behind the wing.
- Present the under-color to the judge. Brush the feathers forward toward you and back. Describe to the judge the color and its importance. The under-color is important because it determines top color.



**Example of how to properly display the wing during showmanship.** (Photo provided by Sarah McNaughton)

- Present the breast and keel bone to the judge. Describe that the breast bone is important as a good indicator of the condition of the bird. Use your thumb and index finger to indicate the width. Describe the proper color and the proper under-color. Check if the bird has any signs of lice or mites. Note if your bird has any disqualifications.
- Present the sickle, hock and abdomen to the judge.
- Present the vent to the judge. Using two fingers, clear the feathers from around the vent. Show the judge that the vent is clean and clear of fecal matter and free of lice or mites.

## Legs, feet and toes

- Present the legs. Identify the shank and indicate if the legs are straight or not.
- Present the feet individually, showing and identifying the pads and tops. Are the toes and nails straight? Does the bird have any signs of broken bones? Talk about why you are showing the legs to the judge. Check the legs to make sure they are the correct color for the bird and to check for the correct numbers of toes. Describe what is correct for the breed you are showing. If the legs are perhaps **not** the proper color, explain why (egg production will cause some bleaching). Check to make sure the feet do not have scaly leg mites (you even can tell the judge what they are) or other negative qualities. You can describe how you might treat something such as mites, too. “If the bird did have leg mites, you can slather petroleum jelly on the shanks and toes to smother the mites.” Identify any possible disqualifications.



**Proper display of the feet and legs.** (Photo credit to Michigan State University Extension – 4-H fitting and showmanship guide)

## Feeding Your Bird

Place the bird on the table and tell the judge what you feed your bird and why. Any type of appropriate feed may be used; no brand is better than another as long as the nutrient needs of the project is being met. Discuss the protein content and any additional supplements you give and your reasoning.

## Pose Your Bird

Posing your bird will take a lot of practice to master. Practice often to ensure your bird will be ready for the show. Ideally, you want your bird to stay still, stand tall with its beak and tail up while being alert. You can gently prod at the wattles to help your bird put its head in the correct position. If possible, your bird should not lie down on the table. If necessary you are allowed to set it back up during the presentation. Tell the judge that you would like to pose your bird, set your bird up, then stand back and wait for the judge to examine your bird.



**Proper posing example.**  
(Photo by Sarah McNaughton)

## Final Statement

When you are finished posing your bird, tell the judge that this concludes your presentation and ask if they have any questions. The judge’s questions may be about your bird, clarifying something you shared in your presentation or a general poultry question. Make sure you study the “American Standard of Perfection” book including other breeds, varieties and your breed characteristics to be fully prepared.

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## Resources for exhibitors:

- American Poultry Association — American Standard of Perfection. [www.amerpoultryassn.com/](http://www.amerpoultryassn.com/)
- National Pigeon Association — NPA Book of Standards. [www.npaua.com/](http://www.npaua.com/)
- Poultry Curriculum for 4-H — Do not abuse or aggressively handle your animal. National 4-H Mall: <https://shop4-h.org/collections/searchresults?type=product&q=poultry+curriculum>
- Showmanship video examples:
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDmAuhLEb6g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDmAuhLEb6g)
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BPFQgB6yf4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BPFQgB6yf4)

# Poultry Showmanship

## Scoresheet

The scoresheet below can be used for practicing your poultry showmanship. This scoresheet may be utilized during your show, but is not required. This scoresheet is an example of the topics to be discussed during your showmanship routine. Always follow what the judge asks of you as an exhibitor.



NDSU

EXTENSION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Exhibitor ID \_\_\_\_\_ Class ID \_\_\_\_\_

Possible Points	Points Awarded	What the judge is looking for
10		1. Introduction – number, breed, breed origin & history, etc.
20		2. Grooming and condition of bird – good health, clean, good body condition, tame and manageable, etc.
5		3. Routine (routine should be done smoothly in any order) A. Examination of head, wattle, ears, etc.
5		B. Wings, color pattern, condition of feathers, check for lice or mite damage.
5		C. Show width of back, undercolor.
5		D. Check keel bone, breast, feather color, undercolor.
5		E. Feet, toes, shanks.
5		F. Tail, proper carriage, condition.
5		G. Place bird on table and pose for judge.
20		4. Exhibitor's appearance and attitude
10 (15 points if no questions asked)		5. Exhibitor's speaking ability and knowledge of subject
5 / NA		6. Exhibitor's ability to answer questions if asked
<b>100</b>		<b>Total Score</b>

RIBBON PLACING: B R W

Comments:

# Fitting and Showing Rabbits

**Fitting** refers to choosing a rabbit for show and caring for it to enhance its condition and appearance. Fitting also includes any preparation of the rabbit before the contest, such as checking its general health, trimming the toenails and removing dead fur. Practicing good management techniques (such as proper animal care and cage or hutch care) will improve the health and appearance of the rabbit for show.

**Condition** refers to “The overall physical state of a rabbit in relation to healthy cleanliness, fur and grooming.” — American Rabbit Breeders Association. The rabbit’s condition is a sign of its health, meat and fur qualities.

## Choosing a Rabbit

When you start a rabbit project, choosing a rabbit breed is an important decision. You have many rabbit breeds to choose from, each with different temperaments and characteristics. A 4-H volunteer leader or experienced rabbit breeder can help you decide what breed is best for you. Worldwide, rabbits are raised for a variety of purposes including food, wool, fur and pets.

- Consider your size and the size of the rabbit when choosing a rabbit breed. Choose a rabbit that is a size you can handle comfortably.
- Choose your rabbit at least four to six weeks before the contest so you have enough time to work with it and familiarize the rabbit with the showmanship process.
- A rabbit older than 3 months will tend to be less excitable. A younger rabbit will get excited more easily.
- Either sex of rabbit may be used in a 4-H contest.
- Make sure the rabbit you choose for the contest does not have any disqualifications. **Refer to the American Rabbit Breeders Association book “Standard of Perfection” for your rabbit’s breed standard.**

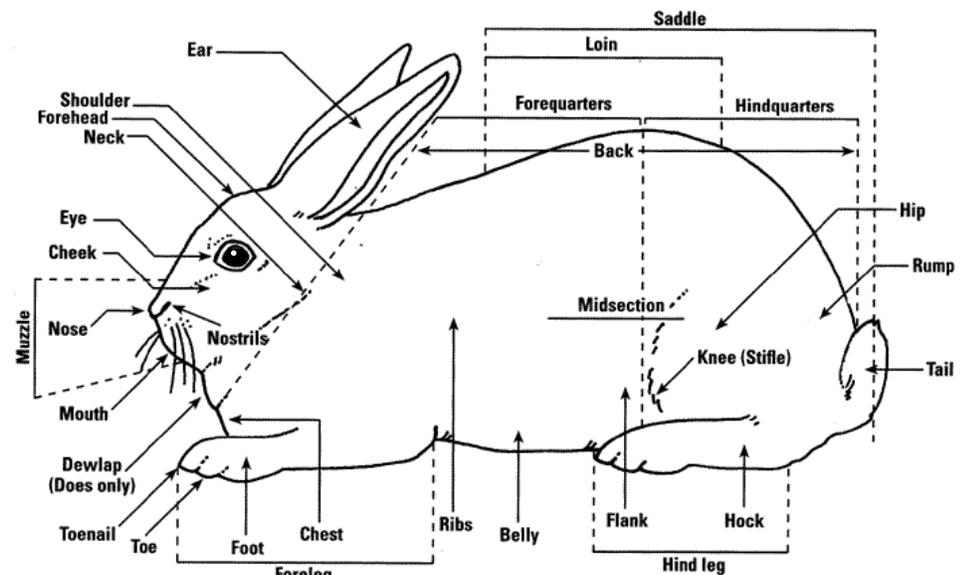
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## Caring for Your Rabbit

Handle your rabbit often to prepare it for fitting and showing in a contest. This will expose your rabbit to other distractions such as unfamiliar sounds (music and conversation), different lighting and movements such as other animals and humans moving nearby.

- Learn the basic fundamentals of nutrition for your rabbit. A caged rabbit cannot forage or select its diet like the wild rabbit does. You are responsible for supplying your rabbit with a proper diet. Animals require food for four main purposes:
  1. To give heat and energy to the body
  2. To provide essentials for building various body tissue.
  3. To supply materials for building bones
  4. To support body, immune and brain function
- Give your rabbit good-quality feed and fresh, clean water daily.
- **Coprophagy** – Rabbits have a unique digestive system. A rabbit will re-ingest the soft small pellets called cecotropes (feces) as soon as they emerge from the body to obtain important nutrients from them.
- **Mites** – If your rabbit has ear mites, treat the condition immediately so the problem is completely gone by the time of the contest.

**Basic rabbit diagram. Please refer to the breed standard for your rabbit exhibit.** Photo used with permission of Daily Hop It: Rabbit Anatomy and Sexing.



- **Loose fur** – For some breeds, remove loose fur by wetting your hands and running your palm back and forth over the rabbit from head to tail.
- **Toenail trimming** – All rabbits need regular toenail trimming, especially before a show. Use a heavy-duty nail clipper and be careful so you do not cut too close or into the quick causing the nail to bleed. Trimming nails a little bit, regularly, is better than trying to trim off a lot once in a while.
- **Housing** – Rabbits can be housed in a cage, outside hutche, barn or other enclosure. Make sure the housing provides space for the rabbit to exercise, is easy to clean, safe, sturdy, durable and provides adequate ventilation.

## Showing Your Rabbit

Rabbit showmanship does not start the week of the contest; begin practicing showing techniques several weeks before the show. The judge will evaluate your care, knowledge, skills and ability.

## Beginning the Show

Participants are silent during the showmanship part of the competition. Only speak in response to the judge's questions.

The showmanship competition begins when the judge asks you to pose your rabbit to the table (see "Posing Your Rabbit" – Figure 20, page 37).

Stand behind the table with your rabbit in front of you, facing the judge. When the judge tells you to begin by saying "handle your rabbit," that's your cue to perform the steps described in the "Handling Your Rabbit" section that follows.

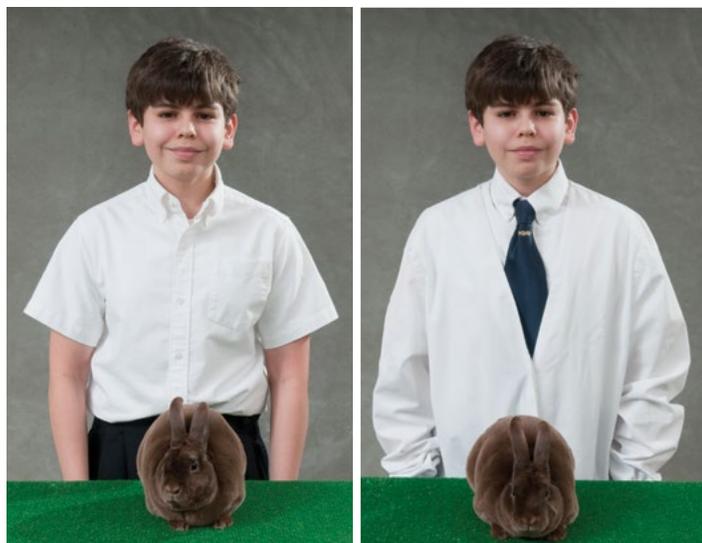


Figure 10. Improper (left) and proper clothing (right).

## Handling Your Rabbit

### Step 1.

Lifting and supporting your rabbit, turn it sideways without dragging its toenails on the table (see Figure 11).

### Step 2.

Place the palm of one hand directly in front of the rabbit's face. Cup your other palm around the shoulders of the rabbit, directly behind the base of the ears and with your fingers in the appropriate place. (This will depend on which of the finger placement options you choose from the list that follows.) Support the animal by gently holding its shoulders with your cupped hand. If at all possible, try not to grasp the rabbit's skin and fur (see Figure 12). This is why exhibiting a smaller rabbit is easier if your hands are small.

- **Option A:** Holding only one ear between your thumb and pointer finger (see Figure 13).



Figure 11. (Step 1) Lifting and supporting your rabbit.



Figure 12. (Step 2) Holding your rabbit.



Figure 13. (Step 2) Holding your rabbit — Option A

- **Option B:** Holding both ears between thumb and pointer finger (see Figure 14).
- **Option C:** Holding one ear between your thumb and pointer finger and the second ear between your pointer and middle finger (see Figure 15).

**Step 3.**

Keeping your hand cupped on the rabbit's shoulders, lift it by the shoulder and ears, raising your hand so its front legs are slightly off the table (see Figure 16).

**Step 4.**

Use your other hand to support the rabbit's lower hindquarters (see Figure 17) or gently place one hand under the chest and the other under the rump.

**Step 5.**

Lift the rabbit and bring it toward your body so its head is in your elbow bend. Lower your other arm to your side. In this position, the rabbit's head is hidden in your elbow bend and the rabbit's weight is completely resting on your arm and hand. The rabbit's front feet should be on your forearm, and the back feet in your hand (see Figure 18).

**Step 6.**

After the judge instructs you to "pose your rabbit on the table," gently return it to the table. (see Figure 19). The way to do this will depend on the size and breed of the rabbit and your size. Next, pose it facing the judge as described in "Posing Your Rabbit" (see Figure 20).

The important thing is not how fast you pick up the rabbit, but whether the judge sees the various steps you use and how well you perform them. However, don't expect the judge to acknowledge each step as you perform it.



**Figure 14. (Step 2) Holding your rabbit — Option B**



**Figure 15. (Step 2) Holding — Option C**



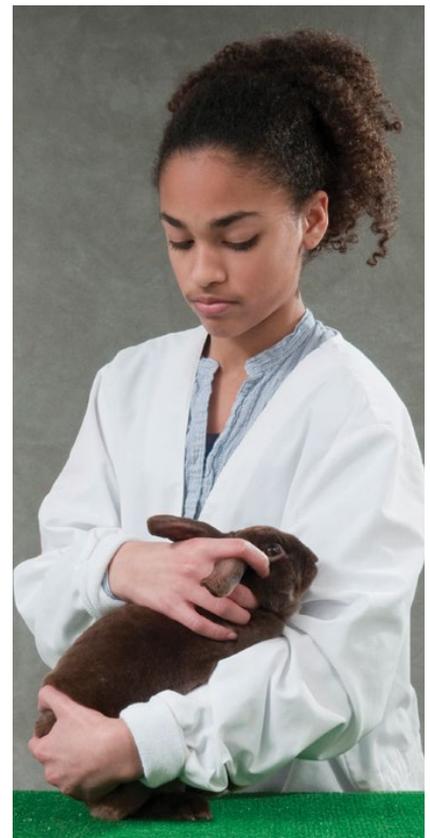
**Figure 16. (Step 3) Lifting your rabbit.**



**Figure 17. (Step 4) Supporting the rabbit as you lift.**



**Figure 18. (Step 5) Holding your rabbit.**



**Figure 19. (Step 6) Setting your rabbit down.**



**Figure 20. Posing your rabbit for the judge.**

(Photo by Leigh Ann Skurupey, NDSU)

## Dealing With Rabbit Misbehavior

Because you are dealing with a live animal during the contest, almost anything can happen. Keeping a cool head is important. Do not overreact if your rabbit does something that embarrasses you (such as leaving feces or urine on the table or on your show clothes).

Just remember these are natural activities for a rabbit. Treat them discreetly and calmly continue through your steps. If your rabbit becomes agitated or stressed while being shown and bites or nips you, try not to overreact. If your rabbit tries to breed or fight with the rabbit next to you, quickly separate the rabbits and repose your rabbit on the table. All participants are responsible for controlling their rabbits on the table.

When examining your rabbit, do not let the rabbit sense that you are afraid of its behavior. Be confidence and take control of your rabbit and you will do well.

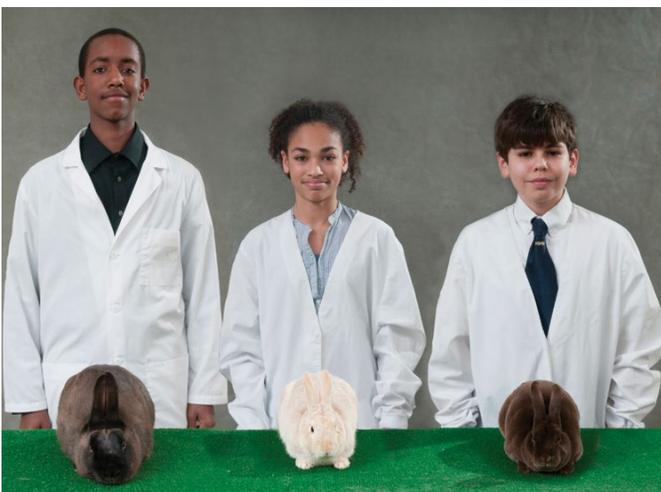
Rabbits are creatures of habit. The more you practice with your rabbit, the easier it will be to show. Practice, practice and practice some more.

## Posing Your Rabbit

**Complete the following steps according to your rabbit's breed standard:**

Pose the rabbit facing the judge and at least 1 foot away from the rabbit on either side of it.

When you practice posing your rabbit, make sure you have a table and a rug or piece of carpet on which to place the animal. Do not try to pose the animal on a smooth surface because it will not have firm footing and may slip.

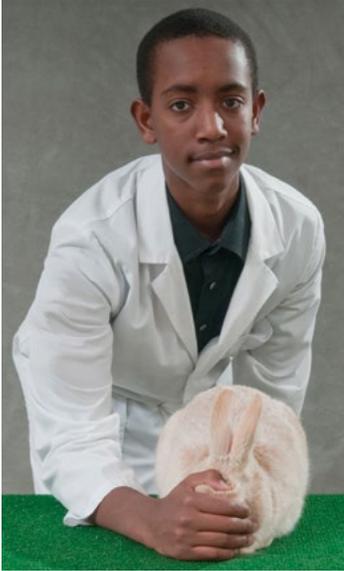


**Figure 21. Posing your rabbit for the judge.**



**Figure 22. Do not pose your rabbit on a slick surface.**

# Posing Your Rabbit



**Step 1.** Cover rabbit's head and eyes with your hand.



**Step 5.** Set the tail so that it is not underneath the rabbit.



**Step 6.** Set the ears of your rabbit according to its breed standard.



**Step 2 and 3.** Set each foreleg even with the eye of your rabbit.

**Steps 4.** Set each hind foot in line with the stifle (the back knee) of the rabbit.



**Step 7.** Smooth or fluff the fur of your rabbit according to its breed standard.



**Step 8.** Stand back from the table and place your arms at your sides.

# Examining Your Rabbit

In the examination part of the showmanship contest, the judge will attempt to determine each participant's knowledge of how to check the rabbit for disqualifications and quality. The judge will evaluate you on how smoothly, systematically and confidently you perform each of the examination steps. For each step, begin on the side you are most comfortable with. Be consistent and continue with the same side of the rabbit you chose throughout the exam. Your movements will be smoother and more systematic because you always start on the same side of the rabbit.

The judge will say "examine your rabbit" when it is time to begin. The examination includes the following steps:



**Step 1.** Lift and turn the rabbit sideways with one hand under its chest and the other hand under its rump for support. Place the rabbit sideways on the table.



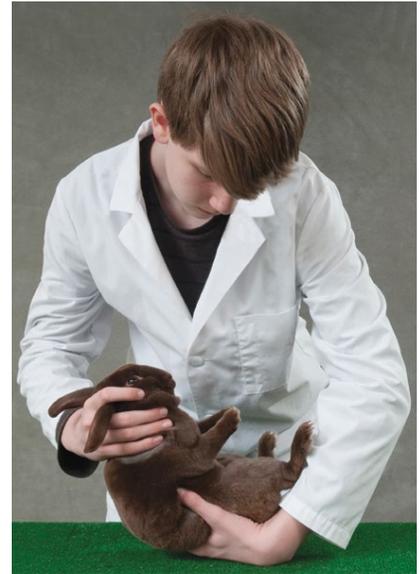
**Step 2.** Starting with the head, gently squeeze the base of each ear one at a time.



**Step 3.** Open and examine each ear to make sure that the rabbit does not have ear mites. Also, check for any nicks in the ears and note tattoo number if present.



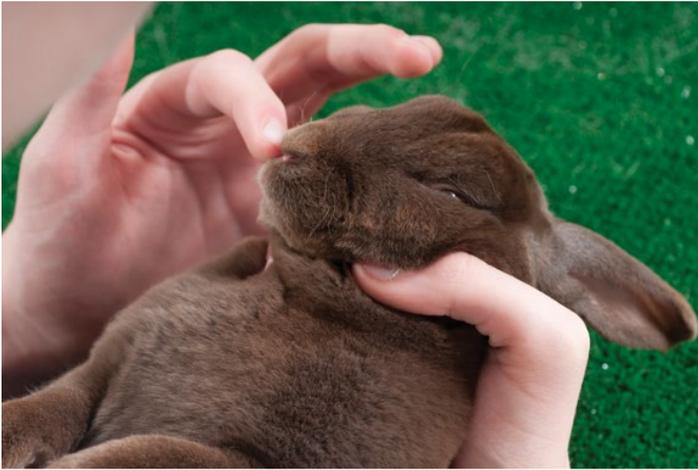
**Step 4.** Check your rabbit's eyes by pointing your finger at each eye. Do not touch the eye. Do this to ensure the animal is not blind. Show the judge that your animal does not have weepy or cloudy eyes. Identify and state the correct eye color for your specific breed to the judge.



**Step 5.** Turn your rabbit smoothly onto its back. Place the palm of one hand directly in front of the rabbit's face. Cup the palm of your other hand around the shoulders of the rabbit, directly behind the base of the ears. Never lift by the ears. Appropriate finger placement will depend on which finger placement option you choose. Support the animal by gently holding its shoulders with your cupped hand. Try not to grasp the skin and fur. While holding the shoulders and ears, use your opposite hand to support the rabbit's hindquarters. Lift the front end and roll the hindquarters under. Do not let go of the shoulders. Release your hand from the rump to proceed with the exam. Make sure you provide adequate support for the rabbit when you turn it over. Do not allow the animal to struggle or kick.

**Note:** Turning the rabbit on its back is a very important step because the judge will observe whether the rabbit is under your control while you perform the examination. Slow and smooth movements help maintain control.

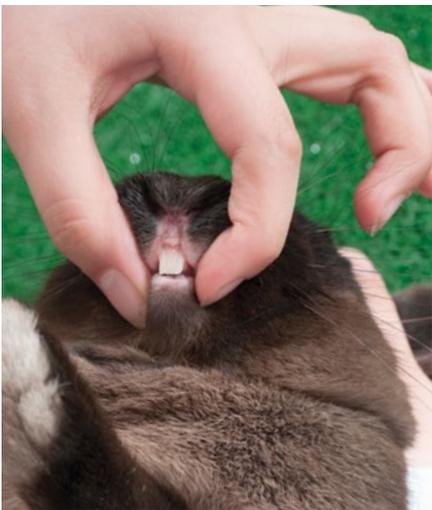
The rabbit now should be positioned with its head either to your right or to your left, depending on whether you are right- or left-handed.



**Step 6.** Point your index finger to the rabbit's nose area and gently touch it to look for any discharge.

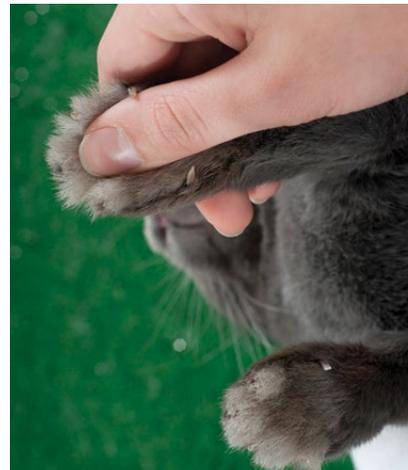


**Step 9.** Gently pull each front leg up separately to see if the legs are straight, crooked or bowed.

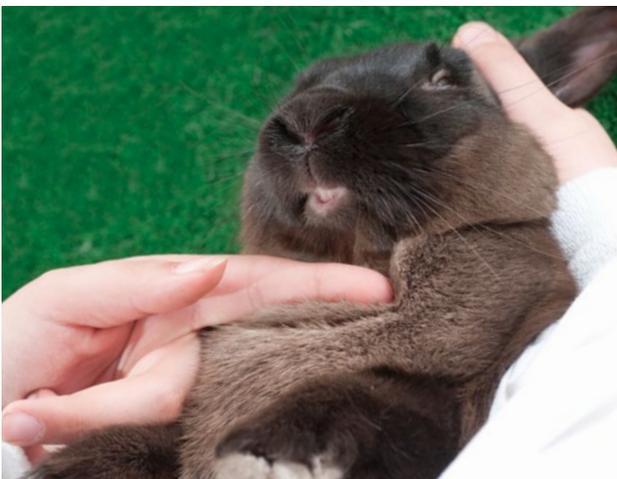


**Step 7.** Approaching the rabbit from above, pull back its lips with your thumb and index finger to show the judge the condition of its teeth.

Talk to the judge about whether you can see any cracked, chipped, broken or buckteeth (malocclusion).



**Step 10.** With your thumb, gently press the footpad of your rabbit to extend the front toenails to check the color of the nails and to look for missing or broken nails. Check each toe and do not forget the dewclaw. With some breeds, you may need to pull the fur back to expose the nails.



**Step 8.** Check the throat or dewlap area of your rabbit for abscesses or tumors by stroking under the chin with the flat backside of your finger. Describe to the judge what you are doing and what you have found.



**Step 11.** Cup and slide your hand over the chest and abdominal areas of your rabbit. Check for abscesses, tumors or other abnormalities. Describe what you find to the judge.



**Step 12.** When your cupped and sliding hand reaches the thigh area of the rabbit, gently squeeze the hind legs together to determine their straightness and note if the back legs are parallel.



**Step 13.** Support the hind legs of your rabbit with your hand and use your thumb to examine each hock area for signs of sore hocks. You also may grab each foot individually, as long as you use your thumb to examine it.



**Step 14.** With your thumb, gently push on the rear footpads to extend the toenails out so you can check the color and look for missing or broken toenails. With some breeds, you may need to pull back the fur to expose the nails.



**Step 15.** Check the animal's sex by holding its tail between your pointer and middle fingers and pressing down lightly in front of the sex organ with your thumb. Examine the area for any signs of disease.



**Step 16.** While still holding the tail between your two fingers, slide your fingers from the base to the end of the tail to determine whether the tail has been broken.

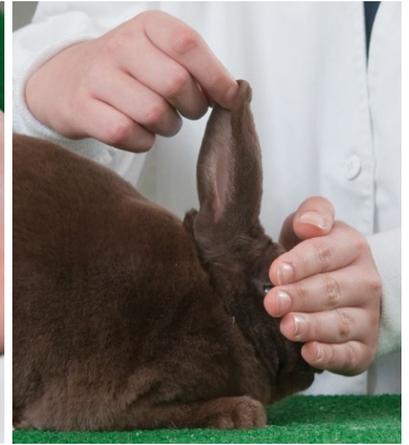


**Step 17.** Place your free hand under the rabbit's rump and gently roll it back onto its feet so the rabbit is facing sideways. Cover the rabbit's eyes to control it and keep it calm.



**Step 18.** With your free hand, gently pull the tail out and release it to examine the tail for abnormalities. Check for proper tail carriage and to be sure the rabbit does not have a wry or screw tail.

**Step 19.** Place the rabbit's ears according to its breed standard, checking for proper ear carriage (pictures to the right).



**Step 20.** Check the quality of the animal's body type and flesh condition by cupping your hand over the rabbit's shoulders and slowly sliding your hand down to the base of the hindquarters (pictures to the right).



**Step 21.** Examine the fur quality, texture and density of your rabbit by running your hand from the tail to the head and back to the tail (left).

If you have a wool breed rabbit, do not run your hand on the animal. Instead, gently fluff the wool from back to front to check the length and condition. Then gently grasp the wool on the sides of the rabbit to check the density.

If you have a rex-furred rabbit as pictured with the dark brown fur, gently press into the fur to check for resistance and then release your hand.



**Step 22.** Pose the rabbit facing forward and stand with your hands at your sides. This completes the examination.

# Rabbit Showmanship

## Scoresheet

This score sheet may be used to prepare for rabbit showmanship. This scoresheet is not required, rather, a tool to use as a judge or exhibitor to prepare what you need to cover when talking about your 4-H rabbit exhibit with the judge. Practice going through these topics with your friends and family to work on your public speaking and communication skills.



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EXTENSION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Exhibitor ID \_\_\_\_\_ Class ID \_\_\_\_\_

**General Note to Judge:** Judge the contestant's actions and knowledge. Do not judge the condition or behavior of the rabbit.

STEP	ACTIONS	PTS	TERMS	PTS	PTS
Carry	Proper support Maintain control	5			/ 5
Pose	Correct pose for breed Introduction: Greeting, Name, Step-back	3	Breed, Compact, Cylindrical, Full Arch Mandolin, Semi-Arch, Commercial	2	/ 5
Ears	Check both ears Read tattoo	3	Mites, Canker, Carriage, Thickness, Color, Torn or Missing Portions, Fur Covering	2	/ 5
Turn-Over	Smooth motion, proper control Rest weight on table	5			/ 5
Eyes	Properly Open Eyes Not forcing open	3	Proper Color, Blindness, Wall Eye, Moon Eye, Weepy Eye or signs of conjunctivitis	2	/ 5
Nose	Proper hand position Show both nostrils Check inside legs for nasal discharge	3	Snuffles, Nasal Discharge Foreign Spots, or Colors	2	/ 5
Teeth	Proper hand position Show upper & lower incisors	3	Malocclusion, Buck Teeth, Wolf Teeth Peg Teeth, Broken Teeth	2	/ 5
Front Feet/Legs	Check straightness of legs Check toenails, pad, & dewclaw Proper thumb position	3	Broken, Extra, Missing Toes Mismatched, White, Missing Toenails Bone Density, Dew Claw, Pads	2	/ 5
Belly	Check under jaw & chest Check abdomen & sides Smooth & complete coverage	3	Abscess, Tumor, Abnormalities Pigeon Breast, Blemishes, Mastitis	2	/ 5
Rear Feet/Legs	Check straightness of legs Check toenails & hocks Proper thumb position	3	Broken & Missing Toes Mismatched, White, Missing Toenails Bone Density, Straightness, Sore Hocks	2	/ 5
Sex	Proper position of rabbit & hand Expose vent/penis & testicles	3	Buck/Doe, Vent Disease, Hutch Burn Split Penis, Descended Testicles in Int/Sr	2	/ 5
Tail	Extend tail; Move side to side Examine underside	3	Wry, Dead, Bobbed, Broken Color, Straightness	2	/ 5
Fur	Return to pose; Smooth motion Proper control; Stroke coat from tail to head to show fur type	3	Density, Texture, Sheen, Luster Rollback, Flyback, Rex, Standing, Wool	2	/ 5
Judging Comments	Final pose: Head, Ears, Shoulder, Chest, Midsection, Loin, Hindquarters, Rump, Breed specific (markings/color)	10	Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Balance Condition, Finish Did not use word, "Nice"!	5	/ 15
Overall Presentation	Show Coat/Apron/Long Sleeves Smile, Hair Neat No Rings, No dangling jewelry	5	Humane treatment/Controls animal at all times Good eye contact, Follows directions, Thanks Judge	5	/ 10
Knowledge			Answers to questions	10	/ 10
Judge			<u>Danish Ribbon:</u> Blue Red White	TOTAL SCORE	100

Comments:

# Drug Withdrawal Form

Raising 4-H animals for human consumption means that each 4-H'er is a livestock producer. The purpose of this page is to ensure that all 4-H'ers and their families know and understand the importance of quality assurance regarding drug withdrawal and supplying safe, wholesome products for human consumption.

In regard to the use of animal health aids, growth promotants or other livestock substances, **I am aware that:**

- Chemical substances used in livestock production or disease control have approved withdrawal times before slaughter.
- Information on specific use and withdrawal times can be found on product label instructions.
- Tranquilizers and other non-approved substances should not be used for food animals.

**Therefore, I certify that the animals I bring to this show have** (check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ while in my ownership, never have been given any substance that requires a withdrawal time from slaughter.

\_\_\_\_\_ compiled with legal withdrawal times in the use of one or more approved chemical substances for animal health, growth production or other livestock management practices.

I understand that violation of approved usage of these substances may be prosecuted and that **any** animal at the \_\_\_\_\_ (name of show) is subject to comprehensive drug tests at the option of show management.

The \_\_\_\_\_ (name of show) and its officers and management will not be legally responsible.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Exhibitor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Exhibitor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Philosophy of Judging

“To make the best better” — our well-known 4-H motto — implies that we need to know what our best is before we can make it better. Our motto asks how well we’re doing now and encourages us to consider how and where we can improve. “To make the best better,” we must have evaluation (judging) that allows us to discover where we are and how well we’re doing.

Remember that the “best” we are striving to “make better” is young people — people who need to feel and know they are special, capable and lovable. We are helping them achieve the best in themselves. Keep in mind that the exhibit/project display is not an end in itself and does not illustrate all the learning that takes place in a 4-H project; it displays a portion of what the 4-H members are capable of doing and shows what they have accomplished and created.

The total development of the 4-H member is more important than the completion of the project/display. Creating, sharing, exhibiting and judging projects can help members develop skills that will last a lifetime in positive and healthy ways. The best gift we can give our youth is to empower them with skills to enter the workforce. Projects and records help young people develop skills, gain knowledge and build confidence, but the person is whom we are most concerned about. In 4-H, it’s people who count!

## The Danish System

The Danish System is designed to give 4-H members a feel for their level of execution in a specific class, recognizing and rewarding young people for their efforts and their projects. The system is designed to maintain a proper balance of competition and recognition. This system is defined as a method of evaluating a participant’s product, skill or exhibit relative to the standards developed for the class or contest.

The Danish system is not used to judge exhibitors against the other participants. Judging against a standard is designed as an educational tool, which highlights areas of success and topics that may need improvement. This allows 4-H members to be recognized for their hard work, as well as helps them recognize the need to improve their skills and to “make the best better.”

### How to Use

After the evaluation of each exhibitor in a class, the entire class is subdivided into three groups according to the quality and merit of each performance relative to the rules and guidelines.

### Three Ribbons

- Blue – excellent; this is an above-average exhibit. The exhibitor meets the standards in a way that surpasses the norm (does not indicate perfection). Minor faults are corrected immediately.
- Red – good; this is an average-quality exhibit relative to pre-established standards. A few specific shortcomings have been identified. Major and minor faults occur.
- White – fair; this is a below-average exhibit with many improvements needed for the exhibitor to meet the pre-established standards. The exhibitor completed the class incurring minor, major and severe faults without much attempt to make a correction; including a disqualification.

North Dakota 4-H chooses to use the Danish Ribbon System to offer an educational opportunity and fair assessment of the individuals’ performance as long as it is enforced uniformly. Judges are expected to know and understand the Danish Ribbon System guidelines thoroughly and direct any questions to show management.

*Mistakes are the portals of discovery.”*

— James Joyce

Thriving youth achieve key developmental outcomes, thus illuminating the process of positive youth development in a 4-H program. Understanding that mistakes and not meeting a standard is absolutely OK is critical. James Joyce said that “mistakes are the portals of discovery.” A white or red ribbon symbolizes perpetual learning, the opportunity to grow and a chance to be encouraged to seek ways to improve to do **better** and be **better** as we continue to “make the best better.”

# Herdsmanship

- The opportunity to make changes and growth in a project and exhibit offers a platform for transformational learning.
- Research indicates through the 4-H Thrive Model that a spark in youth to engage in openness to be challenged and discover new opportunities fosters a growth mindset leading to positive youth development.
- The need for improvement provides a perfect opportunity to reflect on the project using decision-making skills, reasoning and confidence to identify ways to make a change build on improvements.
- A positive attitude regardless of the color of ribbon indicates **good sportsmanship**. Helping youth learn and engage in a positive attitude and good sportsmanship as they build and grow in emotional and cognitive learning is critical.
- Help youth set a goal as they reflect on what they can improve on and cultivate that spark for positive youth development.

Good herdsman take thorough, timely care of their animals the first thing in the morning, through the day and into the evening in terms of the animal's health, feeding, watering and cleanliness. Stalls, pens and cages are clean and neat. Bedding is clean and fresh. Feed pans and buckets are clean and in place. All manure is cleaned out and deposited in designated areas.

Good herdsman do their best to minimize the stress on their livestock from before they leave home until after the fair, clinic or show is over.

*Always be a positive role model  
and ambassador for agriculture!*

— Nationally recognized 4-H Thriving Model  
developed by Mary E. Arnold, Ph.D.

Being a good herdsman does not cost a great deal of money. It does mean that the members are actively involved with the care of their animals and present their animals, pens and stalls in a way that promotes agriculture and shows the best of 4-H to the public. That means not only the pens and stalls themselves but also tack, feed, equipment, aisles and the other areas in and around each member's area.

Good herdsman have their fair entries completed on time, present their paperwork promptly at check-ins and are ready for weigh-ins

A good herdsman is on time and ready to show.

A good herdsman observes all rules and regulations and exhibits an attitude of good sportsmanship.

A good herdsman is helpful to other exhibitors, the public, superintendents and others who are making the show, clinic or event possible.

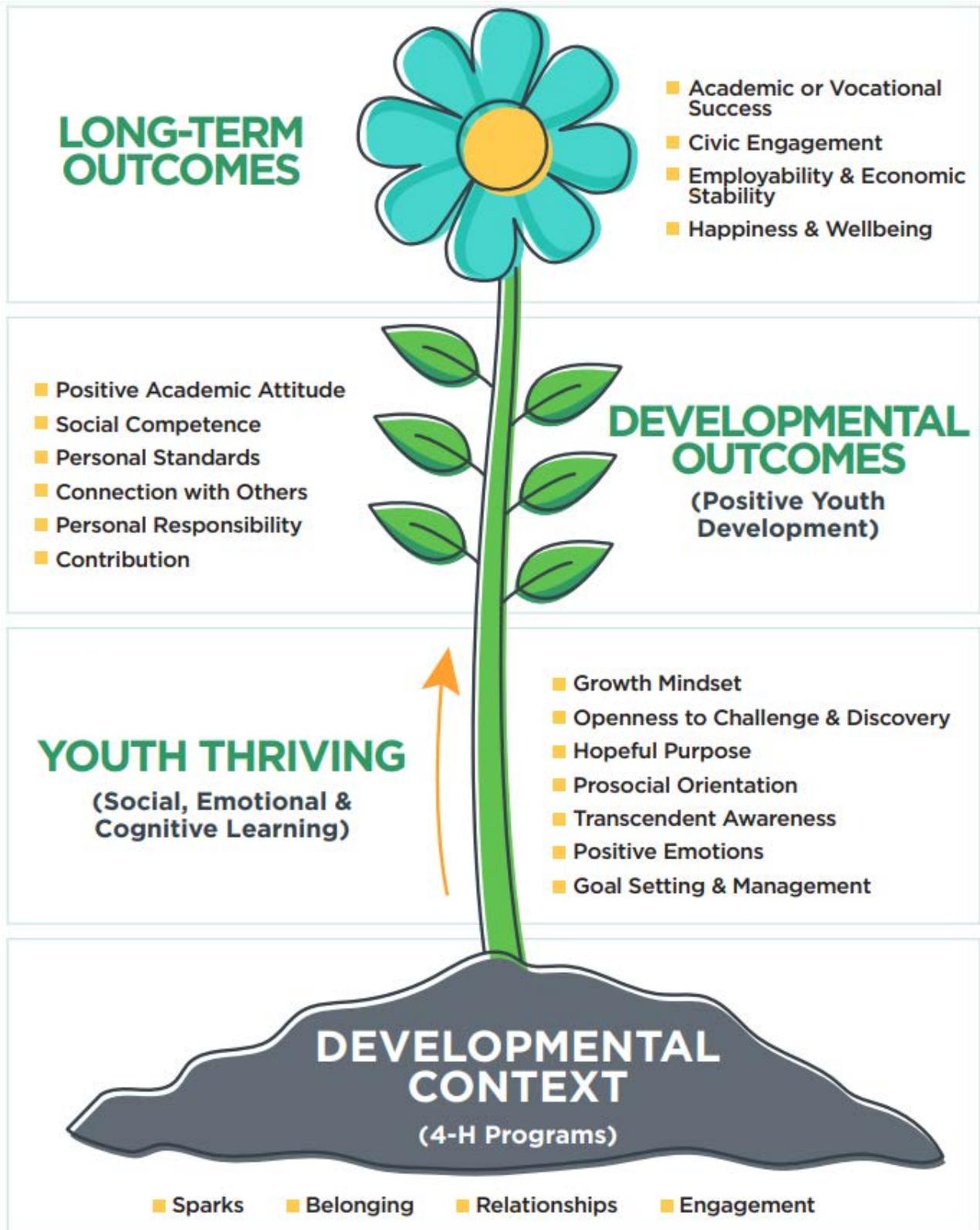
A good herdsman is encouraged to work closely with others and may rely upon their help from time to time. The responsibility, work and effort as it relates to caring for, feeding and managing animals while at a show must be that of the exhibitor.

## Herdsman Award

At the North Dakota State Fair, all species, including horse, will strive for the **Herdsman Award**. The objective of the Herdsman Award is to recognize an outstanding industry professional who excels in sportsmanship, work habits (cleaning, feeding, watering, etc. their own animal) and integrity, and exemplifies leadership as a positive ambassador for the animal and agricultural industry.

# 4-H Thriving Model

Youth who experience high quality developmental settings in 4-H with an emphasis on these key social-emotional skills achieve key positive youth development outcomes, including academic motivation and success, social competence, high personal standards, connection with others, personal responsibility, and contribution to others through leadership and civic engagement.





# North Dakota **4-H Livestock Showmanship** Guide

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