

The Basics Swine Showmanship

There are certain basics in showing swine that even the youngest showman can work to achieve. While these ideas may seem to be very detailed, they are the keys to making the showmanship experience as positive as it can be. Always keep in mind while you prepare for your showmanship that a judge is looking to be impressed in the show ring. If you want to win the blue ribbon, your number one task is to find a way to impress him!

Swine Showmanship is the overall care, training and appearance of 4-H and FFA members and their project animals, and members' performance in and outside the show ring. A member is on display at all times at the fair even though he or she is judged for showmanship only during one special class. Showmanship in the ring is characterized by the appearance of a club member and his or her animal and the manner in which the member presents that animal to the judge. The purpose of showing is to present an animal to a judge in the best manner possible so the judge can evaluate the animal thoroughly. An exhibitor should try just as hard to show an animal well during regular judging as during a showmanship class. The only difference between a regular showing and a showmanship class is that the relative merit of the animal is not under consideration during a showmanship class. A good exhibitor keeps the pig under control at all times. This is difficult because a pig is not held or restrained like other animals, and different training procedures are followed. There are two phases in swine showmanship: preparation of the animal and showing behavior.

Preparation for the Show Ring

Training

Training a pig begins in advance of show time. The best way to do this is to begin walking the pig two weeks before show time, getting it used to you and your commands. This exercise will tend to firm up its muscles and give it a better appearance. You also can practice giving the pig commands with a can or small stick. Put the animal in a pen with other pigs and see if it can be controlled with other pigs around. The exhibitor should not make a pet of the pig or it will not respond well in the show ring. Cleaning. It is best to give the pig a good scrubbing two or three times before the fair. Start about one week before the show and do the last washing after you arrive at the show. It usually requires more than one washing to remove all the dirt and dandruff from the pig. Grooming. The animal's hair coat will show more bloom if you begin brushing the pig prior to show time. Brushing also will help gentle the animal. Brush the hair coat in its normal direction. Never part it on the back. Clip the animal's tail from switch to tail setting if desired. The inside and outside of the ears also can be clipped. To give a pig a glossy hair coat, apply transparent oil to darker hogs. The oil can be mineral oil or a non-detergent motor oil. Never leave a large amount of oil on the pig. The best way to apply oil is to soak a rag and rub it over the pig. If too much oil is applied, take a dry rag and rub some off. White pigs and white areas on dark pigs can be dusted with a white powder

to give the animals a nice appearance. Here again, too much powder is not desirable. Sometimes a good washing makes the pig just as attractive. Before entering the ring. Prior to entering the show ring, the exhibitor should brush the pig clean of all straw and clean its feet of excess mud or manure. The exhibitor should be ready when the class is called. Promptness in getting the pig to the show ring is the mark of a good exhibitor.

Practice

Pigs will handle the fair better if they are comfortable around you. Spend some time getting to know your pig. Regularly work with your pig including exercising them and practice showing them. Have parents or friends serve as a judge as you practice your showmanship skills and get your pig accustomed to being handled. Provide some outside pen experience. This will give your pig additional exercise and will make it easier to move your pig in unfamiliar surroundings at the fairgrounds.

Washing

Wash your pig a few times prior to the show. This will help get your pig used to the extra handling and will reduce scrubbing time at the show. It will also aid in making sure you have a clean, well-presented project to the public at the fair. Use caution when washing your pig. Cold water can be stressful. Wet your pig slowly beginning with the legs giving the animal time to adjust to the water temperature. Secondly, use great caution when washing around your pig's head to avoid getting water into the ears. This will make your pig carry his head in an unnatural manner. To wash your pig, begin with a good pre-rinse to soften hardened manure and dirt. Then, apply a mild soap, scrub the dirt free with a brush, and then rinse. The final rinse **MUST** remove ALL soap and dirt. Dandruff can result from soap residue. When you are finished, return your washed pig to a clean, well-bedded pen.

Going To the Fair

Paperwork: Put all necessary paperwork in a folder or binder for easy access during check-in at the fair. Take time to double check that you have all required paperwork including registration papers, health papers, entry tags or any other records that may be required.

Transporting: Do not overcrowd the animals you are hauling to the fair. Do not give them a lot of feed before a long trip. If your truck or trailer is going to be full of pigs, pen them according to how they will be penned at the fair. Hogs

should be sorted before loading and given time to settle down. During the summer heat try to avoid hauling in the middle of the day. Always water your pigs before transporting them. You may want to wet bedding down when hauling on a hot day or add some ice blocks for the pigs. Make sure proper ventilation is provided.

Show Supplies: Show supplies can be organized in a lockable box. It is most convenient to have one spot to keep all necessary paperwork and equipment. Equipment you might consider packing in your box would include washing supplies, brushes, bucket, hose, boots, sprinkle can, hog hurdles, rags, feed pans, decorations, change of clothing, and showing implements. Unless the show specifies otherwise, you will need to provide your own feed and bedding. Straw or wood shavings are good choices for bedding at the fair. During warm weather, shavings are the better choice as they trap less heat around the animal.

Show Day

Give yourself plenty of time. It is amazing how many things can run amuck when you're trying to hurry. Your pig should be washed the day before the show, and returned to a well-bedded pen. Brushing pigs while they are still wet will help the hair lay down properly. If your animal has gotten dirty overnight, they should be washed again the morning before the show. To make your pigs sparkle when they enter they ring they should be wet not oiled and brushed. Give your pig a drink of water before entering the show ring. This will help your pig stay cooler and more content during the drive. Once you have been penned you can rewet you pig.

Now, let's talk about show day. Your clean, well-groomed pig should come into the ring at a slow pace so that the judge can take a good look at your hog. Be sure that you have dressed appropriately and that your brush is in your pocket. Your job is to remain focused, calm, and confident throughout your showmanship class, no matter how your pig acts. If your hog takes off running across the ring, DO NOT take off running after him. Rather, move quickly but not at a run to recover complete control of your pig. After you enter the ring, keep your hog at the far end of the ring until all of your competitors have entered the ring. Your judge will immediately be impressed when you exhibit the control to keep your hog out of the way of incoming pigs. It also helps to show the judge that you want to be courteous to the other exhibitors.

Showing Behavior

Exhibitor's Appearance

Although the appearance of the pig and the exhibitor's actions in the show ring are the primary considerations in a showmanship contest, do not overlook the exhibitor's appearance. An exhibitor should be clean and well-groomed. An exhibitor often is busy feeding or preparing

livestock just before show time, but should take time for personal appearance before entering the ring. Clothes that are neat and practical are recommended. A sloppy appearance detracts from a good animal and a good showing job. Remember to relax and enjoy the experience!

Knowledge Of The Animal

The exhibitor should have some information about the swine project. He or she should be able to tell the judge the age, weight, breed, sex and other points about the pig.

Before Entering The Ring

As you enter the ring, have in mind where you want your pig to go. The idea is NOT to simply following your pig around the ring, but, instead, to drive your pig around the ring to the places where the judge can get the best look at your hog. At all times, you want to keep your pig between you and the judge while moving your pig along at a slow, even pace with the least possible use of your cane. Excessive use of your cane is one of the easiest ways for a judge to determine that you are a less experienced showman. Successful swine showman accomplishes complete control with very gentle use of their cane. Light taps on a hog that has been worked with is all that will be necessary to get them headed or turned in the right direction.

In The Ring

Goals: Your goals as you drive your hog are to keep your pig 10 to 15 feet from the judge, keep your pig off of the fence, keep your pigs out of the corners, and on the move at all times. The more that you can be in the center of the ring, the more that the judge can get a good look at your hog. Feel free to use your free hand in your pig's face to move him out of a corner or get him off the rail, but NEVER use your knees. Your plan is try to anticipate when your hog will head for the fence and keep him from reaching it. Your posture should be slightly crouched in a relaxed, casual position. Keep your eyes on the judge and always know where your judge is at all times. Eye contact with the judge is a very basic necessity to becoming a successful showman.

Job: Your job is to present your pigs strengths. Once you enter the show ring, you are on their own. This is the time when all your preparation will pay off.

The following are general guidelines for showing hogs in the ring:

- T You should position yourself on the opposite side of your pig that the judge is looking at.
- T Try to drive the pig about 10-15 feet from the judge.
- T Having your entry at the judge's feet is less desirable than farther away.

- T Steer your hog out of corners and away from crowds. A cane makes an excellent steering device.
- T Make all your moves slowly, smoothly and naturally.
- T Don't turn the pig sharply; let it walk naturally. Be on the lookout for trouble from unruly hogs in the ring and try to avoid the area they are in.
- T A nervous, jumpy show person makes a nervous and jumpy hog.
- T Never put your hands on the animals back when in the ring. However, you may use your hand to help turn an uncooperative pig.
- T A soft push from your hand is more desirable and easier than another tap of the show cane.
- T Always be a courteous show person. Step aside and let the other exhibitors and hogs pass through and then resume showing.
- T Never over-show the animal.
- T A judge is not looking for an exhibitor who fusses with or over-maneuvers the animal. Furthermore, a pig will not respond as well if the owner is too nervous.
- T Try to avoid getting your pig caught up in a group of other pigs.
- T When the judge is looking at another exhibitor's pig, don't drive your animal in front of the other pig. This is discourteous to the other exhibitor and objectionable to the judge.
- T Keep an eye on the judge and be ready to respond to directions.
- T By paying attention to the judge and your animal at all times, you will be able to show your hog to best advantage when the judge looks your way.
- T Never hit a pig.
- T Always keep your pig in command, but don't be abusive to the animal if it does not respond. An abused pig will become uncontrollable.
- T Never touch the pig on the rear with a cane. It will cause the pig to hunch up and its tail to drop down, which is an objectionable characteristic.
- T Be ready to stop your pig so the judge can get a closer look at it.

- T Present all sides of your pig to the judge. The judge is interested not only in the side view, but also the front and rear views of the animal.
- T Good sportsmanship is a part of good showmanship.
- T No matter where you placed, keep a pleasant look on your face. It will help you keep the right attitude.
- T Remember that there is always another show, another judge and another year.
- T Congratulate the winner. It is important to accept defeat with dignity and accept victory graciously.
- T Be ready to answer any questions from the judge concerning your animal.

Answering Questions

The final aspect of many showmanship classes is the judge's questions. Many times, how well you are prepared to answer your judge's questions can be the deciding factor in a class.

Your knowledge of your hog and the overall swine industry is critical to your success in this aspect of your class.

Work with your parents or your advisor to come up with possible questions that you may be asked in the ring and what the best responses to these questions may be.

Here are a few commonly asked questions that you should be prepared to answer any time you enter the show ring:

- What is the ear notch of your pig?
- What kind of feed did you use? How much did it cost?
- What does NSR stand for?
- How many nipples should a gilt have?
- Why do we dock tails?
- What can you see from the rear view of your pig?
- What does your pig weigh?
- What is the breeding of your hog?
- How much did your hog cost?
- What are some of the good and bad points of your pig?