

Lamb Showmanship

A good shower is prepared for the proper presentation of an animal. Showmanship is the one area of livestock showing where the exhibitor has control. In showmanship, you are judged on your ability to control and present the lamb at its best.

Advanced planning, practice, and hard work are keys to becoming a good shower. Lamb showmanship teaches many valuable lessons that are used in day-to-day life. These life skills include responsibility, learning about work and determination to reach a goal, succeeding graciously, and accepting setbacks with dignity. Winning takes practice at home and can become a reality by working with the lamb and having someone handle the lamb as a judge will at the show.

Appropriate Dress

Always practice good personal hygiene and dress neatly. Leather boots are preferred for safety and appearance. Wear clean jeans or slacks and a neat dress shirt or sport shirt; do not wear a T-shirt. Tuck in your shirt, and wear a belt for added neatness. Keep jewelry to a minimum.

Leave caps and grooming tools in the grooming area. (Make your final grooming touches on the lamb before the class is called.) Do not wear caps in showmanship as caps distract a judge's concentration. A neat appearance helps make a positive impression.



Show Time

Before a show, walk over the arena to find any low spots. Always set the lamb facing uphill if forced to stop in any low area. This will give the appearance of more extension through the front end of the lamb.

Promptly enter the show ring, leading the lamb from the left-hand side. Small exhibitors may use a halter. Advanced exhibitors lead the lamb with the left hand under the chin and the right hand behind the ears. Keep the ears in an alert or forward position while on the move.

Position the lamb straight in the side-by-side lineup. Quickly yet smoothly, set the lamb so that all four feet are squared with the rear legs slightly back. Do not kneel to set up a lamb; this causes you to have less control of the lamb. Small exhibitors may use a knee or foot to set the lamb's legs. By bumping the breastplate with the knee, smaller exhibitors can move the animal's rear legs back.

Larger exhibitors can lift the front end of the lamb with a leg to move the lamb into proper position. Larger exhibitors can also use their hands to help set up the lamb. Set the rear legs first, and allow the lamb to push into your leg, then lift and set the front legs.

Once the lamb is set up, keep its head held high, and locate the judge. Remain standing in front of your lamb when the judge is viewing the lambs from the rear. Push into the lamb so that muscle expression will appear in the rear leg. Never place your hand on the lamb's back or the base of its neck. This will obstruct the judge's view of the lamb's top. As the judge moves around to the right of the lamb, stay on the left and in front of the lamb.

As the judge views the front of the lamb, move to the lamb's left side and face the judge. Hold the lamb's head erect with ears forward. Be sure to keep the lamb's head high and in line with its body. As the judge moves to the left of the lamb, move back to the front to give the judge a full view of the entire animal.

Handling the Lamb

Always be ready for the judge to handle the lamb. Train the lamb to brace or push against your leg; this is known as "driving" the lamb. By driving into your leg, the lamb's muscles tighten up, feel firmer, and appear large and pronounced. Train the lamb to respond to pressure when asked to drive as opposed to standing squarely in line. When driving the lamb, stand in front and hold its head securely with the lamb's nose tilted upward (Figure 1). Gently push back on the lamb with the inside of your leg placed on the lamb's breast and shoulder area.



Figure 1. Drive your lamb by pushing back on its shoulder area with your knee or leg.

While driving the lamb, make sure all four feet remain on the ground. Never pick up your lamb so that its front feet are lifted off the ground while driving. This does not give you an advantage.

A firm top is a must when driving the lamb. Exhibitors who fail to produce a firm handle on the lamb will place down the line. A judge expects an exhibitor to be able to drive and maintain proper positioning of the lamb.

Moving the Lamb

After handling all the lambs, the judge will want you to walk your lamb. Be sure your lamb is under control and between you and the judge. If the lamb will not move, gently reach back and lift up on the lamb's dock (Figure 2).

When the judge requests, stop the lamb for a side view. Set up the lamb as discussed earlier. Allow plenty of room between you and the lamb in front. This gives extra room to work around the front of the lamb and keeps the lamb behind from crowding you on the profile.

Stand in front and to the lamb's left side to maintain the profile position. Drive the lamb with your leg, applying enough pressure to maintain a level top. Extend the lamb's head and neck upward while keeping its ears erect. Keep the lamb's head in line with the rest of its body.

Stay alert. The judge may handle the lamb again or motion for you and your lamb to move to another line. As lambs are



Figure 2. Lift the lamb's dock to encourage your lamb to walk.

pulled from the profile line, move forward to fill any resulting space. Reset your lamb, and watch the judge with each move forward. Once you are pulled to the placing line, remember the class is not over. Be sure to keep the lamb set up and looking its best.

The judge may decide to place the lambs differently after one final look. Study Figure 3 to learn how to change positions if the judge asks you to move in the line. Be sure to set your lamb in a straight line from the first lamb set up (illustrated in Figure 3). Always turn your lamb to the right (clockwise) unless you are instructed to do otherwise.

When the judge starts giving reasons, the class is over. Continue to work hard and display good sportsmanship. Congratulate the class winners and those who stood ahead of you. Offer encouragement to those that stand below, and, by all means, remain a gracious and humble winner.

Finally, remember this is a learning experience. Leave the show ring with your head held high, knowing you gave your best effort. Learn from mistakes, watch other showers, and improve your skills for the next show.

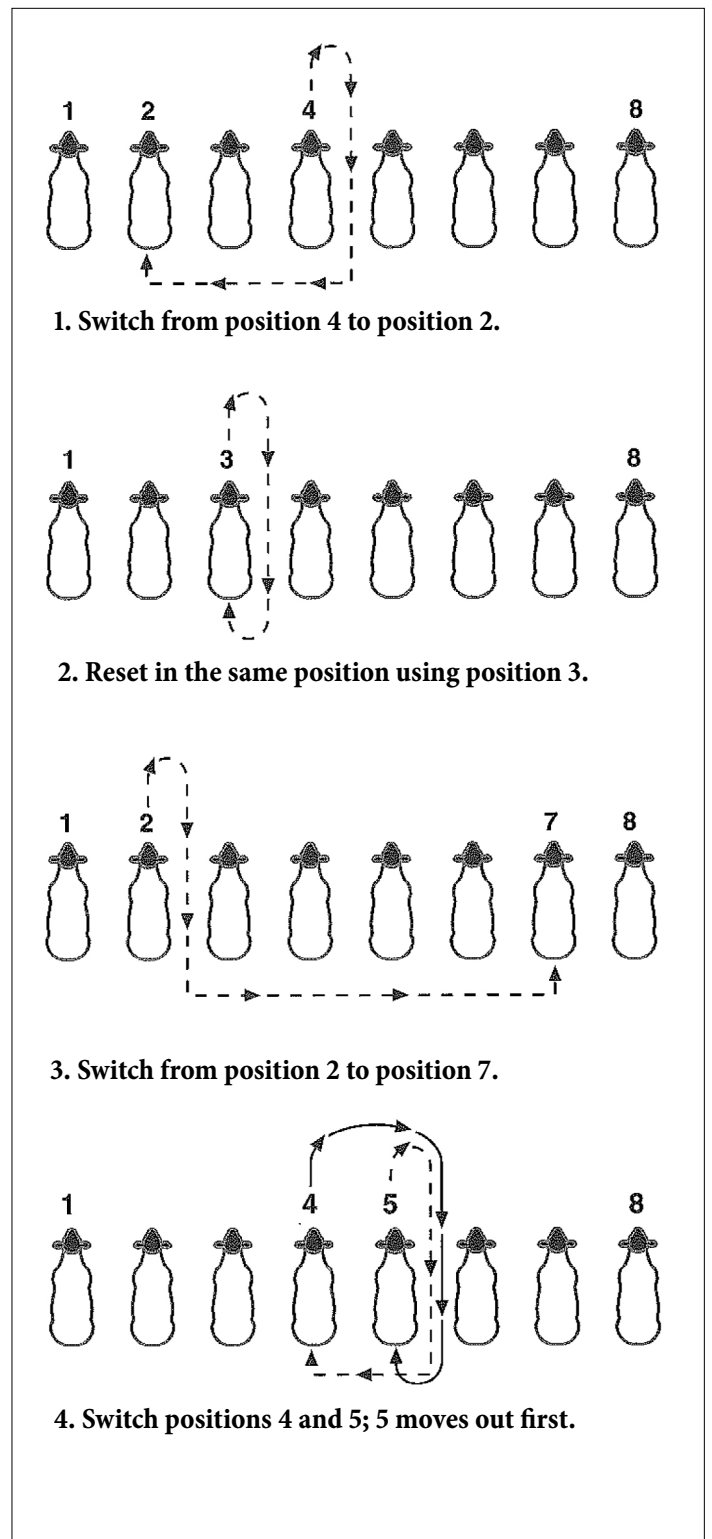


Figure 3. Correct procedure for switching positions.

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