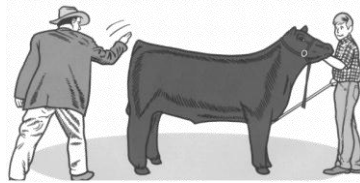


BEEF CATTLE SHOWMANSHIP

Celina R. Johnson

Showmanship is more than entering the show arena during the fair or livestock show! It includes all the hard work that exhibitors put into their project from the day they purchase their animal. Showmanship is defined as the ability to present your animal to the best of its genetic ability. Many factors enter into the equation for a successful showman, including proper nutrition, halter-breaking, and daily care and grooming. All the hard work done throughout the project will pay off on show day!



At Home Training:

Successful showman start early! Showmanship begins the day you purchase your calf. Halter-breaking and leading need to be taught early to ensure that your animal is ready for the show. If you are bringing in your calf from an outside source, give your animal time to adjust to the new surroundings. Spend time with the calf initially, to get the calf used to you. A good way to do this is during feeding, just sit or stand in the pen while your animal eats. Here are some helpful hints to assist the gentling and halter-breaking process:




- Start halter-breaking early!
- Rope halters are generally the easiest for people to use. However, most rope halters do not sufficiently relieve the pressure under the chin. You may want to modify your halter so that the lead slides easily and will quickly relieve pressure under the chin.
- Adjust the halter so that the nose piece is about 2 inches below the eye. (see picture)
- Use a small pen (approximately 8' x 8') initially. This will prevent the calf from ever escaping you as the handler, even if the lead is lost. Gradually move to larger pens (if available) as your calf is leading better.
- You can let the calf drag the lead for a couple of days to let them be accustomed to pressure on the lead and giving to it. However, do not leave the halter on the calf indefinitely, as the animal's skin can develop sores.
- When you tie up the calf initially, tie them at their chin height. This minimizes the amount of force they have to pull back and will minimize the chance for a broken halter. While the calf is tied up (for no longer than 15-20 minutes), brush the calf and allow the calf to get used to you. **NEVER LEAVE A TIED ANIMAL UNATTENDED!!!**
- When leading the calf for the first few times – lead them somewhere they want to go, such as food or water.



- When leading, as soon as your calf takes a step in the direction you want it to go, relax the lead and reward the animal with relief of the pressure. Constant pulling will desensitize your calf and the calf will become stubborn. Animals respond to a reward system.
- Once the calf is leading and comfortable with being tied up – you can begin the rinsing process and other daily grooming needs for the animal. For more information, see the Colorado State University Fact Sheet - "Successful Fitting and Grooming of Beef Cattle"
- Successful showmanship also involves the proper feeding and care of your project animal. For more information on nutrition, refer to Colorado State University Manual – "Feeding Market Beef".
- Remember – PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT! Introduce your animal to the show stick and show halter well in advance of your show. Your animal needs to be trained how to set its feet up properly and walk with a show halter.

Setting your animals feet:

Your job as a showman is to present your animal to the best of its ability. Setting up the feet properly will allow your animal to look its best! The following series of pictures demonstrate the proper setting up of feet.

Front View of the Animal		
		
Too close The animal appears narrow through the chest floor.	Just right Enhances the animal's natural volume and capacity.	Too wide Appears unnatural and unbalanced
<p>When setting up the front feet – use your own foot as a "brake" when asking the front foot to move forward or use your own foot to push the front foot back (less distracting than trying to maneuver the show stick). With enough practice your animal will almost set themselves up!</p>		

Rear View of the Animal



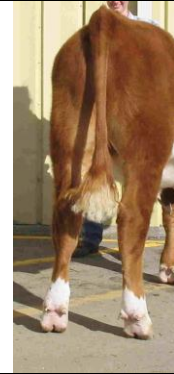
Too close

The animal appears narrow and the stance detracts from the natural muscling. Also, the feet are not quite square, which enhances the narrowness.



Just right

Enhances the animal's natural muscling and base width.



Too wide

Appears unnatural and unbalanced

When setting up the rear feet – use your show stick point to push the feet back, and the hook to pull the foot forward. With enough practice your animal will almost set themselves up!

Side View of the Animal



Too close

The animal appears short sided and structurally incorrect.



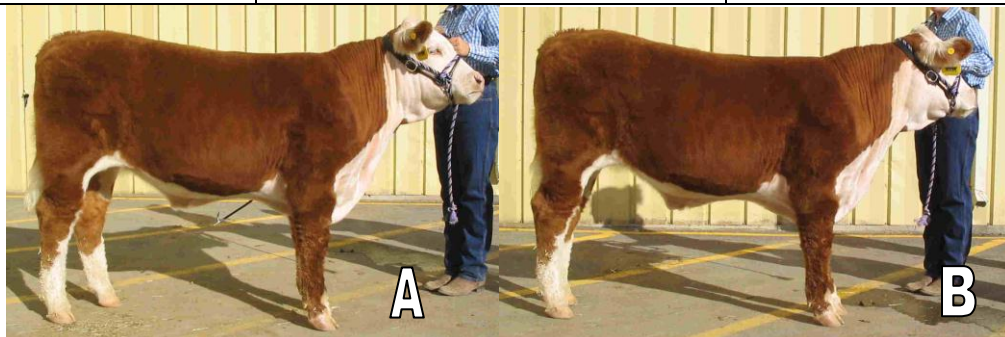
Just right

Enhances the animal's balance and eye appeal.



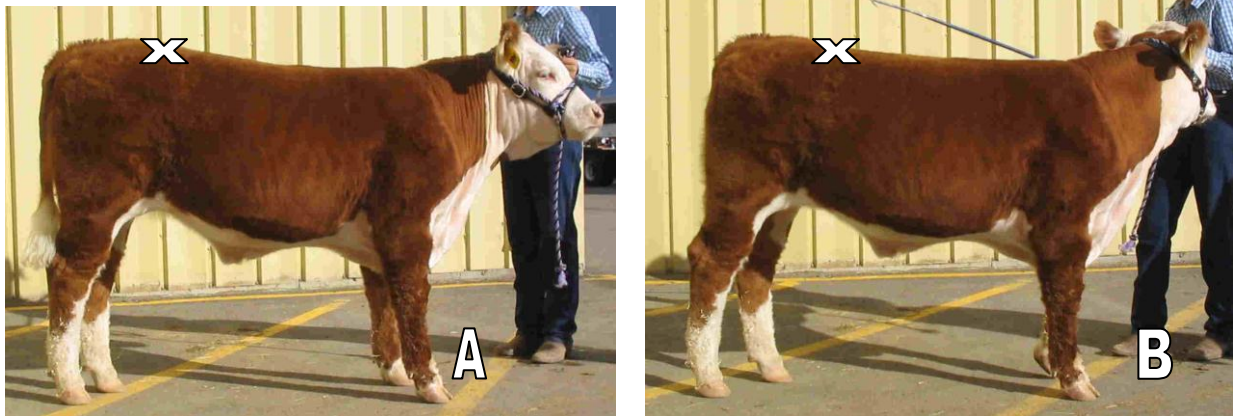
Stretched

Appears unnatural and unbalanced, can cause the animal to appear weak down its top.



When setting your animal up on a side view (or profile), you may either offset the hind legs slightly (A) or set the animal up square (B). If you offset the hind legs, make sure the side closest to the judge is slightly back and the side furthest from the judge is slightly forward. By offsetting the legs, some animals will appear more level down their top and out their hip.

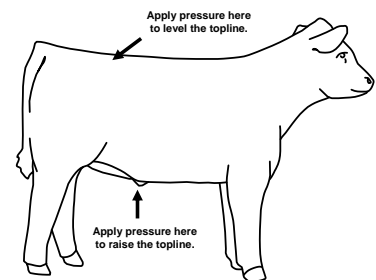
Adjusting the topline ("loining")



Note the calf in photo A – he is round out his hip and slightly hunched. By applying pressure on the loin (denoted with "X"), the calf's loin will drop, providing the illusion of leveling out his hip (photo B).

Additional Uses of the Show Stick:

- When walking your animal, the show stick should be in your left hand with the point down for safety and the lead in your right hand. When you pull into a line, smoothly switch the show stick to your right hand and the lead to your left hand. In the line up, your left hand should be closest to the animal's head.
- Calm the animal: many animals enjoy being "scratched" with the show stick. When you first pull your animal into line and switch the lead and show stick, calmly scratch your animal's belly or brisket (if the belly is sensitive) a couple of times prior to setting up the feet. This gives your animal a chance to relax in line before you start setting up feet.
- Adjust the topline ("loining"): if your calf is weak down its top, apply pressure (carefully, not to upset the animal) to the navel sheath. If your animal is slightly hunched over the top, apply pressure over the loin with the hook of the show stick to bring the top down.
- Control: if your animal is nervous and rushing around the arena, you can use the show stick to gently tap your calf on the nose to slow it down. If your calf is not moving forward and no one is around to help you, gently tap your animal on the rear with the show stick to encourage the animal to move forward.



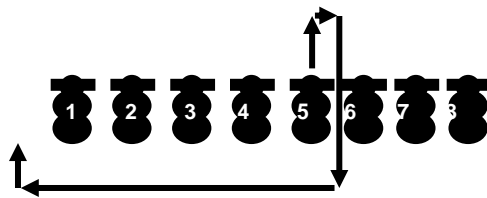
The Scotch Comb:

The scotch comb should be carried in your back pocket or in a leather holder that attaches to your belt. Carry the comb so the teeth point towards you, to prevent injury to someone else if you are bumped. The purpose of carrying the comb is to allow you to re-groom your animal if the hair gets messed up (either by the judge handling the animal or by another animal).

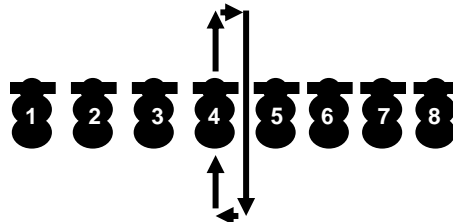
bumping it). Remember – showmanship is about presenting your animal to it's best ability. A good rule of thumb for when the judge handles your animal is to wait until the judge starts to move to the next animal to re-groom the hair.

Showtime!

- Inspect the show ring for high and low spots. If you want to present your animal to the best of its ability, you don't want to inadvertently have your animal in a low spot during the show.
- Dress neatly. Professionalism is essential for successful showmanship skills. Ideal clothing includes neatly pressed button down shirt or polo shirt, tucked in to either pressed jeans or slacks. Boots or similar type heavy shoes need to be worn for safety reasons. Hats should not be worn in showmanship competitions.
- Enter the show ring promptly when your class is called. You will need to make sure that you have:
 - Exhibitor number
 - Show stick
 - Leather show halter on your animal
 - Scotch comb
- If you are not in the first class – try to watch the class ahead of you to see what the judge likes or dislikes.
- Judges ring procedure may vary from judge to judge. If you are first in line, pay attention to the ring stewards and the judge to ensure that you are lining up where the judge wants you to. The following series of diagrams demonstrate the proper techniques to change positions in a line.

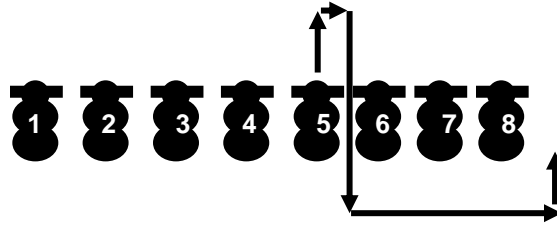


- To move you animal to the front of the line – lead out at least one animal body length, turn across the front of your animal, lead back through the line at least one animal body length and proceed to the front of the line.

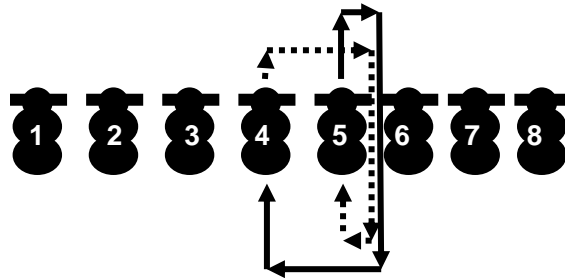


- To realign your animal in a position – again lead your animal out at least one animal body length, turn across the front of your animal, lead past the line at least one body length,

and return to line.



- To move you animal to the end of the line – lead out at least one animal body length, turn across the front of your animal, lead back through the line at least one animal body length and proceed to the end of the line.



- To switch positions – the lower placing animal (in this case #5) would lead out first (solid line), with the higher placing animal (#4) following. Allow at least one animal length between the animals at all times.
- Be aware! In the show ring, you need to be aware of your surroundings, not just your animal. Be aware of the exhibitors around you, the judge, and the ring steward. Many judges and ring stewards use hand signals to direct exhibitors around the arena, if you are not paying attention, you may miss the signal and miss the opportunity to place higher in the class!!!
- Practice good ring etiquette and sportsmanship at all times. If another exhibitor's animal stops in front of you while walking, assist the exhibitor as best you can. In a head to tail or profile lineup, if more than two animal spaces are vacated in front of you, move your animal forward to assist the judge in evaluating the class. Never purposely block the judge's view of other animals. However if your animal is the one hidden, you will need to move your animal so that it can be seen. Remember to always treat other exhibitors how you would like to be treated yourself – courteously!