

Fitting Beef Cattle For the Show Ring

By Amber Elliott,

If you have ever been through the beef barn at your local fair the morning of the beef show you've seen a little what goes into fitting beef. However, that is just a small part of what actually goes into fitting a beef animal for a show.

Like fitting most species before beginning you must think about how you want your animal to look once you are done fitting. You also want to make sure you know the breed standards for fitting. For example when showing a long-haired breed usually the hair is brushed upward. On the other hand when showing most short-haired breeds, the hair is brushed down for a more natural look.

Before beginning you must wash your animal thoroughly. Fitting clean hair is much easier on you and the animal. Use a mild soap for general washing of your animal; only use a commercial livestock shampoo when needed because it tends to dry to the hair.

After washing your animal you may want to use a blow dryer to help the hair dry faster and get the hair lying in one direction. When drying keep the nozzle at a 30-45 degree angle in order to keep the hair going in one constant direction.

It is important to begin the fitting process at home before the fair or show even arrives. At home you want to begin training the hair to either stand up or lay flat, depending on what breed you are showing. A rice root brush is a good tool to use to help train the hair as well as remove any dead hair that may exist.

Once show day has finally arrived. You need to get to the fairgrounds at least three to four hours prior to the show so you can wash, dry and fit your animal. First, washing, when you are at the show you should use a commercial livestock shampoo to get the hair very clean. After the animal is clean you can begin drying, just like you practiced at home. Now the important fitting preparations should begin.

Fitting on show day means pulling the hair on the legs, hindquarters and tail upwards. To begin hold a comb with one hand and a spray adhesive in the other; spray adhesive will ensure that the hair stays where you want it. Always work in small areas, spraying adhesive and then brushing through with your comb. The purpose is for the leg to appear straighter, the leg joints to look smaller and the bone to look larger.

Once you have finished grooming the legs you can move onto the body. Grooming the body can be relatively easy if you do a good job when training the hair at home. All that is needed to be done is comb the hair up and forward, just as was done in the training process. Only now after you brush through the hair you will use a spray adhesive so that hair stays put.

For the next step, you must check the show rules to see if using paint is allowed. Once

you are completely finished grooming the animal you can spray either black or brown paint - depending on the animal's hair color. By using paint it will make the hair appear to be an even color throughout.

Finally, once you have finished showing your animal be sure to remove all of the adhesive from the animal's hair. There are many good adhesive removing products on the market. The best way to find out which suits you is to try a couple before the show. When you are practicing fitting your animal try different removers to see what works best for you and your level of involvement.