

SWINE SHOWMANSHIP

Showmanship is the overall care, training and appearance of 4-H 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.

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.

In the Show Ring

Once exhibitors enter the show ring, they are on their own. This is the time when they will see all their preparation pay off. The following are general guidelines for showing hogs in the ring:

- Never overshadow the animal. 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.
- Try to keep the pig a distance of 10 to 20 feet away from the judge.
- Try to avoid getting your pig caught up in a group of other pigs.
- 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.
- Keep an eye on the judge and be ready to respond to directions. 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.
- Never hit a pig. 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.
- Never touch the pig on the rear with a cane or whip. It will cause the pig to hunch up and its tail to drop down, which is an objectionable characteristic.
- Be ready to stop your pig so the judge can get a closer look at it.
- 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.
- 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.
- Be ready to answer any questions from the judge concerning your animal.

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 showtime, 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!