

The Importance of Showmanship

When you walk into the show and watch the first class, what exhibitors catch your eye the most? I am sure different people would have different answers for this question, but for me it is an exhibitor that excels in showing their goat. In most cases that same exhibitor is the one that will catch the judge's eye as well. We can all pick out the individuals that have this great quality about them. We see them standing outside the ring waiting to check in and get into line. He or she is courteous and friendly to the other exhibitors waiting to get into line. You can tell the exhibitor wants to be there. Their goat is standing patiently, you can already see they have practiced with their goat many times. The exhibitor is clean, dressed nicely, and appropriately. When they begin to walk in, his or her goat's shoulder is right next to their leg walking easily and without any pulling. There is plenty of eye contact with the judge, while still continuously checking on their goat. The exhibitor is walking at a calm and normal speed. They set their goat's feet quickly and smoothly, while never losing track of where the judge is in the process. The exhibitor is always on the correct side of the goat. When he or she is pulled either to win or to be excused from the ring they keep showing up until they pass through that gate. Finally he or she thanks the judge and shows great sportsmanship regardless of whether they won or lost.

The previous description sounds like a showmanship class and rightly so. It doesn't have to be though, this should be any class we show in. The reason we have showmanship is that we increase our ability and our knowledge of how to "make our goats look great" to put it in blunt terms. In showmanship you are a team, there is the exhibitor and the goat. In a team it is a well known fact that one can bring the other down, and the opposite is true as well. We all want our goat to look its best, therefore we should be using our showmanship skills as much and as often as possible. We should strive to maintain this frame of mind all the time. Although showmanship can not put more muscling on your goat, it can't make your goat longer, or wider overall. It can in fact do more than we sometimes realize. In the shows many times the judge uses phrases such as style and balance, femininity, clean in the front, structurally sound, or eye appeal. These are perfect examples of what showmanship can improve on and effectively increase the goat's potential in the ring. The exhibitor can do such things as holding the goat's neck up high and training him to do so. Also not having to pull on your animal, but

having your goat trained to walk as though you do not have to hold the goat at all. This in essence creates a greater look of femininity, allows your goat's neck to look higher and more smoothly extended out of the shoulders. Everyone who has showed before knows that no matter how structurally sound your animal is if it is scared or won't walk easily the goat will not track well from behind. An animal that walks easily and calmly will show its structural correctness. Having a well trained goat will enhance its eye appeal and the judge will be able to see more style and balance in the animal. These examples are only a few of the many benefits we can achieve from showmanship, yet are still very relevant.

The main importance for showmanship is more than simply the physical reason why we have it, making the goat look better. There are many reasons beneath the surface as well. It increases our competitiveness in a positive and a constructive way by striving to out show our competitors. It also allows us to compete with ourselves, constantly reminding us to work on improving our showmanship. Out of the ring it teaches us how to better care and prepare our animals. This includes making sure our animals are healthy and well prepared to take the stress of traveling. Showmanship teaches responsibilities such as training our animals and spending the time to work with them on a consistent time frame. One of the most important things it teaches us is about winning and losing and how to handle ourselves in both circumstances. As a judge there is nothing better to see than an exhibitor that lost his or her class that goes up to the class winner and sincerely congratulates them.

One of the greatest things about showmanship is that it does not matter about the quality of the goat or anything of that nature. You need nothing more than the time to spend with your goat, the effort you put into preparing, and your commitment to enhancing your showmanship skills to go to a show and win a showmanship class. To this day you can take a goat that was at the bottom of every market class he has ever been in and win any showmanship you strive to win. Thank you.

Sincerely,
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