

## What Makes A Good Showman and Is Showmanship For You?

The answers to these questions are very simple. For the first I would say desire and for the second I would say yes! It's truly a simple concept really, if we think about it. Most of the people I have ever met all had one thing in common, they had the desire to better themselves at something. If you pick out any friends you ever had and think just for a second about what were their hobbies or jobs. They could have wanted to know more about fishing, be a better basketball player, or even become a better businessman. Now let's narrow that thought down a bit, take all goat people you and I have ever known. What have they all had in common? I would say, they all wanted to better themselves in the goat industry in some area. This could be a decision to use a buck that would improve on the quality of their breeding does, finding a higher quality feed for their stock, or learning to do A.I. Now, one last time, let's ask ourselves the question, what do all goat people who haul and show goats want? They all have the desire to better themselves throughout the showing process. It doesn't have to be just one part, but any of the parts. That is the beauty of showmanship, it helps you to better yourself and it encompasses all of the areas involved! What better strategy is there to win, than one that will have a positive impact on everything you want to accomplish in your showing career.

In the last article we briefly talked about having your goat prepared when you haul him to the shows. We all know a goat that does not walk well in the ring does not allow the judge to see the true quality of the animal. A good showman is someone who knows his or her goat, who has formed a relationship with the animal and has cared for it throughout the majority of its life. Many times in showmanship the judge will ask you how much you feed your goat, what you worm him with, or how much does he weigh. This is to see if you have spent the time necessary to take care of him. All goats need the vital necessities such as food, shelter, worming, vaccinations, and water. For show goats though, there is much more involved than the mere basics. Many people shave or trim their goats a couple times, months before the major stock shows, this is an excellent preparation for your goat. Another example that many people practice, as well as I when I showed, is feeding the animal separately from the other goats. It gives your goat a huge advantage as far as his growth rate and allows you time to spend time with your goat without making him work. One of the most important parts is training your animal. Not to

repeat myself, but this is a tremendously important part, a part that can not be overlooked. Taking only ten to fifteen minutes a day to work with him on “showmanship” has a huge impact on the day of the show. All of these ideas do take time, but they will accomplish many goals. They will aid in building a true relationship with your goat and are the absolute critical steps for excelling in showmanship.

Although you exhibit showmanship inside and outside of the ring, there are two different kinds of opportunities when you’re inside the ring that you exhibit showmanship. In the first situation is when your goat is relaxed, calm, and is behaving well. We all hope that our goats will show off the training that we have done with them when we walk into the show ring. When this happens you will be able to exhibit how easily your goat walks next to you, how he stays right beside you without any effort, and how your goat turns gracefully without having to pull on him. When you and your goat stop he will stand there with his head up, allow you to place his feet, wait calmly while you switch sides, and not move until you start to walk again. This is the ideal situation and many times it will work out this way if you did your work at home. It ends up looking like teamwork and that is truly what it is.

When we work with animals we understand that they do not always do what we hope they’ll do, when we want them to do it. There will be times when you have to show someone else’s goat, the judge may ask you to switch goats in the showmanship class, or maybe your goat is simply feeling bad the day of the show. Another beauty of showmanship is that even in a situation like this, it’s handing you a free ticket to excel in showmanship once again. This is the second opportunity and I feel it is just as important as the first. This is in no way saying, “lets make our goats misbehave”. No, no, absolutely not. But if our goat is unfortunately misbehaving and we are in the situation anyways, let us use it to our advantage! We have all seen goats in the ring that misbehave, rear up, flop down, even get away and run around the ring. As a judge the determining factor on if the exhibitor is a good showman, is not always if the goat decided to either stand perfectly still or take off for home. The determining factor is often how the exhibitor handled the situation. Did he or she get mad, did they slap their goat, did they jerk it around, yank its tail when it wouldn’t walk, or just simply look like they wanted to be anywhere but in the ring? On the other hand the exhibitor could have calmly repositioned the goat when it

moved out of line and continued to place its feet correctly when it squirmed around. When the goat did not want to walk they could motivate it along by putting pressure on the rear quarters or gently pulling the tail. Finally the exhibitor could calmly set him back down when the goat reared up. I know some of us are thinking I would be so furious by then I wouldn't want to do anything gently! That's ok if you are thinking you would be feeling upset. The idea and lesson behind this is that we learn to put those feelings aside and use our showmanship skills to work with our goat in a constructive way. A way that calms the goat down, reminds ourselves that we enjoy showing goats, that increases the trust your goat will have for you in the future, a way that promotes the skill for accomplishing a goal with your animal, and ultimately shows the judge that you want to be there.

If you notice improving on showmanship did not take away from anything else you like to concentrate on, it only improved on it. Showmanship is not just for a few people, it is for everyone who wants to not only improve on their goats, but themselves as well. It is so important to remember that in showmanship you are a team, there is the exhibitor and the goat. In the future articles I will talk about some techniques for training and preparing your goat for showmanship. If you have any questions or ideas for future articles you would like to see please feel free to contact me. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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