NORTH DAKOTA
4-H LIVESTOCK
SHOWMANSHIP GUIDE

NDSU EXTENSION SERVICE
OLIVER COUNTY
Dairy Showmanship

*Showmanship starts from the time that you enter into the show-ring.

* Exhibitors who excel in showmanship contests are those who display control of their animal and how the animal responds to the commands of the person exhibiting them.

*To successfully show dairy cattle, the exhibitor needs to keep the head of the animal held high for attractive carriage and graceful walk.

* Use two hands to hold the head carriage to the appropriate height.

*Wear boots or hard toed shoes to protect your feet.

*Dairy cattle are shown with the exhibitor walking in a forward direction unless the judge is directly looking at your animal. Exhibitor may walk backward when under direct observation by the judge, at this point the exhibitor should lead at a very slow pace when the judge is directing attention to your animal. When the judge’s attention moves to the next exhibitor the pace needs to increase.

*Knowing how to set the feet of the dairy animal is important in dairy showmanship.

    The front feet are set parallel, but the hind feet need to be scissored. **Heifer’s** feet are scissored with the hind leg on the judge’s side being placed behind the leg of non-judged side. To remember the correct procedure, remember that the judge wants to see where the udder will be on heifers. The placement of the rear legs on cows is opposite of heifers. The rear leg on the side of the judge is in front of rear leg opposite of the judge. This set gives the judge the ability to see both the fore-udder and rear-udder.

*Like in any showmanship competition, always keep an eye on the judge, be alert, be sure that your animal is set the way that you would like.

*When asked to move in line, lead the animal forward about 5 paces, turn the animal by pushing into the animal in a clockwise fashion. Lead the animal through the same hole as where you exited, lead to the requested position from the rear of the line.

*Clipping and grooming is important in dairy showmanship. Cleanliness of the dairy animal displays purity and proper sanitation. Dairy animals should be washed and free of stains.
When clipping dairy cattle in North Dakota one should first consider the weather. If exhibiting in summer shows, the most common practice is to body clip the entire animal except for the topline and switch of the animal. Clipping should be done at least 10 days prior to the show so clipper lines have an opportunity to grow back and blend in and look natural.Doing toplines will require some practice.

Questions may be part of any showmanship competition. Know your animal. Know the birth date, pedigree, what you are feeding and how much, how much she milks (if lactating) the average dairy cow produces about 19,000 pounds of milk per year or about 60 pounds of milk per day. Know what you would change (conformation) to improve your animal.

You should know the breeds of dairy animals. The 7 recognized breeds of dairy cattle are Holstein, Brown Swiss, Guernsey, Ayrshire, Milking Shorthorn, Red and Whites, and Jersey.
Beef Showmanship

*Properly training your calf and getting to know your calf pays dividends come show time. Showmanship is really a response to how well the animal and you communicate. A calm and collected animal usually shows better.

*Always keep an eye on the judge.

*Wear boots or hard toed shoes to protect your feet.

*As you enter the show arena, keep the calf’s head held high. The lead strap should be held in the right hand where the chain and leather meet and the left hand should hold the slack of the lead strap, when on parade. Additionally, when on parade, the show stick is held in the left hand with the point of the show stick pointing down. When necessary, the show stick can be placed in front of the calf to slow the animal. As soon as your animal stops, turn and set it up by using your show stick. Start with the front legs and then the back.

*An important part of showing beef cattle is to leave enough room between your animal and the animals around you. If at all possible leave 5 to 6 feet between your animal and the animals around you.

*As you pull into line, make sure the first thing you do is set your animal up for evaluation. The feet should be set comfortable under the animal and square on all corners.

*Proper use of the show stick is important. Use the show stick to relax the calf by rubbing the belly of the animal. Excessive use of the show stick is uncomfortable to the calf and takes away from your show appeal. Don’t saw the calf’s belly. Always give the judge a full view of your calf.

* If the judge moves to the left of your calf, move to the front of your calf and use the show stick on the brisket to calm the calf.

*If the judge handles your calf, wait for him to move on to the next calf, then comb the calf’s hair back in place acknowledge that the judge handled your calf. The use of plastic scotch combs is recommended.

*If you are asked to present your calf in a head to tail manner, leave enough room between your animal in front of you. If the animal in front of you is moved out of line, fill the gap by pulling your calf forward.

*When you are in a head to tail set, you can scissor your calf’s rear legs by putting the judge’s side of the calf’s rear leg behind the other, but keep the calf looking natural.
When moving in line, lead your calf forward six–ten paces, turn clockwise or over the nose of the calf, leading back thru the opening in the line (that you just left) and move to the new position from the rear of the line, without disrupting the other calves or getting too close to a fence.

Cleanliness is important in showmanship. Make sure that all of the straw and other foreign matter is removed prior to entering the show arena. Extra consideration should not be given to professionally fit livestock.

Questions are sometimes asked during showmanship. Knowing the breed, birth date, pedigree, how many pounds and what you are feeding should be known when exhibiting. Other questions may include - what would you change about your animal, identifying body parts, gestation of a beef animal and other general beef trivia.
Sheep Showmanship

*Upon entering the ring, you need to be showing your sheep to the judge. Eye contact is important, but most judges like you to look relaxed.

*As you enter the show-ring, lead your lamb in a clockwise manner about the ring. There should be a ring steward to guide lambs into the desired lineup. As soon as lambs are in line or a stationary position be sure to set the lamb up or into “show” position. The lamb’s feet should be comfortable and squarely set.

*As the judge moves about the ring, make sure that he/she has a full view of the lamb at all times. When the judge is in front of your lamb, one hand should be placed on each cheek of the lamb - holding the face of the lamb in an upright position facing the judge with the exhibitor looking attentive, you should have the front feet set square and the head carriage held high.

*When the judge handles your lamb place your left leg across the chest of the lamb and allow it to push into you as it braces. This is proper procedure for exhibiting market lambs, while breeding sheep should not be braced.

*As you take your lamb on parade, be sure to keep your left hand on the jaw of the lamb and your right hand placed behind the points of the ears.

*When asked to move in line, lead your lamb forward about 5 steps, turn over the nose of your lamb, come back through the same position in which you just left and lead to the requested position from the rear of the line.

*Pay attention to the judge, watch for ques from the judge on when and where to move your lamb, not following judge’s directions will affect your showmanship score.

*North Dakota requires sheep exhibitors to remain on the left side of the sheep to front and center of the sheep. Do not show from the right side of the sheep or move around the back of the lamb.

*Your knees should never touch the ground when exhibiting sheep. In most cases, exhibitors can stand throughout exhibiting sheep. Squatting is acceptable.

*Some lambs resist the exhibitor from time to time. A calm exhibitor usually results in a calm lamb. Some lambs jump when handled. Be sure to keep your cool and work your lamb in a relaxed manner. Do your best to not disrupt or affect the lambs and exhibitors around you.

*It is never acceptable to lift your lamb by its head/neck or slap your lamb to get it to brace!!!
*When preparing your lamb for the show, proper clipping is recommended. Market lambs should be clipped relatively close. A fine clipper blade will leave the desired length on the pelt for market lambs. Market lambs should be clipped a couple days prior to exhibition.

*Breeding sheep should be blocked out early in the summer and carded and clipped several times prior to the local and/or state fair to get them looking their best. This process will take some practice.

*Make sure to trim the hooves, and clean the ear tags prior to your first showmanship contest of the year.

*Questions are usually part of showmanship. Know your sheep. Which breed it is, what it weighs, what and how much you are feeding it as well as general sheep knowledge. The gestation of a sheep is 147 days or 5 months, the ideal market weigh of a lamb is around 140, the average loin eye size of a lamb is 3 inches and an expected dressing percent is 50-52%. Exhibitors should know the breeds of sheep. Meat breeds of sheep are Suffolks, Hampshire, Southdowns, maternal breeds include Polypay, and Corridale, and common wool breeds include Rambouillet, Targhee and Merino.

*The judge may ask what you would change to improve your animals conformation, your response could be something along the line of to make it wider, to be more expressively muscled or more level topped.

*Judges are brought in from out of state at several shows. Many of them do not know the North Dakota rules and may accept some of the practices that are stated as unacceptable in this video. Showmanship is one persons’ opinion on the day of the show. Remember to do your best, learn from the experience and have fun.
Swine Showmanship

*From the time that you enter the show ring, showmanship starts. Exhibitors who excel in showmanship contests are those who display control of their animal and how the animal responds to the commands of the person exhibiting them.

*To have your hog know what is expected of them in the show-ring takes practice. Exhibitors should introduce their pig to the show-ring prior to competition, so the animal becomes familiar with the setting. This usually helps the animal be more relaxed come show time.

*Many judges make their decisions on how to place a showmanship class within the first minute in the ring, so first impressions are important. As the pig walks into the ring, you should walk the animal towards the judge, but not into the judge. Then move off to the side so the judge can see the next animal coming through the entrance gate, but don’t stop showing. Know where the judge is at all times, try to maintain eye contact with the judge.

*You will want to always keep your pig moving, pigs always look better on the move. You should walk your pig about 10-15 feet from the judge depending on the size of the arena. This works well but also be careful not to get into a large group of hogs as your animal needs to be seen by the judge at all times. Pigs that walk along the fence or are creating fights are usually discounted when in a showmanship contest.

*Remember to always keep the pig between you and the judge. When turning the pig you should turn the pigs head toward you, you will have more control of the animal.

*Most contestants today use a whip or bat to guide their animal, both are acceptable. Remember the utensil that you use is not that important as long as it is used correctly. The bat/whip is used to guide the animal. It should be used from the front shoulder and forward. The less that you need to use the bat/whip, the more it appears you have control of the animal. Never use the whip or bat to hit the animal.

*Having your animal presented well is also important. Some exhibitors clip their hogs. Ideally the hair on the pig should be about ½ inch long with few stray long hairs. Clipping should be done well enough in advance of the show so clipper marks have adequate time grow back. The hogs should be washed and free of stains prior to the show.

*Some days are hot and pigs become unruly. In most swine shows, there will be a board person to help separate pigs. The exhibitor should never try to assist in breaking up pigs in fights.

*Spraying hogs with water prior to entering the show ring helps the hogs stay cool and also gives the hog a fresher appearance. Be sure to not use oil based products on the hog.
*In situations where the hogs are not cooperating, many judges will ask a lot more questions of swine exhibitors than with other species, instead of having exhibitors move the hog around the arena. Therefore, knowing your pig may be very beneficial. The judge will ask questions like: if you were to change your animal (conformation) what would you change? The answer could be something like, make her wider – heavier muscled – better on her feet. They may also ask where meat cuts are located, what you feed your pig, (the answer should be stated in feed products like corn, soybean meal, etc.) how much does your pig eat per day, (should be stated in pounds of feed per day not in scoops or pails.) The exhibitor should also know the birthdate, weight and breed of their animal. Other questions may be, what is the gestation of a pig, which is 117 days or more commonly remembered as 3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days.

*The common breeds of Swine are Yorkshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, and Duroc.

*The most important thing to remember about showing any livestock is to remain calm, cool and collected and have fun.
Goat Showmanship

*The following recommendations will assist you in properly exhibiting both dairy goats and meat breeds of goats. As you enter the ring, look for the judge to see what is to be expected. In most cases, you will be requested to circle your animals one time around the arena clockwise and line your animals up in a side by side manner. Make sure to leave enough room between your animal and the ones around you.

*As soon as you stop your animal, set it up starting with the show side. You can reach over the goat to set the feet. Make sure to keep your eyes on the judge at all times.

*Goats need practice prior to the shows. You should spend several hours training your goat to lead before the show. Even a well-trained goat may be nervous during a show.

*Exhibitors should use a choke collar or chain to show. When leading, the chain should be placed just behind the jaw of the goat for best control. Keep the head carriage high when exhibiting. Adjust the chain/collar so it fits the goat. If it is too loose it can come off during the show, which will affect your showmanship scores.

*If the goat resists moving on the command of the exhibitor, you should reach back and grab the tail of the goat until it begins to move.

*Keep the goat between you and the judge at all times. You can lead the goat from both the left and right side. As you switch sides, you will need to move around the front of the goat, never from behind.

*Meat goats can be braced by placing a leg in front of the animal and letting them push into you. You should be holding on to the chain as the goat braces and not grabbing the head or neck. You should never brace a dairy goat.
Proper grooming and clipping is important for showmanship. Meat goats shown in a market class and dairy goats should be body clipped. You should leave about 2 inches of the switch on the goat. Meat goats shown in a breeding class should have adequate length of hair, but be neatly presented.

*Goats should be washed and free of any foreign matter prior to the show.

*Trim the hooves of the goat a couple days prior to exhibition.

*Dairy goats are not to be exhibited with horns, while horns are left on when showing meat/hair goats.

*Registered goats are to be tattooed.

*Questions are fair game is a showmanship contest. Answering question accurately and thoroughly should help your showmanship score. Know the birth date of your goat, what you are feeding it, how many pounds it eats per day, how many pounds of milk a goat produces, what goat meat is called, what the ideal market weight of a meat goat should be and be able to name some of the body parts of the goat for examples.

*Be sure to dress neatly. Comb your hair. Tuck you shirt in and put a smile on.