

Showmanship for Market Goats in Tennessee
Ricky C. Skillington, Central Region Goat Specialist
UT Extension

As with any new project activity, there are always more questions than answers. While some may say that the Tennessee Junior Market Goat Show program is not new. Compared to the livestock projects, it is very new. This is true throughout the entire country. While there are not a true set of guidelines for showing market goats, hopefully, this fact sheet will give us a place to be uniform in the way that we show.

In order to have your goat looking its best in the show ring, you must spend lots of time working with your goat prior to the show. Having a well broken goat that will respond to the wishes of the exhibitor is the first step to being ready to show. I have already touched on fitting your goat for show, so I will not mention much about that issue in this fact sheet.

The very first thing to remember is not to be late for your class. It leaves a bad impression on everyone if a class has to be held up for an exhibitor. Be at the ring on time and ready to go into the ring. It is good to be there a little early, but try to remember not to get in the way of those lining up the next class. If possible, it is good to have someone else hold your kid and you go to the rail and watch how the judge wants the class presented. The more times that a judge has to tell a class how he wants the animals presented, the less chance those in that class will have to be an winner in a showmanship setting. Knowing this information prior to entering the ring will aid in prediction what is going to happen in the ring and give you a competitive edge.

Be sure to enter the ring, generally speaking, in a clockwise fashion, which you are on the opposite side of the goat from the judge. Always keep the goat between the exhibitor and the judge. Never lead the goat from the side obstructing the judge's view. If you are leading the goat from the left side, you lead with your right hand, palm facing forward. From the right side, lead with your left hand, palm forward. It is okay to place your free hand under the jaw of the kid for added control. Never, hold on or pull the ears. You would not like it and the goat does not either! Notice, in holding the neck chain or collar, my description does not address using a lead on the collar or chain. I personally do not recommend using leads, as they do not provide the control on the head that is achieved by using a neck chain only. I strongly recommend that you use a neck chain instead of a collar. These chains allow much more control over the goat and will add immensely in keeping the head up and making the front end of the goat look more correct. I also recommend that the exhibitor hold the hand not holding the goat to their side. For the last several years, many of those who have placed well in showmanship have held the hand not holding the goat behind their back at a 90 degree angle. I think that these folks won in spite of this rather than because of this. If you keep the hand that is not leading the goat, to your side,

you can use it more quickly to assist in controlling you goat if needed and to help move the goat that is in front of you if needed.

As you enter the ring, be sure to keep the goat's head up. If the first impression that you make to the judge is dragging your goat with its head on the ground, it may be a long day showing. **NEVER use the goat's tail as a go-button!!!!** Although this seems like a nice handle, grabbing a goat's tail only causes them to tuck their tail and look nasty and causes them to roach up their back as they walk around the ring. This is where the practice of leading your goat will pay off. Walk your goat around the ring with its head held high at a steady pace. The old saying, "Not too fast, but not too slow," works really well now. Move your goat at a steady, natural pace. As you move around the ring, look at the judge and make eye contact. You must exhibit an air of confidence while in the ring. There is a fine line between confidence and cockiness and you must develop what is natural for you. This will allow the judge to evaluate the amount of muscling and structure correctness as the goat is on the move. If the judge asks you to lead your goat away from them, move your goat in a straight line directly away from the judge. Many judges will have the exhibitors do this so that they see the natural amount of muscling that the goat has when walking.

Some time during the show, the judge or ring master will have you to line up side by each. As you pull into this lineup, make sure that you are still on the opposite side of the goat from the judge. If not, simply move to the other side by crossing in front of you kid. **NEVER CROSS BEHIND YOUR GOAT!!!** Never switch hands behind your back and **never, never** let go of your goat no matter how well broke it is. Both situations show a lack of control of you animal. When you initially pull in line (side by each), place your kid's feet in line with the front feet of the first kid in line. The exhibitors that are between your kid and the first kid may be out of line, but you line up with the first exhibitor, unless that is you. If that is the situation, the ring master will give you the spot to set you kid. If you happen to have a low fronted kid, placing his feet on a small mound of sawdust will give him the appearance of being taller fronted and more upstanding. Please note that I said a small mound, not one knee high. This will make you goat look out of place and will throw a red flag to the judge that there is a problem with your goat, whether it is or not.

Now that you and your animal are in line, we need to address which hand you use to hold the chain. If you are on the goat's right side, hold the chain with your right hand, palm facing the rear of the goat. If you are showing from the left side, hold the chain with your left hand and set the feet with your right hand. Always remember that your free hand should be toward the rear of the goat. There is one exception to his rule and that is if you have to hold your goat's jaw to maintain extra control, then you switch hands. Keep in mind these rules apply when you are presenting your goat on a rear view and when you are on profile, **NOT WHEN THE JUDGE IS LOOKING AT A FRONT VIEW!!!**

When placing the goat's feet, use your free hand to grab the goat's cannon bone. (This is the bone between the knee and pastern on the front leg and between the hock and the pastern on the rear leg.) Simply lift the leg and place it in the desired position. The desired position is that the feet are set on the

corners of the goat's body as they would stand naturally. Too often, young people try to teach their goat to stand wide as possible and the animal winds up standing there with all four feet "spraddled" out in an uncomfortable manner. This usually ends up with the goat moving around since this does not feel comfortable to the kid. Pushing, shoving and kneeling your goat into line is not good showmanship. If your goat has a particular structure problem, then you will need to make these adjustments so that your kid will look its best from the rear or on profile. Once you have set your goat's body, then you need to turn and face the judge. Some exhibitors stand while others kneel to show. **The accepted way to show market goats in Tennessee is to stand beside your kid.** The classes that you will be exhibiting in will not be so big as to tire you out, so stand with your goat. This will allow you better control of your kid and will allow you to move out quicker at the judge's or ring master's request. The exhibitor needs to remember to keep the back of their goat level. This can be easily accomplished by a light bracing of the kid or by applying backwards pressure to the kid's head.

This is a great time to talk about bracing market goats in Tennessee. A slight pressure applied to the chest and brisket area of the goat should be sufficient to show off the muscle mass of your animal. Excessive pressure or lifting the front feet off the ground or placing the front feet on the exhibitor's feet is not acceptable in showing market goats in Tennessee. Exhibitors will be asked to stop this at Tennessee Junior Shows and any exhibitor that continues to use excessive pressure or that continues to lift the front feet off the ground will be asked to leave the ring. We have to understand that these are meat animals and that animal welfare folks are always watching to make sure that show animals are treated humanely. Bracing tactics that are used with Market Lambs will not be allowed in the show ring in Tennessee. Also, it is wise to ask a judge if bracing is allowed. Some judges don't mind a small amount to keep the animal looking sharp, but others totally refuse to allow any. Once again, the practice will tell you how much bracing your goat needs to look its best. Goats can be trained to brace by applying backward pressure on the goat's head. This technique is extremely useful on judges that prefer no bracing. This does not mean that you need to try to pull your goat's head off. Gentle pressure will make the goat appear to stand naturally. Not all judges will handle your market animals. If the judge does, place your leg in front of your goat and hold it there. This will keep your kid from lunging forward during the handling. As the judge passes down the line, simply change sides and continue showing.

If this is a true showmanship class, many judges will pull each exhibitor aside and ask that exhibitor a question about the production of Market Goats. As a general rule, these questions will be on a level that is appropriate for the age group. If you are asked a question that you don't know the answer to, then tell the judge that you don't know. **Never try to guess or make up something to try to get by.** This never works. Be truthful and honest. Use the fewest number of words that you can get by with. When you try to impress the judge with your vast knowledge, you are probably giving them more information than they want. Often, the judge is more interested with how you answer the question than the answer itself. **Remember, keep showing your goat!!!** Some young people

completely forget about their show animal when answering questions. Mix eye contact with the judge with a quick glance at your kid. The judge is.

As the judge approaches for a front view; turn, switch hands and face the judge while stepping out of the judge's view. As he/she passes, change sides and continue to show your kid. The question always comes up as to what point does the exhibitor change sides when the judge is passing in front. It is preferred that the exhibitor move to the other side of the kid when the judge passes the point of the exhibitor's shoulder. Once the judge has finished a front pass, usually he will ask the class to walk. Follow the judge's request; generally, this will be in a clock-wise fashion around the edges of the ring. Try to walk to the very outside of the ring so the judge will be able to compare more of the animals at one time. Remember, always lead from the opposite side of the judge and keep your goat's head held high and proudly. If your kid happens to "roach" his top on the move, there is nothing wrong with discretely pinching down his top with your free hand as he moves around the ring. When you stop on profile (head to tail) be sure to leave enough room between your goat and the goat preceding you so the judge can walk between them. At this point, follow the same process for setting your kid's feet as has been previously discussed. When on profile, maintaining top-line straightness and head and neck placement is crucial. This is generally the final view the judge has before making his/her decision on class placement. **DO NOT EASE UP AT THIS POINT!!!** Many times a judge may have you on profile for an extended period of time. Hang in there and keep showing. Many times, judges will once again handle the class. Maintain control of your goat and apply slight pressure to insure that the top line is straight.

The judge will then begin placing the class by pulling you across the ring to the opposite side of the ring. Some start at the bottom, while others start at the top. Move your kid out smartly when instructed to do so and lead with the goat between you and the judge. Occasionally, a judge might ask some exhibitors to line their goats in another, shorter line to look at them on profile again, while others might want you to lead your kid directly away from them. Move smoothly; keep your kid's head up and keep eye contact on the judge. When asked to stop, do so and set your kid's feet as discussed before. Regardless, of where your goat is placed, **keep on showing – the battle is not over yet!!!**

As the judge begins pulling you across for their final placing, keep showing. This cannot be emphasized enough. Many judges will switch placings or even walk their top cut again. Stay sharp, (the fat lady has not sung yet). You may be asked to switch places, if so, pull forward, turn into your goat, go back through the line and then turn and lead back into your new position. Always be attentive to being on the opposite side of your goat from the judge. If the judge happens to move you a long distance down or up the line, always walk your kid on the judge's side of the line-up while still showing from the opposite side of the judge. More clearly – never lead your goat on the backside on the line-up where the judge cannot see your kid at all times. Many times, exhibitors, when asked to move, will turn their goat in a tight circle to get to the opposite side rather than simply crossing to the opposite side and leading their goat to the desired location. Believe me, NO goat looks good being turned in a tight circle.

Once the judge has finished their placing, DO NOT QUIT!!! Until he/she has made their comments and you have a ribbon, the game is not over. As a judge comments on your animal, pull it out and place it on profile. This allows the judge and the crowd to see your animal as it is being discussed. At this time, it is appropriate to lead to the judge and shake his/her hand, (win or lose). Occasionally, time restraints and the size of the show will dictate when you thank the judge for your placings. Also, some judges will request that this wait until the show is over. Please heed this request. Show etiquette will be discussed in another fact sheet.