



Beef Cattle Showmanship

Beef cattle showmanship focuses on how well the exhibitor presents and controls their animal, emphasizing confidence, knowledge, and skill. Whether you are showing a feeder calf, a fat steer, or heifer, the goal is to set up the animal correctly, keep it well-positioned for the judge, and pose the animal to make it look its best. Good showmanship highlights the exhibitor's ability to showcase their animal's best features while hiding its flaws, as well as to work safely and effectively with their animal while demonstrating knowledge, awareness, and ring etiquette.

Before the Show

- Make sure your animal is clean and dry.
- Make sure your animal is fed and watered.
- Go to the show ring to look for holes or low spots so you can avoid putting the animal's front feet in those places during your class.
- If you are not in the first class, watch a class or two so you know how the ring works, where to go, what the judge is expecting, etc.
- Remember: good showmanship starts at home with persistence during halter breaking and regular showmanship practice so you can show your animal safely and effectively. Come prepared to answer questions about your animal and its care during a showmanship class to demonstrate your knowledge and preparedness.

Recommended Attire

The main goal of presenting yourself during showmanship is to look as professional as possible.

Attire and appearance suggestions:

- Button down shirt that is tucked in.
- Clean dark jeans without holes and a belt.
 - Jeans should go over the top of your boots.
- Boots
- Number harness that is fitted and worn correctly with the extra strap in the back.
- If you have longer hair, pull it back so it is out of your face.
- Cowboy hats are fine but other hats should not be worn.



Beef Cattle Showmanship Rules of Thumb

- Always stand and lead on the left side of the calf.
- Maintain eye contact.
- When leading, if the animal in front of you stops, help your fellow exhibitor but make sure to use your hand, not your show stick.
- When leading, the hook of your show stick should always face the ground.
- Each time you stop and set up, make sure your animal's legs are set then begin scratching its belly or brisket while standing to keep it calm.
- Any time the judge handles your animal, comb the animal in the place they touched but only after the judge walks away.
 - The teeth of the comb should always face you when it is in your back pocket.

Tools You'll Need

- Show stick – solid black or silver in color, properly fitted to the exhibitor, non-collapsible.
- Plastic comb
- Number harness – preferred but not required.
 - If you choose not to use a number harness, make sure you have safety pins in your show box.
- Show halter

How to Effectively Utilize the Show Halter

- Rope halters should not be used in showmanship.
- The nose piece should sit halfway between the eyes and the nose.
- The lead strap on your show halter should be about 1.5 feet long.
- Hold the halter about two to three inches away from the animal's face.
- Lead the calf holding the lead strap with your palm down. When standing with your calf, hold the lead strap with your palm facing up.
- On leather halters, the chain should be wrapped in black vet wrap or a similar material.



Leading Beef Cattle

- Exhibitors should walk on the left side of the animal, holding the halter with your right hand and the show stick slightly out in front of you in your left hand with the hook of the show stick facing downward.
- You'll enter the ring walking clockwise with the animals following each other one-by-one.
- Keep your calf moving at a natural, smooth pace with its head held high and in a natural position.
- Always maintain eye contact with the judge so you are aware of their directions.
- As each exhibitor enters the show arena, judges will have showmen bring their animals into a line, typically side by side. When directed, slowly guide your animal to a stop, turning to face the animal and switching the halter and show stick to the opposite hands.
- Give the judge the best view of your animal at all times. Don't block the judge's view.
 - Any time the judge is directly in front of your calf, step to the side or turn your body so you are not between the animal and the judge.
- After the judge evaluates the animals side-by-side, they'll likely have everyone make another circle and stop head-to-tail so they can evaluate on the profile and make their final selections.
- If you need to circle, make a large enough circle that you can return to your exact spot in line to ensure proper spacing and alignment of your calf.
- Always turn the animal away from you when circling, except for when you start the "S" formation.
- During the "S" formation, always use as much of the ring as possible. You can do this by not cutting corners or cutting the ring in half.



Setting Up Beef Cattle

- When setting up your steer or heifer you will want to keep your animal appearing at its best.
- Ideally, exhibitors will pull their animals into position, minimizing use of the show stick in setting the feet. To be the most efficient and effective in setting up your calf, practice and teach them to stop when they go to put their right front foot down. This is called “walking them into the set.”
- The left hind leg should be offset under the pin bone and the right hind leg should be set further back.
- When lined up side-by-side, do not stand directly in front of the animal. Stand about a step off from their head. Tip: Your belt buckle should be diagonal in relation to the animal’s shoulder.
- Pay attention to the other exhibitors to maintain good spacing
 - When lined up side-by-side, leaving approximately one animal’s width between you and the animal next to you is a good rule of thumb.
 - When lined up on a profile, stand more in front of the calf about a forearm’s length away from the animal’s head.
- The height, age, and experience level of the exhibitor ultimately decides where they should stand in relation to the animal. Younger, small exhibitors should not stand directly in front.
- If your animal will not stand in position or you need to reset your animal, pull your animal out of position in a circle and set it back up in the same way.
- When your animal is standing, scratch its belly or brisket with your show stick to keep it calm.
 - Scratching should be more of a stroking motion than a sawing motion. This means that the stick comes off the animal between motions.
- If your animal arches its back, gently apply pressure to the center of its back with the show stick to level the topline and hooks & pins.
- When the judge pulls an exhibitor who is standing in front of you out of line, pull your animal forward to fill the empty space.
- Always remember to remain calm and watch where you move your show stick to avoid causing injury or hurting others.

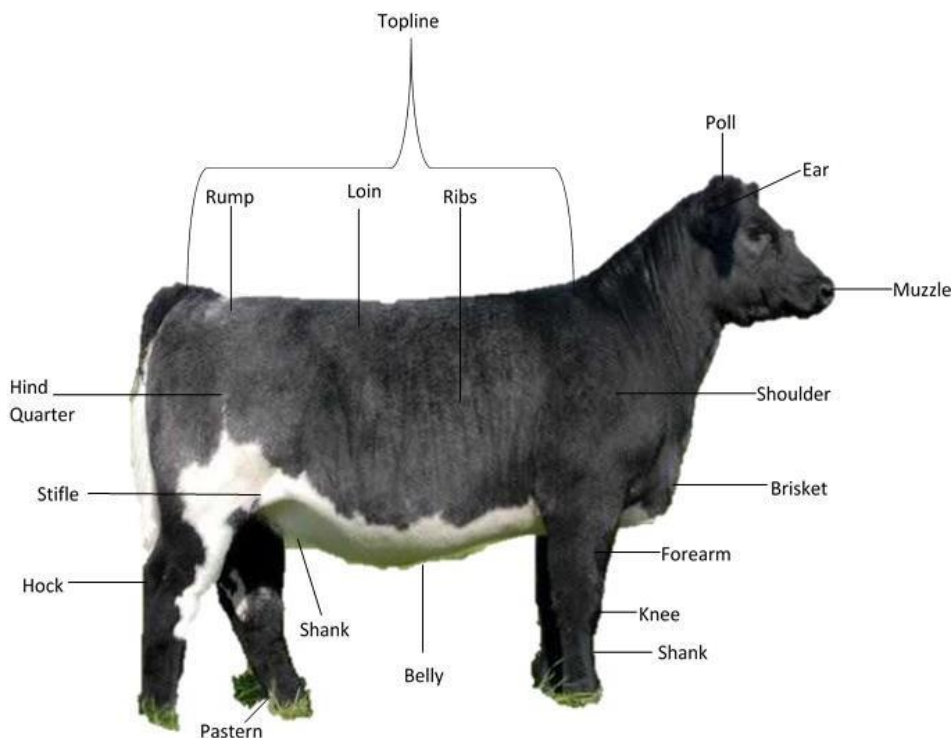


Beef Cattle Showmanship Sample Questions and Answers

Many judges will ask questions about your project and animal during showmanship.

To set yourself apart, be prepared to answer questions regarding the following topics:

1. What breed your calf is
2. Parts of the calf
3. How much your calf eats (in pounds)
4. What your calf eats
 - Percent protein
 - Percent fat
 - Avoid naming show feed brands in your answer
5. Meat science
 - Understand quality and yield grades
 - How much backfat is ideal on a finished market steer
 - Expected dressing percentage
 - What is the current average market price on beef cattle?
6. What types of phenotypic or genetic characteristics you like about your animal, what you might want to change about it, how you highlight the best pieces and hide the least desirable features.



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