



## Sheep Showmanship

Sheep showmanship focuses on how well the exhibitor presents and handles their sheep. The main objective is to demonstrate skill, control, and knowledge by confidently guiding the sheep, maintaining control of the animal, and keeping it properly set up. Good showmanship highlights the exhibitor's ability to work calmly and effectively with their sheep to present it at its best. Be prepared to handle a lamb without a halter and know the different requirements for showing breeding versus market animals. To learn more about the sheep project and how to show a sheep, find a sheep project leader or another 4-H member enrolled in the project and ask them for advice!

### 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 regular showmanship practice so you can show your animal safely and effectively. Practice will help you become comfortable with working on both sides of the sheep. 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 shoes.
- Boots or sturdy closed-toe shoes.
- If you have longer hair, pull it back so it is out of your face.



## Sheep Showmanship Rules of Thumb

- Maintain eye contact with the judge.
- Each time you stop walking and set up your animal, make sure the animal's legs are set by picking them up and setting them into place.
  - For showmanship, it is considered best practice to not “bump” your animal back to set the back legs or to pick their front feet up off the ground.
- Switch which side of the animal you are on as needed to keep the lamb between you and the judge at all times.
  - When switching sides, make sure to do so only after the judge has moved on to look at the next sheep in line. Do not cross between the lamb and the judge and block the judge's view.

## Leading Sheep

- To properly lead your sheep, begin by standing on the animal's left side. Hold the sheep under its chin with your left hand to guide its head. You may place your right hand behind the ears to help maintain control.
- Keep the sheep's head up at a natural angle so it can move smoothly and at a steady pace.
- As you move around the show ring, you'll walk in a clockwise direction, following the person in front of you.
- If your sheep stops and will not move, gently reach back and push on its dock with your right hand to encourage it forward.
- When the judge or ring steward prompts exhibitors to stop walking, stop immediately and set your sheep up correctly as outlined in the next section.
  - When instructed to line up side-by-side, walk your sheep promptly into the lineup and set it with its nose even with the first sheep in line.
  - When instructed to line up on a profile, line your sheep up single file head to tail.
    - If the judge pulls a sheep out of line from in front of you while on a profile view, move forward to fill in the empty space.
- Always keep your sheep positioned between you and the judge; smoothly switch to the right-hand side of the sheep as necessary.
- Throughout the class, maintain eye contact with the judge and be ready to respond to any further directions.



## Setting Up Sheep

- When setting up your sheep, begin with the rear leg closest to the judge. Gently lift and place each leg so the front feet are set squarely underneath the animal, with the rear legs placed slightly back.
- Once you've set the legs, brace your sheep by gently pressing your knee into the breast while holding the head slightly up. This gives you control and encourages the sheep to push back into you so the judge can evaluate muscle.
  - A light brace is often used during side-by-side and profile evaluation, while a full brace is used only when the lamb is being handled by the judge.
- While the judge is handling your sheep, do your best to keep the animal still.
  - If your sheep arches (roaches) its back, gently press down with your fingertips to straighten it.
- After the judge finishes handling your sheep, immediately reset the legs and body position as needed to keep your sheep looking its best.
- If your sheep will not stay set up or if you fall out of line, you can circle your sheep and try again.
- When the judge moves to evaluate the front of your sheep, stand beside the animal on the opposite side so the judge can clearly see the front and breast. Continue holding the head up with the ears alert.

## Tools You'll Need

- Show halter - it is strongly encouraged to go without a halter during showmanship, but some younger or newer exhibitors may opt to use one

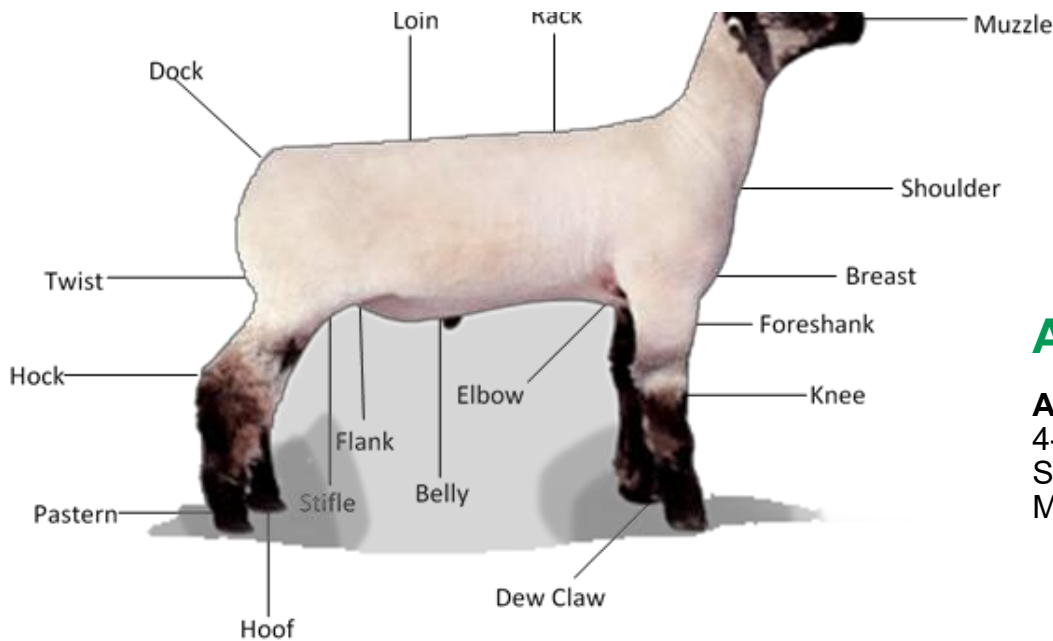


## Sheep Showmanship Sample Questions and Answers

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 lamb is
2. Parts of the lamb
3. How much your lamb eats daily (in pounds)
4. What your lamb 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 lamb
  - Expected dressing percentage
  - What is the current average market price on lamb?
6. What types of phenotypic or genetic characteristics do you like about your animal? What might you want to change about it? How do you highlight the best pieces and hide the least desirable features in the show ring?



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