

Showing Swine

Matthew C. Claeys
Extension Livestock Specialist

Showmanship is one of the most important parts of a 4-H swine project. Showmanship is judged on your ability to exhibit an animal to its best advantage. Advanced planning and practice at home are keys to becoming a good showperson.

Your personal appearance is very important. You should be neatly dressed and look like a livestock person. Leather shoes or boots should be worn for safety and appearance reasons. If the animal steps on your foot it is much easier for the hog's foot to slip off of a leather boot than a tennis shoe. You should wear nice jeans or pants, but never faded blue jeans because they do not look professional.

Your shirt should be a nice button down or polo shirt that is pleasing to the eye, not a camouflage shirt or T-shirt. Your shirt should be tucked into your pants and a belt should be worn. It is advisable not to wear a hat because it may distract the judge's concentration. Planning, practicing, and neat appearance will help you down the path of success.

Showing Equipment Needed

A driving tool is required for you to let the hog know where to go. A livestock cane, whip, riding crop, stick, or a piece of PVC pipe can be used. However, the tool of choice is a livestock cane.

A small hand brush is needed. It should be small enough to fit in your back pocket.

A sprinkle can is needed but you should not bring it into the ring during the show. Your need for the sprinkle can will be discussed later.

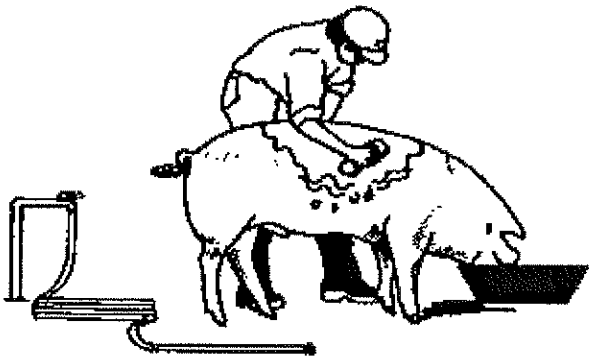
Before the Show

You must thoroughly wash your animal and be sure that it is clean. All soiled, dirty areas must be cleaned. You need to take special care not to get water in the ears of the animal as it may affect its equilibrium. Prior to returning your pig to its pen, check for and remove any soiled bedding from the pen. If you need additional bedding to replace what you remove, add it before you return your clean hog to the pen. This will help to keep additional dust, chaff, or small wood chips off your clean animal.

Just before entering the ring, you should sprinkle a little water on your hog with the sprinkle can. Then brush your hog's hair the way it naturally lays. This means that the hair on the hog's top should NOT be pulled straight back. This will make the top appear flat and a flat top is a fat top. You should brush the hair with the natural part down the spine. This is the way the hog's hair naturally lays and it gives the appearance of a meatier top.

You must not use oils and powders on your hog. These items will make your animal hot and packers will not accept hogs with oils and powders on them.

Lastly, you should NOT clip the underline, jowl, or ears. Clipping is not needed and does not help the appearance of your hog. Judges want to see your animals in their "working clothes" and not clipped.



Show Ring

A superior job done in showing your hog starts long before the class is called. Practice driving and training your animal at home. The extra practice will help you control the hog and polish your showing skills. You may want to pretend that a tree is the judge. Work on maneuvering your pig around the tree as you would a judge in the show ring. As you gain more control of the animal, a figure eight pattern works well as practice for any situation that you might encounter.

- You should be prompt and on time for your class. This shows that you are organized, ready to work, and are courteous to the other exhibitors. When you enter the ring, the hog will probably take off running and kick up its heels. Calmly walk over to your pig and take control by driving it 10 to 15 feet area from the judge.
- Your cane should be used with the crook part down to tap the hog. Your animal should be tapped from the fore rib forward (shoulder and jowl area). Never beat your hog and never hit the animal on the top, loin, or ham area. Always drive your hog tapping the front one-third of the body. If you want your hog to move to the right, then tap the left side of the hog. If your hog needs to move to the left, then tap the right side of the hog. If your animal is to go straight, a light tap on the top of the neck or shoulder blade should do the trick.

Just because you have a cane or whip in your hand does not mean that you have to constantly tap your animal. When your pig is moving fine, let it walk. You should only use the driving tool when it is needed and to keep the hog moving from one point to another in front of the judge. This should be done to show the best attributes of your pig.

- You should always keep the hog between you and the judge. This provides the judge with a full view of your hog. When you move or change directions, switch the driving tool to the other hand to help keep you in position. Do not use your hands or knees to drive your hog. The only acceptable time to use your hands or knees on the hog is during the penning of the animals.

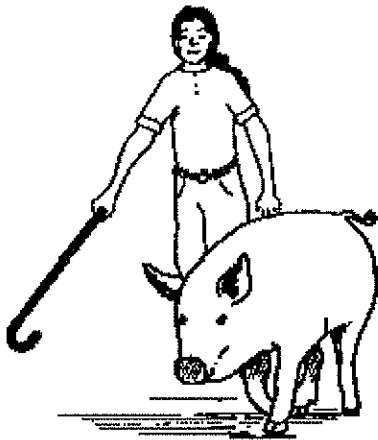
When walking with your hog, calmly move with the animal staying on the side opposite the judge. A slight bend at the waist may help you to keep control of your animal. Be relaxed. If you are calm your hog will be calm and respond appropriately to your commands.

- You should be courteous at all times and aware of the "danger zones" to be avoided. One danger zone is groups of other hogs. If your hog gets in a bunch, then let it work its way out, but do NOT block the view of another hog or exhibitor.

In a group of hogs, your pig may engage in a fight with another exhibitor's animal. You should not jump between the fighting hogs because you might get hurt. However, you may use the cane to assist in reconciling the situation. You can simply snare or hook your hog's nose and pull it away from the other hog. This will help separate the hogs so that a ringman can get a board between the fighting animals.

Another "danger zone" includes the corners of the show ring. If your hog gets in a corner, do NOT beat the hog to move it out. You should simply place your brush on the hog's snout. The hog will not like the bristles in its nostrils and it will move from the corner easily.

When you are selected to be penned, work your hog toward the pen area and get it into the designated pen. You should close the gate and fasten it shut. After the judge acknowledges you to pen your hog, do NOT just stop showing and raise your hand to wait for the ringman. Move your own hog to the pen as discussed above so that the show will continue to run both smoothly and quickly.



- While in the pen your market hog should be positioned with its ham toward the show ring. By having the ham facing the show ring, you provide the judge with a view to easily evaluate the muscle and leanness of your hog. You should have someone bring the sprinkler can to you and sprinkle the hog. Then brush your hog again and allow it to relax, but do not let it lie down.

If the judge sprinkles shavings or some other material on your hog, brush it off as inconspicuously as possible. This shows that you are aware of what is going on and take pride in exhibiting the animal so that it looks its best at all times.

When you leave the pen and re-enter the show ring, close and latch the gate behind you. This is show ring courtesy and prevents other hogs from entering the pen and taking time away from the judge's view.

- Your eye contact with the judge is very important. By making eye contact, a judge will almost automatically look at your market hog. Your good eye contact also insures that you will not miss a cue to be penned or to follow some other request by the judge.

- You should be ready to answer questions about your project. The judge may ask you any number of questions about the swine industry to get an idea of what you may have learned from your 4-H swine project. The questions may be easy like the weight, gender, breed, age, or parts of the animal. Questions may also be about carcass composition, swine management practices, feeding and nutrition, or marketing systems. You should learn all that you can and be prepared for any type of question.

When the class is over or you are dismissed, continue to show your hog while leaving the ring. You should listen to the judge's comments and learn from the experience.

After the Show

You should return your hog to its pen. Be sure that the gate is locked and that fresh water is provided. Then go back to the show so you can learn more from observing the other showpersons.

Lastly, you should be a gracious participant. Congratulate those exhibitors that had a good day. Learn from your experience and strive to do better at the next show. Remember, just by participating, working hard, and doing your very best, you are a winner!!

Swine Showing Equipment Checklist

Showbox

- feed pan
- water bucket
- portable nipple waterer(optional)
- sprinkle can
- wash brushes
- hose (short)
- soap
- cane or driving tool
- small show brush
- health papers
- show catalog
- pen signs
- hammer & nails
- wire & pliers
- hog feed
- bedding (sawdust or chips)

Personal

- camera and film
- towels, washcloth and soap
- lawn chairs
- rubber boots & work clothes
- show clothes
- safety pins (for exhibitor numbers)
- First aid kit
- flashlight & batteries

Reviewed by: Darwin G. Braund, William L. Flowers, and James R. Jones, Department of Animal Science, North Carolina State University

Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Employment and program opportunities are offered to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.