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Fitting and Showing Swine

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Figure 1. A good showmanship job includes a thorough washing of the pig. Use a mild liquid soap but remember to rinse the pig with clear water to avoid skin irritation.



Fitting and showing swine to the best advantage can be a rewarding experience.

Many open class swine shows, such as the National Barrow Show, limit animal grooming to washing and brushing. However, 4-H and FFA shows do allow grooming because of the experience gained from animal care, ownership responsibility, and sportsmanship associated with a showmanship contest.

EQUIPMENT

To properly fit, show, and care for your pig, you will need to acquire some equipment. Suggestions come under the following areas.

Care and Feeding

- *2 Feed pans — 1 each for feed and water
- *Pail — used for water
- *Feed and bedding amount adequate for show
- *Show box — although not required, it can be used for storage of all equipment taken to the show.

Grooming

- *Rice root or scrub brush
- *Mild, liquid detergent
- *Electric clippers, hand clippers or scissors
- *Hoof clippers or knife
- *Hair dressing
 - Oil: mineral oil or commercial show groom oil
 - Talcum powder
 - Rubbing alcohol
- *Fly sprayer
- *Wiping cloth
- *Water hose with shut-off nozzle
- *Boots for washing

Showing

- *Small brush, pocket size
- *Cane, whip or slapper whip
- *Small 2 foot by 2 foot hurdle
- *Folding gate type hurdle, used to move pigs to show ring or separate pigs in the ring.
- *Water sprinkler can

TRAINING

Good showmanship begins before the time of the show. During the growing period, the pig should be trained to walk and turn according to directions from the person showing it. To guide the pig, use the following signals:

- Right turn — tap the pig on the left side of the head.
- Left turn — tap the pig on the right side of the head.
- Stop — place your hands and the cane or whip in front of its snout.
- Start — tap the pig on its side. Do not hit the pig on its top or ham.
- Never abuse the pig.

A fenced grass lot is a very good place to practice driving your pigs. This will teach obedience to commands and provide exercise.

Many pigs raised under confinement conditions are hard to show to best advantage because they are not accustomed to moving around in a large area and their feet are often soft and tender. They will move very restrictively and short in stride and resist movement from the pen. It is best to move these pigs out to a larger pen to exercise and move around freely.

WASHING

One of the most important steps in fitting your pig for a show is washing. Begin by thoroughly wetting your pig, including the head and feet. Be careful to prevent any water from getting into the pig's ears, or it will hold its head lopsided.

Use a mild, liquid detergent and scrub your pig vigorously (figure 1). If your pig is very dirty repeat washings may be necessary. Scrub the feet of your pig thoroughly since they are usually dirtiest.

Be sure to rinse all the soap. Any soap not removed from pig's skin will leave a fine, flaky dandruff in hair coat. A diluted solution of vinegar and water used as a rinse will help remove any residue soap.

CLIPPING

Clipping the hair from certain parts of the pig enhances a clean, lean, muscular appearance. Although more expensive, an electric clippers will do a neater and faster job than a hand clippers or scissors. Since pigs won't stand still, the easiest way to restrain them for clipping is to snub their nose with a pig holder, twine string, or rope. When catching the pig, make sure to snub only the upper jaw.

Some gilts and barrows should have ears and tails clipped. If your pig is very coarse in its appearance, clipping the ears will make it look more trim and less masculine. Clip the entire ear including the inside. The tail may be clipped from the tail root to the switch. If however, a gilt or barrow is too refined, ears or tail should not be clipped to give a more rugged appearance.

Long hairs should be clipped from the pig's underline, jowl, and crotch. This makes the pig's lower body more trim and gilts underline more prominent (figure 2).

GROOMING

All black, red or spotted colored pigs should be oiled. Apply a light coat of oil to the black or red areas, but not to the white areas. A commercially prepared show oil may be used or a half and half mixture of mineral oil and rubbing alcohol works well and is cheaper. A plastic sprayer can be used to apply a uniform, thin coat of oil. After spraying the pig, work the oil into the skin. Since the pig's ears and tail are often scaly, rub extra oil into the tail and around the ears. Use a soft clean cloth and remove excess oil from the body.

Take a soft brush and saturate it with clean water. Brush the pig's hair in the direction that it naturally grows. This procedure will make the pig's hair glisten and very attractive. A small pan or pie tin and brush can also be used for oiling. If this method is used, have a special brush only for oiling. The pan and brush method works well for oiling all dark colored pigs and is particularly useful for covering small areas of black.



Figure 2. This gilt is properly fitted for show. It has been washed and oiled and the underline clipped to emphasize prominence.

White breeds and white crossbred pigs should be scrubbed clean and then covered with talcum powder. Crossbred pigs with gray spots or dark colored spots may also be powdered. Apply the talcum powder in a light layer and then brush the pig lightly to work the powder into the hair. Another way to powder a pig is whitewashing with a wet paste-like mixture made of talcum powder and water mixed to a thick consistency. Apply this mixture in an even coat over the entire body, including the feet and legs, tail and ears. Allow the powder mixture to dry on the pig. Then brush off the excess powder: always brush with the natural growth of the hair. If the show is held during extremely hot weather, don't use oil or powder. Instead sprinkle the pig with water to help keep it cool.

If you have oiled or powdered your pig, thoroughly wash it after the show to make it more comfortable and cool.

Feed your pig at least one hour before the show. A limited feeding will prevent a sluggish appearance. Just prior to showing, offer your pig a cool drink of water. This will help keep your pig cool at a summer show.



Figure 3. The exhibitor in the center of the figure is doing a very good job of showing this gilt to the judge by keeping the gilt in the center of the ring away from the group in the back corner.

FOOT CARE

Feet and leg problems sometimes occur in show pigs because of poor foot care. The best cure is to prevent the condition from happening. This involves selecting pigs which are structurally sound and long and loose in muscle design. Proper health and management practices should also be followed to prevent injury and infection.

Some conditions such as small inside or outside toes can be corrected by foot trimming. These pigs will often stand narrow or splay footed. The feet should be trimmed 2 weeks before the show. Care must be taken to avoid cutting too deeply into the toe. If a deep cut occurs, apply a wound treatment, such as Copper-tox, to prevent infection.

Confinement hogs often develop sore feet from the wet concrete floors. This condition can be improved by daily exercise in a grass lot, starting about 3 weeks before the show.

A copper sulphate or 10 percent formaldehyde solution can be used as a foot bath. This solution should be about 1/2 inch deep in the pan. Place the foot bath where the pig must walk through it at least twice a day.

SHOWING

Now that your pig has been fitted and trained, you are ready to show. You should know all the facts about your pig such as birthdate, weight, breeding, and your management program. Be aware of the judging schedule and be prepared to enter the show ring on time.

Dress in clean, neat practical clothes. Colored clothing is less likely to show dirt than white. Hard soled shoes rather than canvas type shoes help prevent injuries by giving your feet more protection if stepped on. Wear clothes appropriate for the show ring. Girls should wear slacks rather than skirts. Do not wear extremely tight fitting clothes that will distract from your exhibit. Head gear, such as a cap, may distract from your exhibit, however, if properly worn and it helps to control hair and aids in your showing, it may be appropriate apparel.

A cane may be used with the curved end pointed down. The curved end can be used to hook the pig's nose and to separate pigs in a fight. A small whip works well if your pig is not a fighter. This whip should be approximately three feet long. A slapper type whip is less harsh and will cause fewer bruises. Use the whip properly. A gentle tap on the shoulder or head will maneuver the pig in the right direction. A light show stick or other functional equipment may be used but is not as effective as a cane or whip.

SHOW RING ETIQUETTE

One of the cardinal rules when showing a pig is always to keep the pig between you and the judge. The judge can get the best view when the pig is from 10 to 20 feet away (figure 3). Keep away from a crowded group of other pigs or corners so that the judge can see your pig at all times.

Always keep your pig on the move with its head up. However, don't overshadow your pig since this merely draws attention to you rather than the pig. Keep a calm, collected appearance and never lose your temper. The judge may walk up to your pig to handle it or look at its underline. If this happens, merely step in front of your pig to stop it by placing your hands in front of its head.

Avoid using your knees to move the pig and don't place your hands on its back. These actions give the pig an unnatural appearance as the pig will probably hunch up, dropping its tail.

Be alert and watch the judge for directions. Always control your animal but continue to have eye contact with the judge who may motion you to a holding pen on the side of the show ring or to another area of the ring. If you are not watching the judge and miss your cue, you

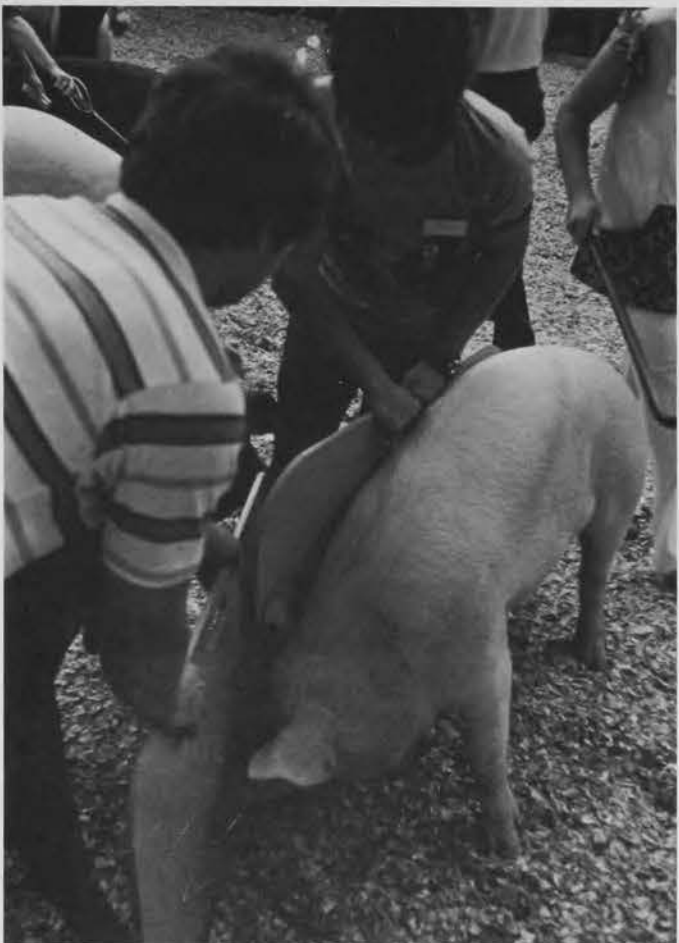


Figure 4. Use a hurdle or small gate to separate your pig if it starts to fight. The curved end of a cane can also be used to pull pigs apart.

may not be given another cue and consequently place your pig lower in the class. If you are directed to go to a holding pen or moved into another ring, allow your pig to relax but continue to watch the judge for instructions.

If your pig should start fighting in the show ring, use a hurdle or small panel to separate the pigs (figure 4). This equipment should be available at ring side. Another method is to grab your pig in the rear flank and pull the pig back.

HERDSMANSHIP

Showmanship doesn't stop after you leave the show ring. It should also be practiced in the barn. Pens need to be kept neat and clean. They may be bedded with wood shavings or clean dry straw. Feed and equipment should also be kept neat and orderly.

There are always people available to help you at the show. Extension agents, vocational-agriculture instructors, adult leaders, or more experienced exhibitors will provide good assistance. If you have questions about some area of your swine project, ask them for help. If you are an advanced swine exhibitor, help the younger members learn and encourage them in their project.

Good luck: remember that good showmanship is good sportsmanship.

4-H SWINE SHOWMANSHIP SCORE CARD*
 (100 points possible)

A. ANIMAL APPEARANCE	Perfect Score 40 points
1. Cleanliness	15
a. Hair and hide clean and free of dandruff.	
b. Feet and legs clean.	
c. Hooves trimmed and scraped.	
2. Grooming	15
a. Hair brushed in direction that it grows.	
b. Pig shown with appropriate hair dressing (oil or powder).	
c. Pig sprinkled only with water on extremely hot days.	
3. Clipping	10
a. Inside and outside of ears clipped when appropriate.	
b. Underline, jowl, and crotch — long hair clipped when appropriate.	
c. Tail clipped, when appropriate.	

B. SHOWING PIG	Perfect Score 40 points
1. Presenting Pig to Judge	30
a. Proper use of cane, whip or other show equipment.	
b. Pig shown at slow walk.	
c. Halts and controls pig for close inspection.	
d. Pig never allowed to assume an awkward position when standing still. Never place pig's feet by handling them.	
e. Pig not allowed to make abrupt turns or permitted to walk into an area which necessitates backing out.	
f. Prevents pig from coming in contact with or fighting with other pigs.	
2. Cooperation With Judge	10
a. Awareness of judge's position at all times.	
b. Pig kept within clear view of judge at all times.	
c. Pig kept in open area about 10 to 20 feet from judge, never in crowded area.	
d. Pig brought to immediate halt if judge indicates a desire for close inspection.	
e. Follows judge's instruction in pig movement in arena or to holding pen.	

C. APPEARANCE AND MERITS OF EXHIBITOR	Perfect Score 20 points
1. Appearance	10
a. Exhibitor well groomed. Clothes neat and clean.	
b. Extremes in color and fit are not appropriate. Shorts are discouraged. Colored trousers are now more appropriate than white.	
c. Hard soled shoes rather than canvas shoes are desirable.	
d. White shirt (or blouse) with the official 4-H chevron, a 4-H T-shirt or official shirt (or blouse) provided by show management are considered appropriate. Individual club or county identification is discouraged. Final decision on head gear or dress code is left to individual show.	
2. Merits	10
a. Brings pig into ring promptly.	
b. Responsive to judge's and ringmaster's requests.	
c. Works quickly but not abruptly.	
d. Recognizes quickly and corrects faults of pig.	
e. Not distracted by persons and things outside the ring.	
f. Shows animal, not self.	
g. Does not leave ring until released by ring official.	
h. Displays a courteous and sportsmanlike attitude while at the show.	
i. Can give prompt answers to questions related to the pig exhibited.	

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