

Dairy Cattle Showmanship

Important questions to ask when learning about your dairy cattle:

- What Breed is it?
- How old is she? (calf, heifer, cow)
- Who is the sire? (father of the cow)
- Where are these body parts located?
Poll, Hooks, Pins, Withers, Switch, Brisket, Topline

In The Ring

Dairy Showmanship is all about making the cow look good and knowing that every move has a purpose. Upon entering the show ring, the only things you should have are your cow and a show halter which can be seen below.



When leading, the halter should be held firmly in the exhibitor's left hand, with the hand inside the halter wrapped around the ring with a firm grip on the chain. Never lead an animal with your fingers inside the halter's ring. The lead strap should be looped loosely in the right hand. When in the show ring you will almost always be walking in a clockwise direction, so this is how you should practice when preparing for the round robin. When showing, always stay on the cows left side. Face at an angle, in a position far enough away to see the stance of her feet and topline. The judge will ask you to walk around the ring and then stop to set up your animal.

Important Anatomy

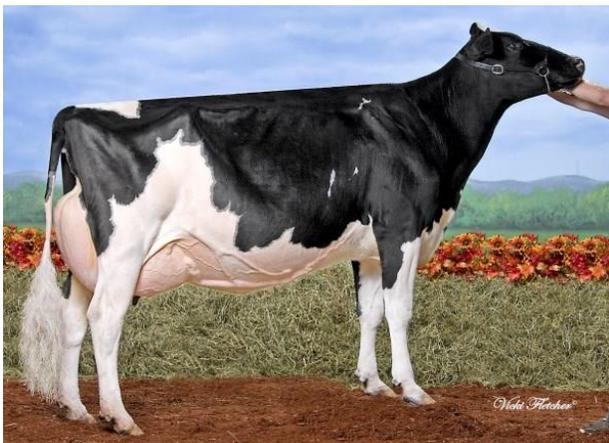
The topline is located right along the spine of the cow usually consisting of hair that is spiked and groomed. The point of the topline is to give the illusion that the cow's back is straighter, therefore allowing better mobility (which ultimately means more milk production).

Important questions to answer before entering the ring:

- Why are heifers and cows legs set up differently in the ring?
- Why are dairy cows thinner and more feminine than beef cows?
- What is the point of topline?

Setting your cow up.

When setting up your animal in the ring the two front feet will always be squared. When it comes to the back legs, pay close attention to whether you're handling a heifer or a cow. "Heifer" refers to the age of a cow 1 year of age until she has delivered her first calf, therefore bearing no udder. When showing a heifer and setting her up, you want to have her back leg closest to the judge further back (staggered). Whenever the judge changes positions, the cow's legs should follow. A correct rear leg position can be seen to right if you are reading this as the judge:



"Cow" refers to a dairy animal that has calved and is now producing milk with a visible udder intact. When setting up a cow, the animal's back leg closest to the judge should be slightly forward. With the back foot slightly forward, this gives the judge a better view of the rear udder. A correct rear leg position can be seen to the left if you are reading this as the judge:

Dairy Cattle Showmanship Techniques

When leading the cow around the ring, make sure the head is held high at all times. (see above photos). This gives the cow a longer, taller look and gives the exhibitor more control over the animal. Interactions with the judge should be pleasant. If your animal decides to act up in the ring, the most important thing is to keep calm and exhibit patience.

Some tricks to keep in mind are "roaching" and "pulling throat". "Roaching" is the technique used to straighten out the cow's back if they are severely arching it. "Roaching" can be done by placing your thumb and index fingers on the cow's spine right about their ribs and lightly pressing down. "Pulling throat" is a technique used to make a cow's neck look thinner and leaner. Often times cows have too much fat on their neck. "Pulling throat" can be done by leading the cow with your left hand while pulling the fat up toward the cheek with your right hand.

