

## **SHOWMANSHIP FOR ALL AGES**

### **POISE, APPEARANCE AND ATTITUDE**

#### **ATTITUDE:**

- Sometimes it's very hard to be patient while you are waiting to appear before the judge. We have seen classes where the kids have had to wait over an hour or two to be called up before the judge. The way of the future seems to be more and more shows are scheduling specific times for the students so they don't have to be in the showroom for hours, holding their birds, mashing the feathers and exhausting the birds as well as the students.
- Patience is very important. Even when a time is scheduled, sometimes there are extenuating circumstances that make the show move more slowly than other times. Normally each student is scheduled for a 5 minutes interview with the judge. If the student takes a long time in answering the question it does put the schedule behind, but this is to be expected. If you were nervous and suffered from a case of "brain freeze" you'd want that extra time to answer. You can very politely ask the judge to come back to that question at a later time which will give you a moment to consider the answer. If it's done politely and considerably points will not be deducted unless you just don't know the answer. It's best to politely say, I'm sorry sir, and I don't know the answer to that question. Many times the judge will tell you the answer.
- The first thing the judge or the public notices is how well you conduct yourself on the show floor. You don't want the judge to remember you due to your poor attitude, poor conduct or lack of attention.
- It is so important to never lose sight of the judge! Always know what he is doing and watch how the kids are responding to the questions he is asking. You can't hear the questions but you can watch so you can get a feel what the judge likes or dislikes.
- Some judges like a talker, others like a direct answer, but all judges like to be respected.
- When you approach the judge you should begin the interview with a Hello Sir, how are you. Use the judges name, Hello Mr. Kroll, how are you? Then perhaps even shake the judges' hand. This really floors the judge! Also, politeness counts. Saying yes sir and no sir shows great respect and judges are surprised and pleased with students that do this. They never forget that special class with students showing such a pleasing attitude.
- Remember, some competitions are so close it really comes down to the slightest little things that break those ties.
- Never ever talk to the other competitors while you are on the floor either in the staging area or waiting inside the showmanship arena. The judge will not like the fact that the competition is not important enough to receive your entire attention. If you are more concerned with your social life or discussions with your friends and family, then he probably won't give you a second look. Needless to say your attitude won't win you top points in that section of the class.
- You should be gracious in winning and in defeat. No one likes a poor loser. If you win, be happy but don't rub it in to other competitors who weren't as fortunate. If by chance you didn't win don't say you were "set up" or "rooked". All contestants are asked the same questions. Be a good sport and congratulate the person who did win.
- Don't think the judge or the show staff isn't watching to see what happens after the scores are announced. You can bet they are. If you are a good sport, they will remember that. That act of maturity and kindness will work in your favor the next time you run up against that judge.

## **POISE:**

- The way you conduct yourself during showmanship is very important as we mentioned above. Here we are going to talk about how you handle yourself before the judge, this is called poise. It's always very important to look at the judge when you stand before him. He doesn't want to have to tap you on the shoulder to get your attention. Your undivided attention is on the judge only, not on the crowd, not on your bird.
- Look directly at the judge while he is speaking and look directly at him when you are speaking to him.
- You should be proud, standing straight and tall. Slouching, standing with your hands on your hips or in your pockets is not attractive. During examination of the bird when you have to speak to the judge, always look away from the bird and directly at the judge.
- Acting bored is not an option either and this can show in your stance. You shouldn't use words like "shucks", "geez", "gosh", or "shoot", I don't know that answer.

## **APPEARANCE:**

- Your appearance, right along with that of your birds makes a big first impression on the judge. First impressions really do count.
- If you want to be taken seriously, you need to look like you are serious about your birds and your competition. A well groomed appearance will really go a long way in the judge's mind. It all comes down to trying to get the judge to remember you.
- Depending where you are doing showmanship, the state fair, your county fair, at a sanctioned show someplace, your dress code will be noticed. Not all shows have a required dress code. If they do, follow them. If they don't then it's up to you to take the initiative to be dressed well and appropriately.
- At some shows, many of the competitors wear lab coats that they display pins and patches they have won. This look really does improve your appearance of knowledge. If you knew enough to win those patches or awards, you must really be knowledgeable. If a lab coat isn't an option, then there are other ways to dress that are just as neat and presentable. Many competitors wear their 4-H or FFA accessories either in full uniform or parts thereof.
- Other outfits should consist of clean pants with no holes or stains are really a must. The pants should be dark black, dark blue, dark green, etc. At several shows I have noticed that clean, no holes or stains work well on a nice pair of jeans and this seems to be accepted very well especially if a lab coat is worn over them. A clean, long sleeved, pressed white shirt with a collar always looks extremely neat. Tuck it in! Tee shirts aren't the way to go, as a matter of fact most shows frown upon this and points are deducted for appearance. Also, short sleeves, jewelry, shorts, hats of any type are a big "NO" also.
- Personal cleanliness is extremely important. You should have clean hands and clean fingernails. If your hair is long it should be pulled back out of your eyes.
- The judge is aware that many times while you are in the holding area or in the showmanship area your bird might have a slight accident on your clothes. Sometimes this is just unavoidable. If it happens you are allowed to ask for assistance by stepping back from the holding area, ask for a cloth to clean yourself up. If it happens while you are before the judge he will watch your reaction. If you aren't invited to clean it up, you can be sure this won't count off on your appearance points.
- Good luck to all of our youth showmanship competitors. All of us, the show staff, the judges, your instructors, teachers and your parents know how hard you have worked to enter this competition.

## **CAGE TRAINING FOR SHOWMANSHIP and CLASS JUDGING**

By: Doris Robinson, Youth Poultry Superintendent, Florida State Fair

### **Why cage train before a show?**

If your flock is used to having freedom and running around the yard and kept in a large pen, being caged is very stressful. It would be like moving from a big bedroom into a closet and learning to live & sleep there. It's confining and almost claustrophobic except the bird can see out. You will see that the bird is quite nervous. He shows this by trying to get away from you every time you open the cage door. He'll do anything to get away, from running to the back of the cage to trying to fly out the top. Remember to try to move slowly when you open the cage to get him out so your quick movements don't scare him even more. Granted, you might have to move rather quickly to catch him but it can be done without causing him undue stress.

When you present your bird or birds at a show for judging, a judge will always come up to the cage and take the bird out to examine it. You don't want to discourage the judge by presenting a bird that is flighty, even mean. This certainly doesn't present a good first impression. When it comes down to the final decision between 2 or 3 birds that are equal, the judge is going to choose the bird that shows well as the best bird representative of its breed.

When you enter showmanship, you are judged on your handling skills of live birds. The bird is not being judged in this case, **YOU ARE!** You are being judged on how well you handle your bird (gently, considerately), how well you have worked in keeping the bird in good condition and how well you have trained your bird to be worked with in and out of the cage. The judge knows how long you have spent in working with your birds. He's aware that every breed is a little different, that some are very flighty, some are too docile. He's judging you on your selection of the breed you have chosen to work with. For example: Leghorn's are quite notorious for being a flighty type of chicken, this might not be the best choice for showmanship. LeFleche are absolutely crazy and no matter how many days, weeks, or months you work with them, they just can't be trained to pose, especially on a table. If you do choose either of these birds, we would suggest you bring your extension ladder to the show so you can get them out of the rafters.

### **Getting Started:**

1. It is best to use a cage similar to the ones the bird will be shown in at the shows. You can purchase show cages at several poultry supply places. If this is not an option then use a cage that is similar in size and shape as a show cage.
2. Set your cage up at table height, your waist level or higher as that is how the cages will be set up at shows.
3. Select an area to set up your cage in a high traffic area. It's important that the birds learn to be comfortable in a busy area with family and friends walking by and even other animals wandering around.
4. Shows are very noisy and busy places so it's a good idea to set a radio near the cage and put it on a talk show, not music. This way the bird gets used to a lot of people chattering as they walk by.
5. The idea is to replicate the showroom as much as possible.

### **Taking Time:**

1. Teaching the bird to accept and be content in a cage is not an overnight project. You should work with the bird or birds often.
2. Start slow. Put the bird in the cage for an hour or so while you are feeding and watering your other stock or doing your homework. Be sure to give him a little feed and water so

he becomes familiar with it being available while caged. Gradually work on caging so he's used to it for a day or more at a time and that means you'll have to add an hour or so every week. He will know this is a safe place and nothing can get to him and he'll be used to being confined. This could take a month depending on the temperament of your bird. Be sure to always put him in the cage head first and remove him from the cage head coming out the door first.

3. Now that the bird is comfortable in the cage you can start to train him. Always take the bird out of the cage head first. Examine him like a judge would. If you've not seen this done you should watch a judge at the show while the bird is being handled and judged. You can also buy the 4-H National Showmanship Manual that has visuals that can help you. Once you have done this put him back in the cage head first. You might give him a little treat from your hand, especially if he's acted well. Do this several time a day if you can so that he is used to being caught and looked over. The bird will realize that he's not going to get hurt and eventually learn just to stand there to be caught.
4. When the bird is comfortable with the last step, I start opening the door, holding a treat in my hand get him to walk up to the door for the treat. He will eventually do this every time you or someone comes near the cage. Then it's a simple manner of reaching in and removing him from the cage.
5. Saying that a judge will be impressed is speaking lightly. Judges appreciate a bird that is easily caught verses one that they have to struggle to catch. Not only is this a problem for the judge, the bird could be hurt, break feathers, tear a toe open or scrape his comb. This is not the way to make points and win an award. It could be the most perfect bird in the showroom, but once it's injured and is wild, he just won't get there. The only reason he might get further is because the other birds in that class are in worse condition.
6. Therefore, it's important that you have other people begin to handle your bird. Have someone take the bird in and out of the cage. Have them hold them and look them over. Make sure this person or persons handle the bird gently. The bird needs to be comfortable with other people handling it too.
7. Many times at shows, it pays to take the time to talk to other breeders or show folks. You can ask them the tricks of the trade so to speak. This is especially true of the breed or breeds you have elected to raise and show.
8. Impress the judge with a little extra work. After the bird is comfortable with the routines we have outlined above, you can add the final touch. Take the bird out of the cage, do your examination. Now, stand the bird in the palm of your hand in front of the open cage, he should hop right in. As soon as he hops in, toss in a treat. The goal is to get him to hop in the cage and immediately turn around to face the door and get his treat.

#### The Goal:

1. Make the judge take a second look at your bird. If you can get a second look, then you have a shot at taking that class. The birds that are just sitting or are wild in the cage are not showing their best. That's the goal. Train your bird to show its best!
2. If you can get your bird to pose and show for the judge, he will be impressed with you and your bird.
3. Take time to watch judging, watch the reactions of the birds in their cage. See how a judge handles these birds and let's see how they are scored.
4. Practice! Keep it fun for you and the bird. Sometimes at poultry shows it's the little things that make a huge difference.