

# A guide to showing

An NFYFC and Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) guide to showing native and rare breeds

This showing guide is aimed at encouraging more young people to promote the benefits of producing, buying and eating British. The guide helps raise awareness of rare breeds and rare breed meat and demonstrates the need to better use British products and why their future market needs to be widened.



**Fun, Learning  
and Achievement**



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## Jimmy Doherty, RBST President

As president of RBST I was really happy to hear that the trust had teamed up with The National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs to produce this great booklet to try to encourage more YFC members and children to show livestock. It's vital to get the younger generation interested and involved with keeping and showing livestock as they are the future of British agriculture.



# How to show your livestock

Presentation is key when showing farm livestock. Learn how to master the art to improve your showing skills

There is a diverse variety of farm livestock in the UK. When showing livestock it is important to ensure presentation is of the highest level; this applies to both the handler and the animal.

## Your first show

For those new to showing, spend time at other shows to find out what goes on, and start at a local show. Get hold of as many recent livestock show schedules as possible, as it will provide an insight into different show rules.

- Check the suitability of the animal is matched to the size of the handler.
- Make sure you know how to fit the halter correctly.
- Although the animal itself is not being judged, it must be presented in a clean and tidy state.

## Learn the 'breed standard'

Breed societies can set out specific rules on how livestock should be presented, which need to be adhered to.

## Learn 'ringcraft'

When a judge is considering an animal you will be asked to walk it out and back – this is the point when you will have the judge's undivided attention. When you're turning around to come back, always turn so that you are on the outside of the animal, allowing the judge to see it clearly.

## How are you going to look?

You've trained your animal and prepared it for the competition. You know some basic facts about your breed and your particular animal to share with the judge when asked – breed, sex, age, breeding record, any special qualities that breed may have.

You are ready to compete – in all your animal looks the part, so make sure you do too by dressing appropriately.



## TOP SHOWING TIPS

- ✓ A clean shirt and a tie always look good, especially if you wear a tie relevant to your breed
- ✓ A clean white coat, buttoned up correctly is a must. On a wet day you can always put a waterproof jacket on under your white coat
- ✓ Footwear is very important too – flipflops and trainers are a definite 'no-no', wellies are just about acceptable in very wet conditions but best of all are clean, sturdy boots or shoes
- ✓ Many young handlers wear a cap too; this looks good but is not vital
- ✓ Try and make sure your animal has a clean halter.



# How to show... Pigs

Preparation and practice is key for showing pigs

When choosing possible show pigs, it's essential to read the breed standard for your particular breed. This lists the points that the judge will be looking for; size, coat and markings, body shape, conformation and of course the all-important underline (the placement and uniformity of the teats). All pigs sold as registered breeding pigs should meet this criteria, otherwise they really shouldn't have been registered.

A calm pig makes for a much easier time in the show ring. For this reason it might be easier to start with an older pig, but even young pigs can be trained quite easily given enough time and practice.

Ensure all vaccinations are up to date; discuss this with your vet if you are unsure which

vaccines your pigs might need.

You should give yourself and your pig plenty of time to prepare for the show ring, ideally training from a young age or at least six-to-eight weeks before the show. Construct a makeshift ring at home (using hurdles or a corner of a field) and practise walking your pig round in a clockwise direction, using the board to block their field of vision and the stick to move them forward.

You should not hit your pig with the stick. Instead use it with light, regular pats to keep the pig moving. You should position yourself between the edge of the ring and your pig, with your board to the side nearest the ring – this allows the judge to see your pig clearly as you move round the ring.



## Get ready for a show

In the weeks leading up to the show, teach your pigs to walk to board and stick, as you will be expected to walk it around the ring. Stand at the pig's left hand side with the board in your left hand and the stick in your right, allowing the judge a clear view of the animal. Also teach the pig to stand still.

About two weeks before the show, bath your pig to loosen flaky skin and give its coat a shine. Pig oil can be applied at this time. Some breeds can be shown oiled up, such as the Large Black and Saddleback, so check whether your breed can be or not. On the day, remember to ensure your pig is fed well.

Book an extra pen for your kit, and remember the scent of other boars could result in your pig being something of a handful on the day.

When you get into the ring give your pig a moment or two to get acclimatised to the new surroundings. It may stand rooted to the spot, empty its bladder or take off running – whatever happens stay calm and don't panic, just keep calm and carry on. You won't be the first person to have this happen and you certainly won't be the last – but pigs wouldn't be pigs if they didn't keep us on our toes.

Observe the judge so you know when he is looking at your pig as this gives you the best chance to show it off. If you're asked to stop your pig, placing the board directly in front of its snout usually does the trick and be prepared to answer questions about the pig; date of birth, bloodlines, breeding history etc.



### PREPARING PIGS

#### ☑ Bathtime

Get your pig used to being washed and brushed. Not only will they enjoy it, helping you to build a good bond with your pig, but it will improve the condition of their skin and coat. Your pigs will learn to love bath time!

#### ☑ Pig oil

Regular applications of pig or baby oil will ensure they shine in the show ring – though be careful on hot or sunny days that they don't burn. Don't forget to clean their ears and trotters too.

#### ☑ Fattening up

Show condition is generally a bit fatter than working condition.

# How to show... Beef cattle

Practice makes perfect when showing beef cattle

Before attending a show with an animal it requires a large amount of practice and handling. The way in which breeds are presented vary – most breeds have a breed standard and guidelines that need to be considered.

## Halter training

Halter training is particularly important. The correct way to secure a halter results in the lead rope going under the jaw of the animal and exiting on the left hand side. The animal needs to be relaxed when tied up and when walked on the halter.

## Grazing

As the show season starts, turn them out to graze in the day and get them in at night (to give them cattle nuts or coarse mix). In hot weather you may want to reverse this. The feet of housed cattle inevitably grow over-long so get them trimmed back by a professional. It's advisable to have their feet trimmed about a month prior to the first show.





# Preparation for showing

## Hair maintenance

Much of the preparation with cattle is hair maintenance. Ensure all the dead hair is removed using a shedding comb, rice root brush, or grill brick, as this will give the best finish as new hair grows through. Brush using a forward/upward motion using long strokes pointing towards the head.

## Washing

Rinse your cattle two-to-three times a day in the run-up to the show and blow-dry them. Wash them once a week with soap and brush in a mixture of sheen and oil products. When washing them in the lead up to the show, ensure the switch at the end of the tail is washed and back-combed to make it fluffy.

## Leading the animal

When leading the animal, stand on the left hand side – typically you walk around the ring clockwise, with the animal on the inside. Lead at a comfortable pace with the animal's head held high enough for impressive style.

## Judges

It is important to look regularly at the judge as well as pay attention to your animal. The cattle must be able to stand 'four square'. Use a show stick to practice this; by gently pressing the stick against the coronet band, the animal will pick up its foot and move backwards. Use the hook of the stick behind the heel to bring it forward.



# How to show... Dairy cattle

## Feet first advice for showing dairy cattle

Preparation before showing is very important – this involves halter training and handling.

When showing dairy cattle, the most obvious difference is that you show the animal on a short halter and walk backwards.

Most dairy animals are kept inside, therefore the feet are a priority and it is advisable to have their feet trimmed about a month prior to the first show. Most dairy breeds are shown in a similar way – dairy cattle are clipped for the show ring.

For dairy cattle a key feature is to show the animal's udder, therefore it is essential to ensure the animal is milked early enough to ensure the udder can fill up naturally.

Most breed societies have a young breeders' section, so do check before entering a class. Being part of this is a great way to learn.



# How to show... Sheep

Know and understand the varieties of sheep and follow society guidelines

Among the sheep breeds there are a variety of types. These include short wool, long wool, primitive and Hill and Heath sheep breeds. The different breeds require different preparation for the show ring.

A general way of analysing the different breeds is:

- Primitive – are usually shown in their natural state.
- Longwools – usually sheared earlier in the year so they are shown in full fleece
- Shortwool – typically breeds that are trimmed for showing
- Hill and Heath – the way in which these breeds are presented vary.



## Guidelines for showing sheep

The majority of breed societies have guidelines on the appropriate presentation of the breed. It is important to adhere to the society guidelines as going against the accepted view could put you at a disadvantage.

If showing a breed that trims, take account of the shearing dates – i.e. the earliest date after which yearlings and older sheep must be bare shorn. When choosing which sheep to show, consider the head, teeth and the legs, as everything else can be changed through feeding and trimming. Foot trimming is important, as well-trimmed feet allow the sheep to stand up on their legs better.

While some people keep their show animal inside, it can affect their teeth. It is very important that the animal's teeth meet the pad.

Plenty of practice and handling of the animal is very important; this involves a lot of halter training.



### TOP SHOWING TIPS:

1. Get sheep to walk in a straight line to show efficient gait and correct alignment of limbs. The handler needs to walk alongside the left shoulder of sheep – not in front or behind of the movement.
2. The handler is expected to have knowledge of the animal and demonstrate ability to control sheep whilst standing in line. Understand tips such as placing the hand under the chin, especially when being examined by the judge. It is important to pay attention to the judge and the animal.
3. When comparisons are being made between sheep in a line-up, the animal must present itself favourably by standing square – pairs of feet together; back legs slightly back, which allows the spine to appear straight and the head slightly raised.
4. Small treats from the pocket will keep the sheep interested but do not overdo it.

# How to show... Native Breeds

Opportunities for rare and native breeds are increasing as awareness in food production rises  
#EatThemToKeepThem

The United Kingdom has a diverse selection of rare and native breeds of livestock – these breeds have fantastic qualities and produce a high quality meat product. The opportunities for our rare and native breeds are increasing as consumers are becoming more aware of food production and how an animal has been reared and produced.

Some of the UK's native breeds have the ability to thrive on a low input, grass-fed diet. And as a result, produce a high quality product. It is very important to promote the quality of the native breeds and their produce to help ensure the success of the breed.

Taste is a key selling point for native and rare breeds.

Flavour and eating-quality come from a collage of factors: not just breed but feed, exercise, slaughtering, hanging and butchery.

Buying from rare and native breed producers is a great way to support these. From meat to wool, our breeds produce quality products and buying from breeders allows them to continue to keep these breeds alive.

If you are a producer of any native breed products, then sign up to the RBST Pledge and get a free listing on the 'Food Map' section of the RBST website at [www.rbst.org.uk](http://www.rbst.org.uk).



### TOP RBST TIPS

- ✓ Confirm the breed of animal your product comes from (check the RBST Watch List) so you can be sure it is one of our native breeds.
- ✓ Confirm the animal is from registered stock parents or is a pure breed of poultry so you are helping protect the breed from extinction and ensuring you get what you are paying for!
- ✓ Support the “The Five Freedoms” so you know an animal had a life worth living, and hopefully a good life.
  1. Freedom from hunger and thirst: by ready access to water and a diet to maintain health and vigour.
  2. Freedom from discomfort: by providing an appropriate environment.
  3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease: by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
  4. Freedom to express normal behaviour: by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and appropriate company of the animal’s own kind.
  5. Freedom from fear and distress: by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.
- ✓ Consider whether the cows, sheep and goats are pasture fed, and the pigs and poultry have been reared outdoors. That’s how we like our livestock.
- ✓ Support RBST. To find out more about RBST’s work to conserve rare and native breeds, visit [www.rbst.org.uk](http://www.rbst.org.uk)





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