

# Showing and Selling

## Showing the 4-H Market Lamb

Show day at the county and state fairs is your project's "moment of truth." It is at this point that all you've learned, how you've managed, and how well you control your animal are all tested. After spending all that time, energy, and money, you certainly want to have your lamb relaxed and well-groomed before you enter the show ring.

## Fitting and Showing

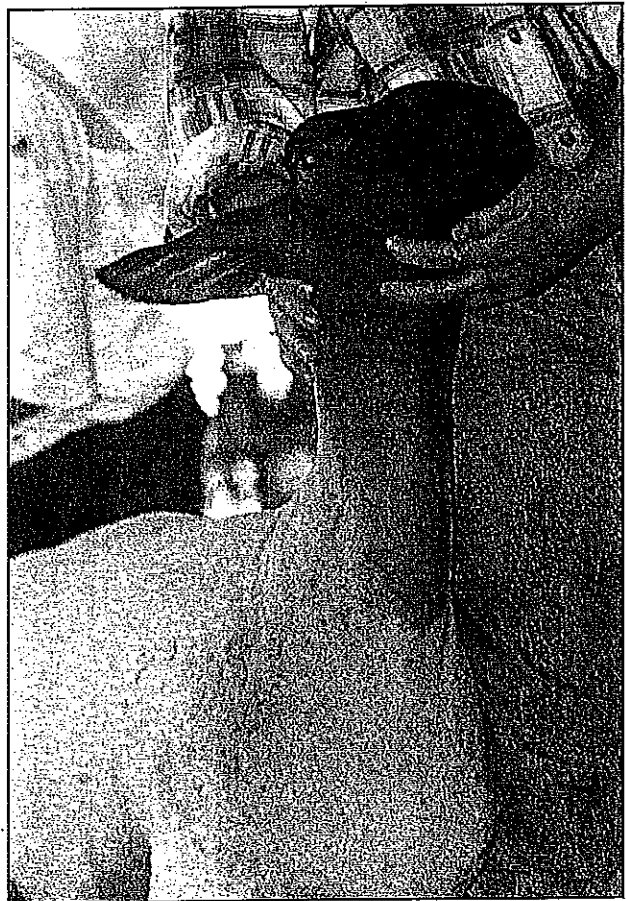
Proper fitting and grooming of a lamb cannot all be done on show day. You need to start working with your lamb far enough in advance so that you can get to know each other and so that the lamb will respond to you. However, do not overtrain the lamb and make a complete pet of it. Pets often do not show at their best. The lamb should be quiet and easy to handle.

## Before the Show Training

1. Starting at least a month before the lamb show at your fair, take the animal out daily for a walk. Such exercise conditions the muscles, improves feet and leg soundness, and firms the finish. This helps your lamb show better.
2. To lead the sheep, place one hand under the jaw, keep the head up and alert, and put the other hand on the dock or behind the ears. Pull up on the dock to get the sheep to move, or apply pressure behind the ears. The hand used on the dock or behind the

ears does not have to touch the sheep but it should be ready to control the sheep if it gets spooked. Never hold a lamb by its fleece.

3. When breaking a lamb to stand, never let it jerk loose and run away from you. It will develop this bad habit and will try to escape from the show ring if you do not teach control.
4. Practice showmanship every time you handle your animal, not just in the showmanship classes.
5. Have one of the members of your family act like the judge so you will gain practice in showing, and the lamb will know what to expect.



## Grooming

### Equipment Needed

1. Trimming stand (See Figure 64.)
2. Wool cards
3. Blanket, hood, and blanket pins
4. Soap
5. Water hose
6. Clean towels
7. Curry comb
8. Rice root brush

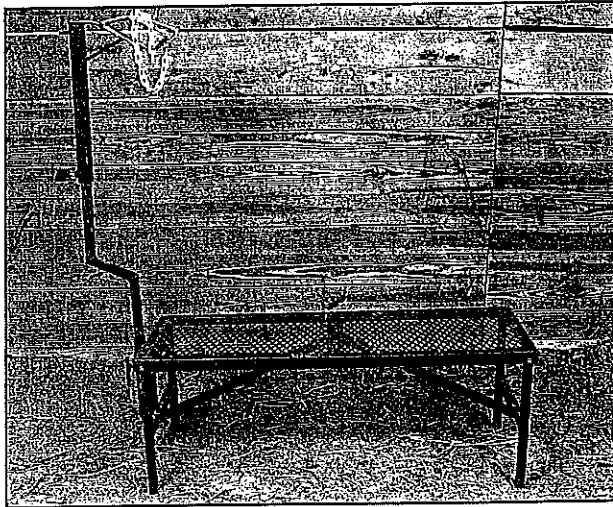


Figure 64

9. Hand shears
10. Electric shears
11. Hoof trimmers
12. Grain and hay
13. Bedding for pens
14. Feed trough and water bucket
15. Copy of fair book and project book
16. Spray bottle

## Fitting Market Lambs

### Washing

Wash the lambs before the show. Use a mild soap or detergent. Soak the fleece well with water, being careful not to get into the lamb's ears. Apply a small amount of soap and scrub the sheep from top to bottom. Use a brush and curry comb to scrape out all dirt and dung. When the fleece is clean, rinse it thoroughly several times to remove all dirt and soap. Curry the excess water out of the fleece, using the curry comb and also dry off with a clean rag or towel. Blanket the animal to keep out dust and dirt. Leave the animal in a clean, well-bedded pen after washing. If the animal gets dirty, you may need to wash it again at the fair.

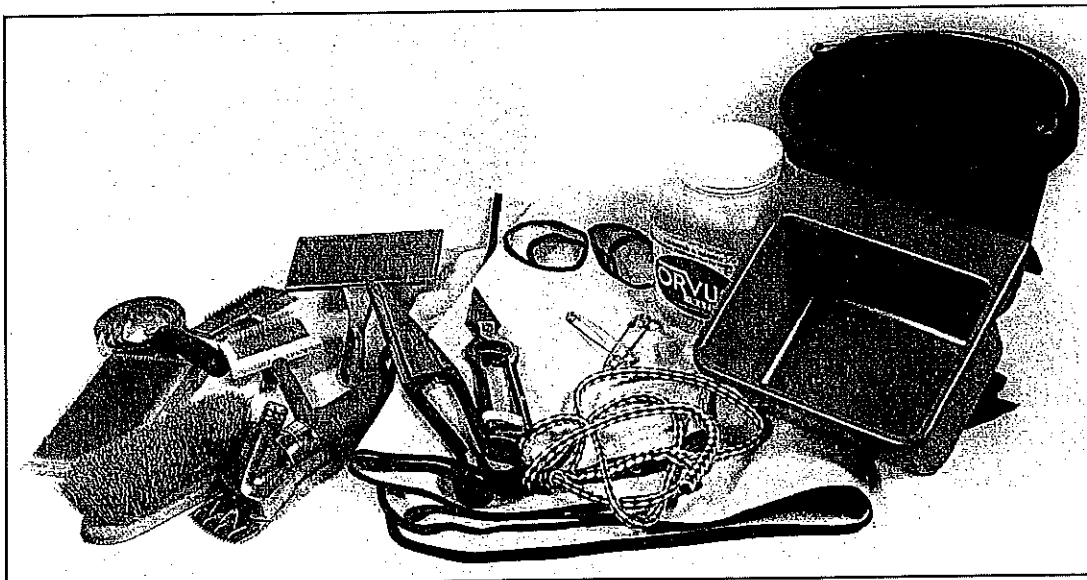


Figure 65  
Sheep equipment

## Grooming

1. Fitting the wool is done several different ways. Most market lambs are shorn very close. Either slick shear or leave "butt wool" on the lamb. Know the grooming rules for your county fair. Some rules state that lambs must be slick shorn or wool must be a certain length (i.e.  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch all over or "butt wool" can be only  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch). If you do not know how to trim the "butt wool," or do not have someone to help you with it, you may be better off slick shearing the entire lamb rather than it looking rough and ragged. You may slick shear the lamb a week before the fair. The final trimming or "touch-up" should be the day before or early the morning of the show (Figures 66 and 67).
2. Inspect the feet. If they need trimming, trim at least two weeks prior to the show. If you do it one or two days before the show and

you happen to get the hooves too short, the lamb may be lame.

3. It is also very important that you have all your show equipment ready prior to the day the fair starts.

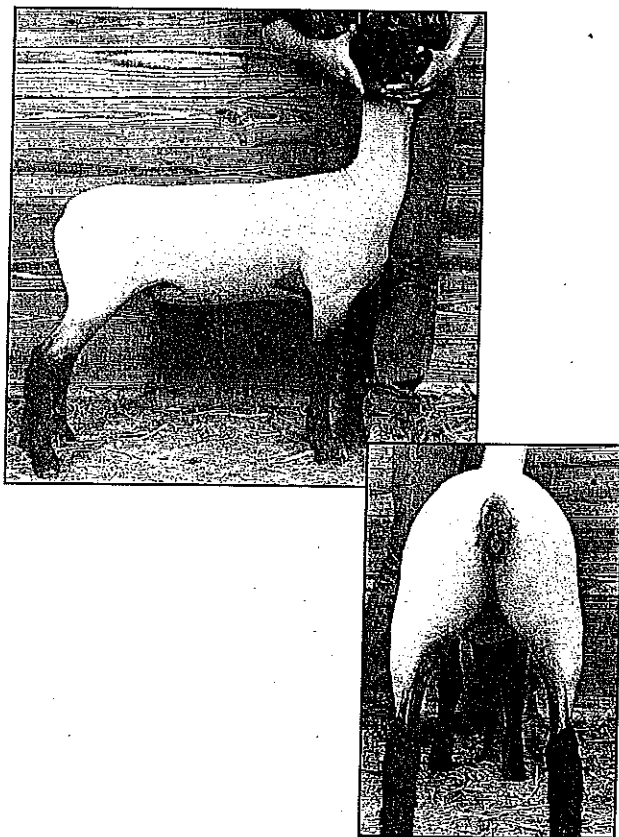
### Fitting Safety Tip

When fitting a sheep, you are using many sharp tools. Be careful not to injure yourself or any of the exposed areas of the animal, especially the hocks, the belly, the face and the area under the dock.

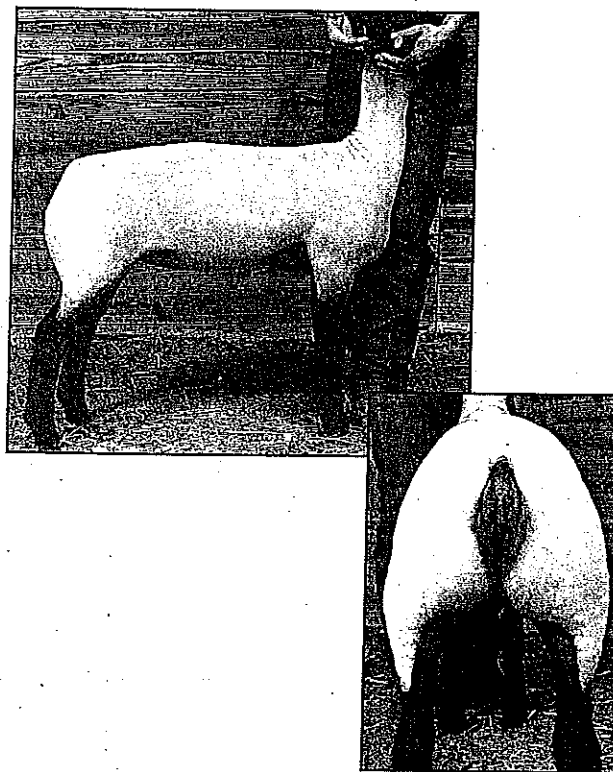
### Note to Parents or Advisors

The fitting stand and headpiece may be constructed out of wood. See the building plans in Appendix III.

Electric shears may be borrowed from a local advisor or other 4-H members. Contact your county 4-H agent for more information about where to borrow or purchase them.



*Figure 66*  
*Slick shorn lamb*



*Figure 67*  
*Lamb fitted with butt wool*

## Grooming/Fitting Guidelines for Meat-Type Breeding Sheep

1. Completely shear the animal 90–100 days before the show. The sheep should have 1 inch of fleece by show day.
2. Six weeks before the show, spot shear the animal in areas where as much wool is not needed. These areas include the belly, flanks and front end.
3. The week before the show and before washing, shear the belly, flanks, throat latch and the inside of hocks and knees.
4. Organize your equipment before proceeding.
5. Secure the sheep on the stand and trim its hooves.
6. Using the electric shears, shear the wool off the belly. This is done by shearing a straight line from flank to flank, on both sides and then removing the wool in between. Then blend the belly wool to the side wool.
7. Next, wash the sheep following the directions on the previous page.
8. Once it is dry, secure the animal on the fitting stand and dampen its fleece with a small amount of dish soap and water. With a brush, go back and forth on the top line and sides and go up and down on the front and rear end. Always use the brush in the same direction to train the wool.
9. Card the sheep using a rolling motion of your hand and wrist. Snap the heel of the card into the fleece. Follow through by setting the top side of the card down into the fleece and bring the heel up and out. The #2 card is generally used for finishing work or on light open areas of fleece like the rear end. Carding is done to straighten out the tip of each fiber so it can be trimmed evenly.
10. Before trimming, dampen the animal's fleece with water using a spray bottle. This lubricates the blades of the hand shears.
11. Hold the shears squarely, at a right angle to the line of trimming. Make the path of the shears parallel to the line of the sheep's body. Trim by drawing the upper blade over the stationary, lower blade. Don't move the lower blade of the shears. Move the shears away from you. (A left-handed person will need to reverse the order of working the blades.)
12. To blend the body parts of the animal together, first trim the area where you want the shortest wool.
13. Specific areas:
  - The rump is leveled out by shortening the wool over the hips.
  - The neck and shoulder junction is trimmed to make the shoulders seem smooth and to define the neck well.
  - The area between the shoulders and hips is blended to make the topline appear level.
  - The dock is made to appear higher by trimming the topline wool down, and by cutting the wool on the tip of the dock very short and in a straight line.
  - The area between the dock and the topline is blended in a half-moon shape rolling up from the dock to the topline.
  - The legs are defined by trimming the wool above the hock very short, and by trimming the wool in front of the flank short to emphasize the fullness of the rear leg.
  - The belly line should be blended by trimming the wool closest to the belly very short and then angling the blades so the wool above the line gradually gets longer.
  - The front end is trimmed making the wool short, so the animal appears trim through the front end.
  - The throat and breast wool is cut very short and the wool is blended from the throatlatch to the brisket. The front end should look slightly narrower than the rear end when the animal is finished.

- The sides are trimmed so they blend into the top, bottom, front and rear, giving the sheep a straight profile when viewed from the side and rear.
  - The face, chin, and neck areas are trimmed starting with the short wool nearest the face and blending to the longer wool on the neck. Finish by blending the area behind the ears to the neck.
  - Trimming the head and legs depends on the breed of sheep you are fitting.
14. The whole fitting process is then repeated. First use a curry comb, re-wet the fleece and rub it out with a towel to set the fleece and even out the color.
  15. After the sheep has been carded and trimmed a second time it should be ready for the show ring. Blanket and hood the sheep and keep it in a clean pen.

These are just guidelines for fitting. Each sheep's individual make-up varies the fitting process. To obtain guidelines for fitting wool-type breeding sheep, contact a breeder in your area.

### Fitting Guidelines for Wool-Type Breeding Sheep

Fitting wool breeding sheep is similar to fitting meat breeding sheep, but there are some major differences. The same basic equipment is used, but the amount of use of each piece differs.

**Wool sheep are not washed.** They should be shorn three to five months before the show. Then, keep them well bedded in a clean pen. Make sure they stay free from burrs, hay chaff, mud and rain.

The fitting process for wool sheep is started much earlier than meat sheep. The original shaping or cutting out is done at least two to four weeks before the show. This gives the wool ends time to "color up." This simply means the fleece is uniform throughout in color.

Because wool-type sheep are not washed, the first step in the fitting process is dampening the wool

ends with water and a brush. Use the curry comb to break up the dirt. (The curry comb is used much more than the card in wool-type sheep.) When using the curry comb, always go in the direction of the break. This means use a forward or backward motion when working on the sides and an up or down motion when working on the front or rear end.

The next step is carding, if it needs to be done. Use only the number 3 card very lightly so not to disrupt the crimp of the wool fiber. Trimming is the next step in the fitting process. Most people do not blanket their wool sheep, but you may do so to keep them cleaner. This should not be done during humid or wet weather because if the animal should get wet, it may discolor the fleece.

Fitting wool-type breeding sheep varies from breed to breed and from one area of the country to another. When showing a sheep in the eastern states, like Ohio, the bellies of wool sheep are shorn, as in meat sheep. When showing a sheep in western states, bellies are not sheared and the sheep are shown in 6–8-month fleeces. Some breeds of wool sheep, especially Corriedales, are shown with the legs washed from the hocks or knees down.

The many differences in fitting wool sheep make it necessary for you to have someone who is experienced help you the first few times. Ask your advisor, 4-H agent, or the producer from whom you bought your sheep for the name of someone who could help you get started.

### At the Show

After arrival at the fairgrounds, water and rest your sheep before feeding. Your lamb may be nervous about its new surroundings. Stay with your animal until it is relaxed. Bed your pen with the appropriate bedding.

If the weather is hot, use a fan. If the weather is cool, or the sun extremely hot and your barns are open, use a tarp to control ventilation for the lamb's optimal comfort.

## Preparations Immediately Before the Show

Feed and water your sheep lightly (half feed or less) at least a couple of hours before the show. A limited feeding will keep your sheep active and alert. Proper "fill," or the right amount of water and feed eaten, is an important part of showing. However, do not starve your sheep or deny it water prior to the show.

Groom and prepare your sheep for show. Your animal should be thoroughly clean. You may need to wash your sheep again if it got dirty. Allow enough time before the show for the lamb to be dry. A judge does not want to handle a wet lamb.

Be sure you follow the established grooming practices for your county fair. Consult the fair book for market lamb rules and breeding sheep rules.

Finish up any last minute trimming. Complete finishing touches with wool cards and sheep shears. Make sure ears, nose, and eyes have been wiped clean. Wash manure off of feet. Be sure

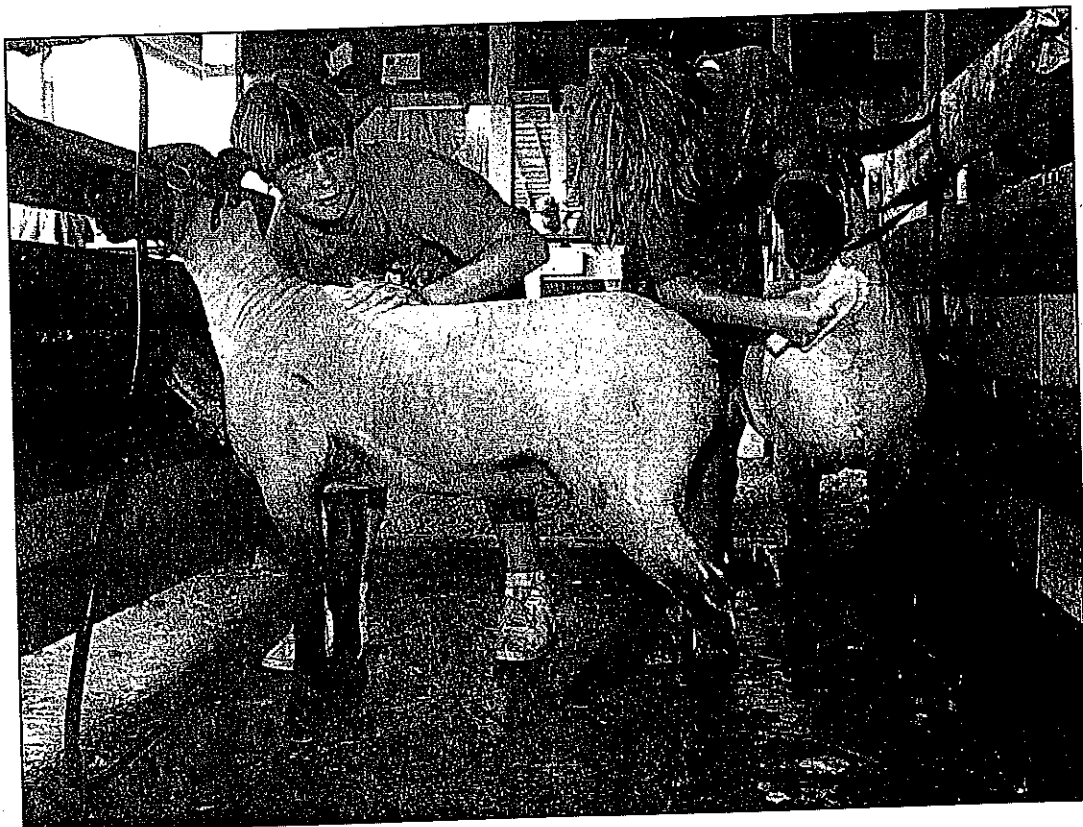
that all bedding or straw is off the lamb (especially underneath).

When the sheep is ready, get yourself ready. Be a clean, neat, and appropriately dressed exhibitor. This shows that you are interested in your project. Comb hair and do not wear a hat or cap. Nice jeans or dress pants, a shirt with a collar or t-shirt with club name is appropriate. Wear boots or hard sole shoes; no tennis shoes. Remember, you are trying to promote the sheep industry as well as yourself, your family, and your club.

Know your sheep and the important information about it, such as birth date, weight, and how it has been fed and managed. Some judges will ask questions about this information, so be prepared.

If you have time, go watch a couple of classes being judged. Watch the judge work, know the patterns he or she will follow. Be a student of what the judge likes and dislikes. Study the show ring to see if it is level. Where are the high and low spots and where is the lighting the best? Keep this in mind as you enter the show ring.

Be ready to leave for the show ring as soon as the class is called.

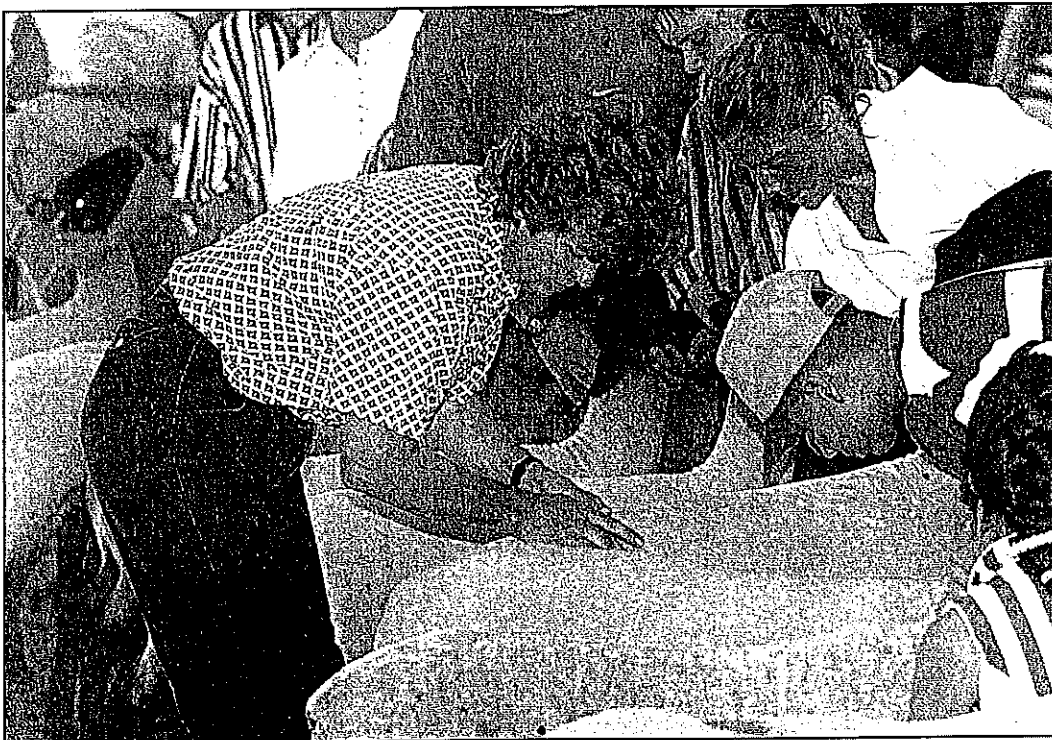


## Showing

- The key to show ring success is to present your animal as efficiently and effectively as possible. A good showman will always make his or her animal look the best that it can, emphasizing the good points and deemphasizing the bad points.
- Bring the sheep into the ring slowly, keeping a nice constant speed. Move the sheep with one hand under the jaw and the other hand either on the dock or behind the ears. Keep calm control, remember that the first impression that a judge has of you and your lamb is a very important one.
- Don't crowd your sheep in line. Leave plenty of room between you and the next exhibitor. Move into position and set your sheep up. Always set the legs closest to the judge first. You will have the most control if you reach over the top of the animal to set the legs with your free hand. However, many young people cannot reach over the top of the sheep. You will need to do what is most comfortable for you.
- Set all four legs squarely under the sheep. You may want to set the hind legs slightly wider than the front legs. This makes the sheep look wider from behind.
- After the animal is set up, move to its shoulder opposite the judge and kneel, making sure to keep the head up and topline straight. Most judges prefer you not put your knees on the ground, so you do not get sawdust on the sheep or lose control in the show ring.
- Whenever you move the sheep into the ring or during the show, be sure to keep the animal between you and the judge. Do not block the judge's view of your sheep. To turn the animal keep your hand on the jaw, not the throat, and turn its head toward your belt buckle. Slowly move the sheep toward you, switch hands until you stand at the opposite shoulder.



- Alertness in the ring is extremely important. Keep one eye on the judge and one eye on your animal at all times. Pay attention to any directions or signals the judge may give, such as turning your sheep sideways and moving it from one place to another. Concentrate on what is going on in the show ring, not who is standing along ringside or who is sitting in the stands.
  - When the judge moves in the rear or in front of the animal, do not “jump” from one side to the other. Instead, slowly and deliberately move from one side to the other. If you move slowly, you will not scare your sheep or the sheep beside it.
  - When the judge goes to handle your sheep, there are several ways you can cause it to tighten up or “brace.” One way is to put a little pressure under the jaw and at the same time, pull the head down slightly. A second method is to place your knee against the sheep’s brisket and pull the head up. Both of these methods cause the sheep to push forward and tighten up. Most showmen use a combination of these two methods. Continue to brace the animal until the judge is done handling the sheep.
  - During the show, keep the sheep’s feet on the ground. Sheep are born with four feet to stand on, so let them use them. Also, do not strike the hind end of the sheep in an attempt to make the sheep feel firmer.
  - Courtesy in the show ring is very important. Do not try to take advantage of other exhibitors by pulling into line ahead of someone else or having your sheep out of line so the judge cannot see others. Lack of courtesy in the show ring is very irritating to judges.
  - Be calm, and don’t be overly aggressive and “over-show.” Be patient with your sheep and don’t get upset if it doesn’t act just perfect. You will accomplish more by working slow, than by being mean to your sheep.
  - Pay attention when the judge gives his or her reasons so that you will know what to improve for next year.
  - Sportsmanship is very important—be a good winner as well as a good loser. Above all, learn from your experiences.
- Remember to concentrate on your animal’s position and watch the judge. You should have a calm, confident manner in the show ring.





## Tips for Exhibiting at County Fair

1. A county fair or state fair offers several activities that can distract the exhibitor from caring for their lamb project. Keep your project an important focal point.
2. Keep pens and aiseways clean. The county fair may be the first or only impression many people have of 4-H and FFA projects or agriculture. Be sure that:
  - Pens are clean.

### Fair check list

Take these items to the fair:

- Bedding
- Copy of the fair book
- Extension cord
- Extra blanket(s), hood(s) and pins
- Extra clothes
- Extra towels
- Fan (if the weather is hot)
- Farm sign (if you have one)
- Feed trough (one per pen)
- Grain
- Halter
- Hay
- Health papers  
(obtained from your vet)
- 4-H project record book
- Lawn chairs  
(for your parents)
- Registration papers  
(for breeding animals)
- Showbox with equipment
- Tools (hammer and nails)
- Trimming stand and head piece
- Water bucket (one per pen)
- Wire

- Animals are clean.
  - Animals are fed regularly.
  - Animals are watered frequently.
  - Old or uneaten feed is cleaned out before new feed is added. Usually animals eat less away from home.
  - Someone is watching for signs of heat stress in animals (heavy breathing, panting, etc.).
3. Be a good neighbor. Be careful not to spill water into the pen next to your own. Keep your area neat and tidy.
  4. Start early. Start early enough to prepare animals for the show so that you will not get in a hurry and cause your animal to become excited. This can cause injury to your animal, yourself, or a fair visitor.
  5. Represent agriculture. You and your project will show people who are not familiar with agriculture where their food comes from. When visitors are traveling through your barn be helpful in answering their questions about lamb production.



## How to Deal with Questions at the Fair

### From Interested, Concerned Citizens

- Take them seriously.
- Answer their questions honestly and sincerely.
- Avoid industry jargon and buzz words.
- Be a good listener.

### From Activists, Protestors

- Ignore them.
- Do not confront or debate them.
- If they persist, report them to your superiors.

### From the Media

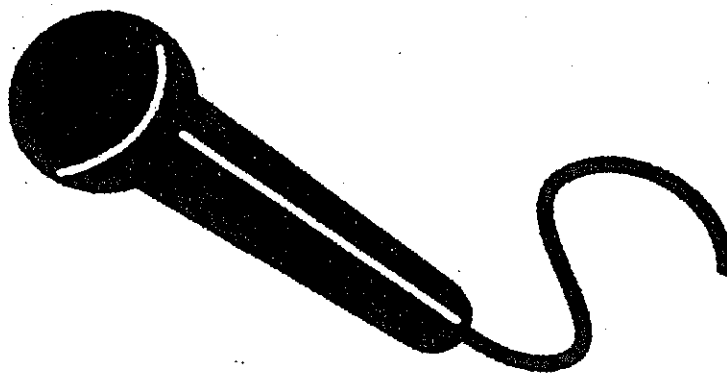
- Contact a superior to determine if you should do the interview.
- Confirm your facts.
- Plan your talking points.
- Avoid industry jargon and buzz words.
- If you don't know, say so.

### Basic Messages to Communicate to Everyone

- I believe in the humane and responsible care of all animals.
- Meat and dairy products are part of an overall healthy diet as recommended by leading health authorities.
- Americans enjoy the safest food supply in the world.

### Ten Tips to Help in Dealing with the Media

1. Confirm your facts before you talk to the media.
2. Plan your talking points. Make them early and often.
3. Anticipate opposing points of view.
4. Be brief in your response.
5. Be honest. Always tell the truth.
6. Speak in a language everyone understands. Avoid jargon and buzz words.
7. Smile. Smile. Smile.
8. If an untrue statement is made, refute it immediately and politely.
9. Beware of hypothetical, either/or, and ranked questions.
10. Nothing is "off the record."



## Selling the Project Animal

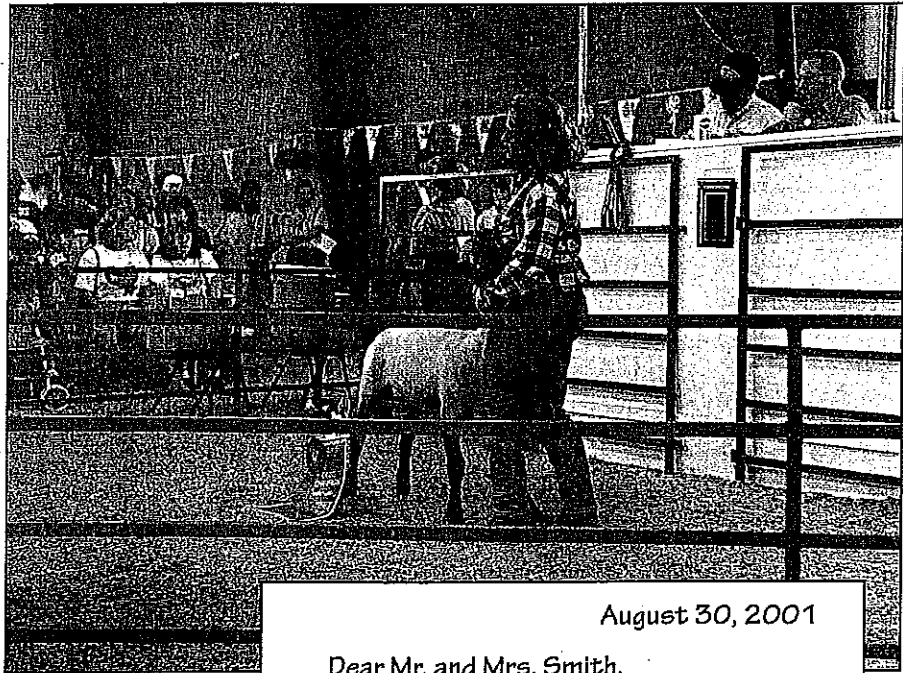
A Junior Fair Market Livestock Sale is held in conjunction with most county fairs so that 4-H members can sell their finished market animals.

(This, of course, is another "moment of truth" for all your project work.)

Become acquainted with the rules and procedures and cooperate with those in charge of the auction. There will be weighing and preliminary requirements to meet, ear tagging, sale order placement, and so on. Pay attention to announcements that come from the show manager and be prepared to enter the sale ring at your appointed time. Be prompt and have the lamb clean and groomed as you did for the show.

When you enter the sale ring, set the lamb up in the middle of the ring so that all may see the animal. Keep your lamb set up and presentable while you are in the sale ring. Your time in the ring may be as short as a minute or as long as 10–15 minutes. Whatever the time, always be alert and cheerful.

Also, there is usually considerable promotion, and many adults and representatives of the business community offer premium prices as a means of rewarding the 4-H member for his or her extra effort. It is important that 4-H members make contact with these buyers prior to the sale so that they know their support is appreciated. This small amount of effort before the sale is a matter of courtesy, and by it, you may in turn be rewarded by being offered a greater amount at the sale. After the sale, regardless of the amount you received, write to the buyers and thank them for their patronage.



August 30, 2001

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith,

Thank you for coming to the Crawford County Jr. Fair Sale and purchasing my market lamb. My parents said that I have to save the money to help pay for college later. They taught me how to sign a check and we went to the bank together to put it into a savings account for me.

This was my second year taking a lamb project and I can't wait until next year. I had a lot of fun and learned a lot while taking care of my lambs. Every day, I fed and watered them and went for long walks. I also learned how to keep good records about how much feed my lambs ate and how many pounds they gained.

Thanks again for supporting the Jr. Fair by buying my lamb. I really learned many things this year and I'm glad that people like you help support programs like 4-H for kids like me.

Sincerely,

Jenny Miller

