

YOU WANT TO SHOW LIVESTOCK OR HORSES!

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So you would like to show livestock or horses!!! A common comment!!!! Let us walk thru a few steps that are important before taking on this endeavor. First, in Alabama, most shows are limited to 4-H or FFA members. The comments in this document relate to the potential exhibitor being a 4-H or FFA member. The next thing that is recommended is to attend a livestock or horse show and truly watch the work and effort that is needed to make the exhibition of livestock/horses a worthwhile and rewarding experience for exhibitor and parent/guardian. Make friends with exhibitors and visit their show animal facilities on their farm/ranch.

The next issue to address is what will the exhibitor learn from showing livestock or horses? The life-skills that are learned as a result of any 4-H or FFA livestock/horse project are many and varied. High on the list is decision-making. One must realize that the decisions of animal selection, feeding and care of the project animal and dedication to the project can be paramount to the success in the show-ring. Other life-skills that are developed as a result of animal projects are responsibility, animal care, management and knowledge, money and time management, as well as goal setting and leadership skills.

Alabama has a multitude of opportunities to exhibit most species of animals. There is considerable variation within the various species, in terms of opportunities. The three major events are the Alabama National Fair, held annually in October, the Alabama Junior Livestock Expo, held annually in March in conjunction with the SLE rodeo and hosted by the Southeastern Livestock Expo and State 4-H Horse Show, held annually in July. All three events are held in Montgomery. In addition, there are a number of county and "regional" State Fairs, "jackpot" type shows and stand-alone shows held throughout the year.

Livestock shows have animal conformation classes when the judge evaluates form and function of the animal as it relates to the industry. Market animals are evaluated on their desirability of producing a high quality, edible food product, i.e., meat. Breeding animals are evaluated as replacement animals for the breeding herd. Livestock shows often have a "showmanship" class when the exhibitor is evaluated by the judge on the ability to handle, manage and control the animal while being exhibited, as well as mannerisms and courtesies displayed in the show-ring.

Horse shows have conformation classes as well as performance classes, when the judge evaluates suitability of being ridden. Horse shows often have a "showmanship" class when the exhibitor (on-foot) is evaluated by the judge on the ability to handle, manage and control the animal while being exhibited, as well as mannerisms and courtesies displayed in the show-ring or arena. In "horsemanship," the mounted exhibitor is evaluated by the judge on the ability to handle, manage and control the animal while being ridden.

BEEF CATTLE

For beef cattle, the show season typically ends with the Alabama Junior Livestock Expo. The opportunity exists to show heifers and steers. The heifer project, quite frequently, is considered because the 4-H or FFA member has access to a cowherd, from within their immediate family, from which to select an animal to get started with. A heifer calf born between January and March is of the age that makes her eligible for two show seasons. Selection of the project heifer should be around the calf's weaning time/age, i.e., 6 to 7 months, weighing 500 to 650 lbs. Wean the heifer, introduce her to new surroundings, and start her on feed with a properly formulated ration to gain between 2 and 3 pounds per day. Daily, feed a ration with a minimum of 12% protein, at the rate of approximately 3% of body weight. This should produce excellent results. This heifer can be shown in the Fall, when she is 7-9 months old, again in the Spring at 12-14 months of age. Ideally she will be bred when she is 15-18 months old, shown again in the Fall at 19-21 months of age and again in the Spring at 24-26 months of age. Heifers of all breeds and crosses are eligible.

For steers, the feeding regime is somewhat different. With the end result to be the State Steer Show in March, select a steer that will be 15-18 months old in March, weighing 1100-1300 lbs, with a rib-eye area of between 12 & 15 square inches and fat thickness of .35 to .45 inch between the 12 & 13th rib. Cattle are herd oriented and animals remain calmer if they are housed together. Steers of all breeds and crosses are eligible.

DAIRY CATTLE

For dairy cattle, the show season ends with the Alabama National Fair (October). The opportunity exists to show heifers and cows, in milk production. A heifer calf born between August and March is of the age that makes her eligible for two show seasons, as a heifer. Then the heifer becomes eligible to show in the cow classes, until she reaches six years of age. Introduce the calf to her new surroundings, and start her on feed with a properly formulated ration to gain between 1 and 1.5 pounds per day. Daily, feed a ration with a minimum of 12% protein, at the rate of approximately 2% of body weight. This should produce excellent results. This heifer can be shown in the Fall, when she is 4-14 months old. Ideally she will be bred when she is 15-18 months old, shown again in the Fall at 16-26 months of age. Then she becomes eligible for the cow classes. Cattle are herd oriented and animals remain calmer if they are housed together. Only dairy breeds are eligible.

HORSES

The Alabama State 4-H Horse Show (Montgomery in July) is the endpoint of this project. Mares and geldings of all breeds, ages and disciplines are eligible. Disciplines include speed events, equitation (when the rider's performance is evaluated and weighted more heavily than the horse's performance), halter and showmanship. Jumping classes, reining, dressage and trail classes are also offered. In 2008, mounted drill team competition was added to the Alabama State 4-H Horse Show.

MEAT GOATS

For market meat goats, the show season traditionally ends with the Alabama National Fair. The opportunity exists to show breeding does at both the Alabama National Fair and the Alabama Junior Livestock Expo. The meat goat project, quite frequently, is considered because there is a lesser time commitment to this project than there is to the beef cattle project. A doe kid born between January and April is of the age that makes her eligible for two show seasons, as a breeding animal. Selection of the project doe should be in spring or early summer. Introduce her to new surroundings, and start her on feed with a properly formulated ration to gain between .25 and .40 pounds per day. Daily, feed a ration with a minimum of 12% protein, at the rate of approximately 2% of body weight. This should produce excellent results. This doe can be shown in the Fall, when she is 5-10 months old, again in the Spring at 10-15 months of age, shown again in the Fall at 17-22 months of age and again in the Spring at 22-27 months of age. Does of all breeds and crosses are eligible.

For market meat goats, the feeding regime is similar to the does. With the end result to be the Alabama National Fair in October, select a either a wether or a doe that will be 5-10 months old in October, weighing 60-90 lbs, with a fat thickness of .05 to .10 inch between the 12 & 13th rib. Goats are herd/flock oriented and animals remain calmer if they are housed together. Market animals of all breeds and crosses are eligible.

SHEEP

For market lambs, the show season traditionally ends with the Alabama National Fair. The opportunity exists to show breeding sheep at both the Alabama National Fair and the Alabama Junior Livestock Expo. The sheep project, quite frequently, is considered because there is a lesser time commitment to this project than there is to the beef cattle project. A ewe lamb born between January and April is of the age that makes her eligible for two show seasons, as a breeding animal. Selection of the project ewe should be in spring or early summer. Introduce her to new surroundings, and start her on feed with a properly formulated ration to gain between .40 and .75 pounds per day. Daily, feed a ration with a minimum of 12% protein, at the rate of approximately 2% of body weight. This should produce excellent results. This ewe can be shown in the Fall, when she is 5-10 months old, again in the Spring at 10-15 months of age, shown again in the Fall at 17-22 months of age and again in the Spring at 22-27 months of age. Ewes of all breeds and crosses are eligible.

For market lambs, the feeding regime is similar to the ewes. With the end result to be the Alabama National Fair in October, select either a wether or a ewe that will be 5-10 months old in October, weighing 110-140 lbs, with a rib-eye area of between 2.75 & 3.5 square inches with a fat thickness of .15 to .20 inch between the 12 & 13th rib. Sheep are flock oriented and animals remain calmer if they are housed together. Market animals of all breeds and crosses are eligible.

SWINE

For market hogs, currently there are two terminal shows, the Alabama 4-H & FFA Market Hog Show, in Montgomery, in January and the South Alabama 4-H & FFA Market Hog Show, in June, in Dothan. The Alabama National Fair has a breeding hog show. The swine project, quite frequently, is considered because there is a lesser time commitment to this project than there is to the beef cattle project. Selection of the project market hog should be targeted to the specific show. Introduce the pig to new surroundings, and start on feed with a properly formulated ration to gain approximately 1.25 pounds per day. Daily, feed a ration with a minimum of 16% protein, at the rate of approximately 2 to 3% of body weight. This should produce excellent results. That target should be a market hog that is approximately six months old at the time of the show, weighing 230 to 280 lbs., with a rib-eye area of between 5 & 8 square inches with a fat thickness of .75 to .90 inch at the 10th rib. Hogs are herd oriented and animals remain calmer if they are housed together. Market animals of all breeds and crosses are eligible.