

# The Dairy Show Ring Steward—



assisting the judge for an effective  
presentation of dairy animals



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**D**airy people just love to attend shows.

A show provides an opportunity to view a significant number of elite animals in one location. At the same time, it also encourages development of the Holstein breed in Canada. By studying top-quality animals at a show, a dairyman is updated on current breeding trends and can make comparisons to how his breeding program fits into the overall Canadian scheme. The breeder can evaluate his ability to feed and grow his animals to their potential. Shows are an excellent place to view the offspring of various sires, and judge whether the daughters of a particular bull possess the qualities desired in his home breeding program. As well, shows stimulate discussion on various topics, and act as a forum for promotion and marketing efforts.

At the show, fitters and showpersons are responsible for preparing and presenting

animals in their best light. The judge then places the animals in each class and gives effective reasons on the placings. Spectators desire the best view possible of the entries and champions. However, to meet all of the above objectives, the show must be effectively orchestrated by show organizers. The ringman is an important element in the overall scheme.

At many dairy cattle shows around the world, it has become common practice to engage a ring steward to assist the official judge with the staging of the show. People are being asked to act in this capacity at local, county, regional, district, provincial, and national levels. Some shows for youth now involve large numbers of competitors as well.

*In an effort to provide uniformity in procedures across the country, the following information provides some helpful guidelines for ringpersons.*

# Duties and Responsibilities for Regular Classes

**W**hen accepting the role of ringman, it is important to remember your major responsibilities are three-fold. Understand that you are to choreograph the show, not judge the animals. Be precise in your instructions and be friendly, but firm, with the exhibitors regarding ring procedures. Communicate your wishes often and, at all times, maintain control without confrontation.

Firstly, you are present to **assist the official judge** by directing animals to be paraded in a manner he or she can easily view and evaluate. That way the judge is

able to concentrate on the task at hand and not be concerned about directing traffic in the show ring.

Secondly, you have a **responsibility to the exhibitors**. By clearly communicating your directions to each leadsperson, the show runs more smoothly and you avoid confusion in the ring.

Thirdly, you have a **responsibility to the spectators**. People often travel long distances to attend cattle shows. They want to be able to see the cattle as they are being paraded and judged, as well as view a final lineup of what the judge sees, as reasons are presented on each class.

## Preparations

Just like the official judge, it is important to **arrive early** for the show. In most cases, one-half hour prior to start time is sufficient. This allows time to meet with the show officials and judge, and to discuss your plans with other people assisting with the show. This would include the announcers, ribbon presenters, people marshalling cattle for the classes and, of course, caretakers who keep the ring tidy.

**Discuss the ring technique with the judge** prior to the show. Each judge has a personal style when it



comes to ring procedure.

**Survey the show ring area** before the show to familiarize yourself with several different aspects. It is important to observe where the majority of people watching the show are seated or standing; this helps with the positioning of the initial and final lineups. Generally, spectators like to view the lineup from the rear; your final line should address this. It is also important to check where trophy presentations and photographs will take place. Your lineup should allow for easy

movement to this area once reasons have been completed on the class.

Next, check with the clerks of the show to **ascertain how many animals or contestants are to be presented in each class**. Usually, the clerks will provide a copy of the program for you with up-to-date deletions or substitutions. Take a few moments to find the totals in each class. By knowing this number, you can easily signal to the judge when all contestants have entered the ring. It is also useful to **keep the program handy** to jot down the first and second

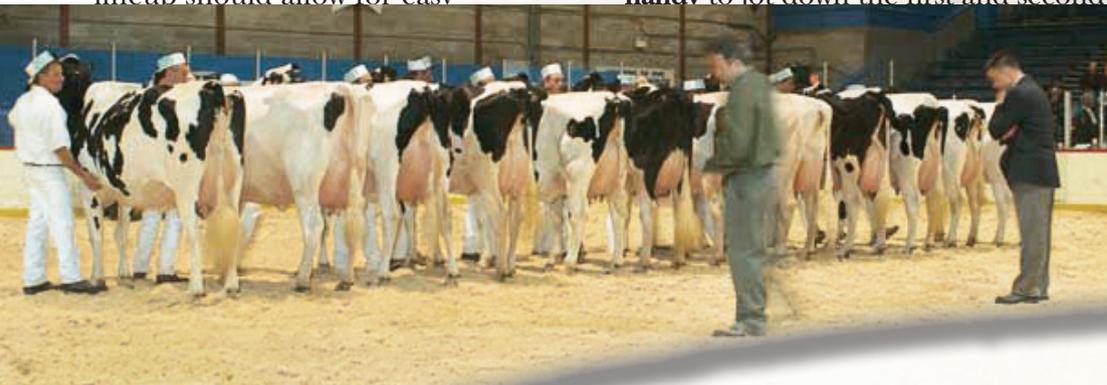
place winners at the completion of each class. This provides a quick reference when animals return for the championship class.

**Speak with the people assisting in the marshalling of animals.** Select one of them to be your contact person to let you know when the entire class is in the ring. They have complete lists just as you do. An important objective, once the show has started, is to keep it moving at a good pace.

**Late arrivals** invariably occur. When this happens, **quickly move the animal, along the outside of the ring,** into the correct age position. Once you get to the older cow classes (four years and over), late arrivals can be added to the end of the class.

Lastly, **make yourself known to ring custodians.** Judges, exhibitors, and spectators appreciate a clean, tidy ring. Select a person to head the maintenance team. Make frequent eye contact and hand gestures to direct these people to areas needing attention.

Be at ringside 10 minutes prior



*The ringman supports the judge, but does not interfere with the judge's role.*

to the scheduled start time as cattle are usually making their way to the marshalling area.

## Dress Code

**Dress professionally** in the ring. In most cases, a dress shirt, tie, and trousers are appropriate. Casual dress slacks are satisfactory and they are easily laundered. Footwear should be comfortable leather shoes or boots.

In warmer weather, a conservative-looking golf shirt is quite acceptable. If it is a higher-level show (provincial, championship, national), preferred dress is a jacket and tie, which is similar to what the judge wears. Do not wear sleeveless shirts, blue jeans, shorts, running shoes, work boots, or sandals in the ring.

For women, a pantsuit (or dress pants and jacket/vest) is appropriate.

## Ring Procedures

Once the show begins, **stand at the entrance** where the cattle are being led into the ring. Speak to the exhibitors as they enter and give them clear directions as to where you wish them to parade their animals. It is important to get the entire class into the ring quickly.

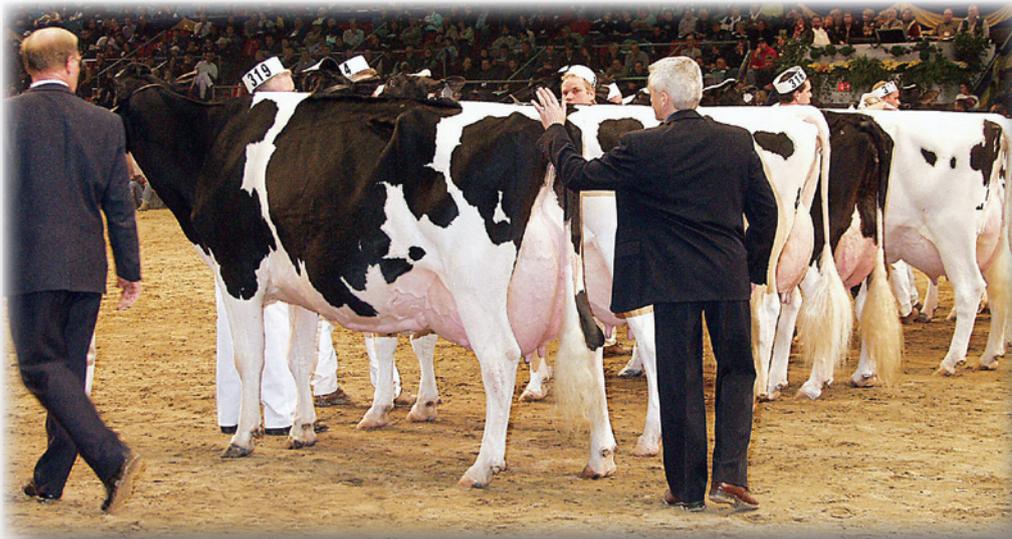
Because most judges like to view the entire class from a distance, **ask the exhibitors to move their animals at a faster pace**, walking forward, until the entire class is in the ring. Also, encourage exhibitors to use the entire show ring area. Keep the animals to the outside as much as possible as many leadspersons tend to crowd in on the judge.

Occasionally, you may get large gaps between animals. This can be caused by an unco-operative animal, or sometimes by a leadsperson who moves very slowly. Go directly to the animal causing the delay and gently nudge the animal or **ask the**

**leadsperson to close up the gap**. This gets all animals into the ring and enables the judge to get a good view. This also helps the judge to assess animals in a favourable area in the ring. Try to position animals so the judge is not analyzing an animal in a corner where it may be awkward to move it into a desirable pose.

Once all animals are in the ring, **be as inconspicuous as possible** and still maintain control of the show. **Stay to the outside**, but be ready to move quickly to the centre of the ring once the judge has made his initial evaluations and is about to move his first pulls into the centre. Position these animals in a straight line and in such a manner that the judge can make a second or even third lineup, if necessary, and still have enough room to manoeuvre.

Once the judge has made his initial picks, he might signal for the rest of the class to line up in another area. **Move quickly to the designated area** and signal the remaining



*Moving into position, the ringman directs leadspersons in parading their animals.*

contestants to line up their animals in a secondary straight line. Do not make this line too close to the first line. Leave some room for the judge to work with the first pulls. Once the second line is in place, notify the judge the second line is ready for viewing. He just might find an animal he missed in the first pull, and that

animal is then easily moved forward.

If the judge wishes to see a **secondary line** from his first pulls, then **move the animals forward a reasonable distance** without getting boxed in. Once the judge has indicated his preferences, ask the leadsmen to parade their animals again in a large circle utilizing all of

the ring space available. This allows the judge to see the class head-to-tail again. While the judge is making his final judgment, go to the second line and ask them to move forward as a group. This cuts down on the steps the judge has to take and moves the class to conclusion more quickly. Again, make sure the final lineup is in a straight line. Stay close to the animals to assure this happens.

Communication with your judge is important. As the **class nears completion, stay close by** so the judge can indicate to you the class is finished. At this time, if the classes are in milk, have the judge indicate which animal(s) is designated as best udder(s). You, as ringman, may then indicate the completion of the class to the recording stewards, the announcer, and also tell the ribbon presenters which animal(s) is designated as best udder(s).

The judge then has a few moments to prepare his reasons as the placings on the class

are recorded and the ribbons distributed. It also gives you the opportunity to **tell the leadspersons how to parade their animals and exit the ring.** Be prepared to lead the procession to the exit, listening to the judge's reasons and controlling the speed of the exit. The leadspersons should lead their animals out of the ring in a timely and orderly manner so the judge can present his reasons on the class and the spectators have a clear view of the animals paraded

head-to-tail. Keep the entire class in single file to avoid congestion at the exit.

In the **championship classes**, you should have discussed with your judge his **preferred way of displaying the class winners.** In most cases, the class makes one trip around the ring and is lined up side-by-side. The judge then has the opportunity to move the top prospects forward. If possible, the champion contenders should be lined up head-to-tail so the majority of the spectators have a clear view of the winners. Once the

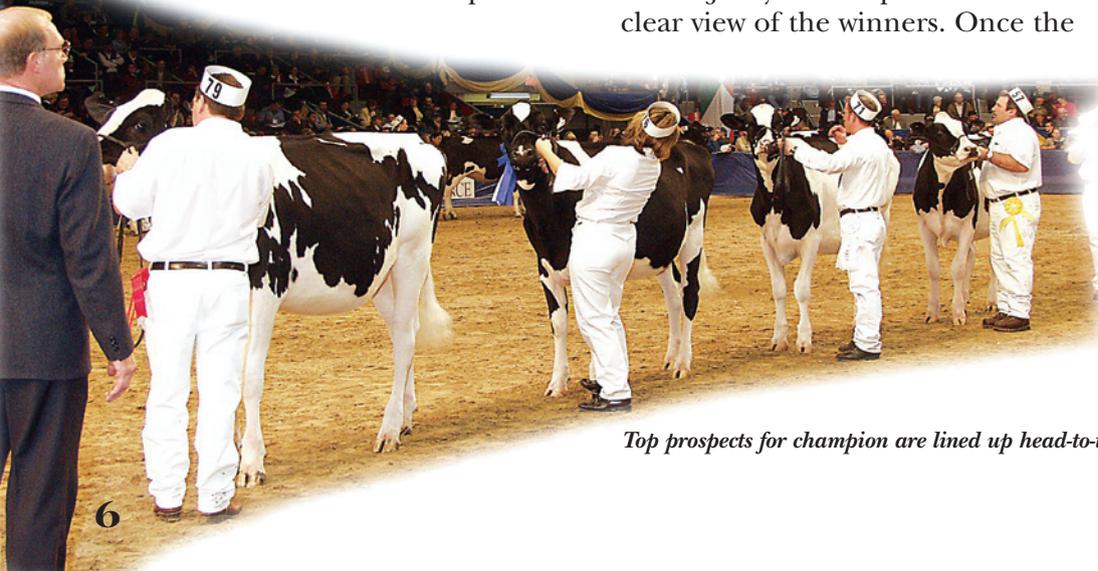
winners have been named, the rest of the class may be excused in an orderly fashion.

## Group Classes

**Group classes** should again be lined up with the rear of the animals facing the majority of the spectators. **Line the groups up in close proximity to each other, allowing the judge to work from the centre of the ring.** Line the groups, once judged, head-to-tail down the centre of the ring.

## Conclusion of the Show

As ringman, once the show has come to an end, be sure to congratulate the official judge on his performance and thank him for the opportunity of working with him. Be sure to check with the official's desk to make sure all of your duties are complete prior to departure.



*Top prospects for champion are lined up head-to-tail by the ringman.*

# Duties and Responsibilities for Youth Classes



*In this showmanship class, the ringman remains inconspicuous.*

## Showmanship

Showmanship classes present a whole new dimension for ring stewards.

Basically, you stand at the entrance to the show ring and inform the contestants to move the animals quickly into the ring. Once the class is in the ring, you should stay on the sidelines until the judge is ready to make his first pulls to the middle. When this happens, move to the designated area for the beginning of the line. Once the first animal has arrived at the designated position, move again to the sidelines. Your job in showmanship is to remain aloof

and neutral.

Part of showmanship is keeping the lines straight with adequate spacing between entrants. Do not get involved at this point. Set the first position only and the rest is up to the persons competing in the showmanship class. The judge will give all of the necessary instructions to the persons regarding movement, etc. Once the judge has made his final selection, move to the designated area and indicate where the first-place animal should stop. When that animal is in place, there should be no further instructions from the ringman until the judge is ready to give reasons. At this point,

direct the class to exit in single file.

In the case of several heats of showmanship, the judge usually determines how many contestants are to return for the final group. The ringman should communicate this to the recording stewards or create a wider space between the last qualifier and the rest of the class so the show recorders make no mistakes as to which contestants return for the final heat.

## Conformation

Conformation classes involving youth participants are always interesting and fun to watch. Handle

these classes the same as a regular show. Remember, however, some contestants may be a little nervous, and, once in a while, their calves do not co-operate. Some calves may balk and refuse to move.

If a calf is creating problems or roadblocks, quickly come to the competitor's aid. Oftentimes, the leadsperson is frustrated or shows emotion. Offer him/her reassurance and assist in moving the calf along. A friendly smile and warm encouragement goes a long way to rebuilding the competitor's confidence.

# Timely Reminders

## Communication

**C**ommunication during the show is extremely important—especially between the judge and ringman. Stay close enough to hear his instructions. However, at no time give the appearance you are judging the class. For younger, aspiring judges, working as ringman with a seasoned judge is a great learning experience.

Also, communicate with the ring announcer, the clerks, and ribbon presenters. Good communication helps the team function smoothly.

## Catalogues

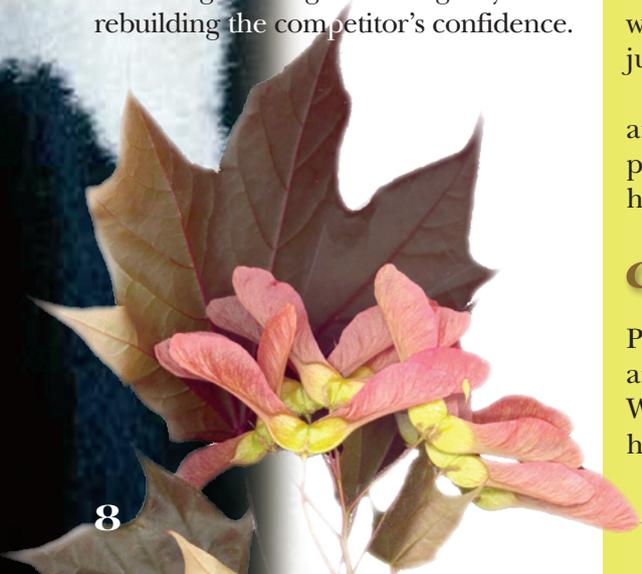
People often say the best view in the arena is from the centre of the ring. While this is true, a good ringman has little time to view the cattle as a

spectator does, or to study a catalogue. Occasionally, the judge may ask you the age of a calf, so have the catalogue handy for quick reference before returning the catalogue to your pocket. Quickly record the first and second-place winners, after each class, to note which animals should return for the championship class.

If you would like a completely-marked catalogue, ask one of the people at the officials' table to mark one for you and retrieve it at the end of the show.

## Fraternizing

Exhibitors always appreciate a casual greeting as you move past their animals. Be careful not to place yourself between an animal and the judge's view.



A quick hello is appropriate with people standing around the ring, but your job remains in the centre of the ring. Arrange to meet people in the stable area after the show.

## Lunch

Larger shows often run through the noon hour. When lunch arrives, select an opportune time to step to the sidelines for a quick bite. Leave all food and beverages at the officials' table as there will be opportunities to partake of these throughout the

show. Keep refreshments out of the centre of the ring.

## Touching Animals

General, accepted practice for ringmen is to refrain from touching an animal (e.g. put tail down, move foot). Other exhibitors may interpret this as an animal receiving an unfair advantage.

If an animal soils her tail, be prepared to take the halter for a few moments while the leadsperson ties the cow up.



*The final lineup is a straight line initiated by the ringman.*

# Summary

**T**his outline covers most of the areas and situations you may encounter as a ringman.

By following these guidelines, you will be confident in your role as ring steward.

Take your responsibilities seriously as the judge, exhibitors, and spectators appreciate your efforts.

*The content for this publication was drafted by Murray Reissner, Beachville, ON for Holstein Canada and Holstein Ontario. One of Canada's foremost ring experts, Murray has choreographed numerous shows in Ontario and, particularly, the national Holstein show at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.*

*Photos taken by Vicki Fletcher Photography.*



*Leading the procession, the ringman controls the speed of exit to enable the judge to complete his reasons.*



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