

Power County 4-H showmanship clinic builds youth confidence and fair readiness

AT A GLANCE

4-H youth improved showmanship knowledge, confidence and county fair readiness through peer and adult-led instruction across goat, lamb, steer and swine projects.

The Situation

Livestock showmanship asks youth to demonstrate animal management, communication skills and composure while exhibiting before a judge. 4-H members entered the fair with varying levels of experience, and many youths reported limited confidence and preparedness for showmanship and round robin competition.

Youth learn showmanship skills from club leaders, volunteers and fellow 4-H members within their local clubs. However, they have fewer opportunities to receive instruction from experienced exhibitors outside their club and gain exposure to other livestock species. Additional educational experiences can help youth broaden their livestock knowledge, strengthen confidence and better prepare for county fair and round robin competition.

Our Response

To address this need University of Idaho Extension, Power County, partnered with experienced youth exhibitors and adult volunteers to provide a free two-hour 4-H Showmanship Clinic prior to the Power County Fair. Instruction focused on judge's expectations, show ring preparation, effective showmanship



Scott Nash shared judge's perspective while experienced 4-H youth demonstrate showmanship. Photo by Christie Evans.

techniques and round robin competition for goat, lamb, steer and swine exhibitors. Twenty-seven youth from Power County and surrounding counties completed pre and postclinic self-assessments on a five-point scale.

Experienced 4-H showmen representing multiple age groups and skilled adult volunteers shared practical knowledge gained through years of livestock project participation. The clinic intentionally combined peer-to-peer learning with adult expertise, allowing youth to learn from both the experiences of successful exhibitors and long-term livestock mentors. Exposure to multiple livestock species provided participants with broader understanding of showmanship expectations across projects and introduced opportunities to

explore livestock species they may consider exhibiting in future years.

Program Outcomes

Youth reported increased knowledge, confidence and fair readiness across all six evaluation measures. Average self-rating increased from 3.3 before the clinic to 4.1 on a five-point scale after participation, demonstrating measurable improvements in showmanship knowledge and competition preparedness.

Evaluation highlights

- Round robin readiness increased from 2.3 to 3.6, the largest gain among all measures area.
- Understanding what judges look for increased from three to four.
- Understanding successful showmanship skills increased from 3.1 to 3.9.
- 81% of participants rated their confidence showing before a judge and their show ring preparation at four or five.
- 85% rated their ability to apply the skills to help with their livestock project at four or five.
- 81% rated learning from experienced showman as helpful or very helpful.

These findings indicate that youth left the clinic better prepared for county fair competition and more confident in their ability to demonstrate livestock showmanship skills. Participant responses suggest that combining peer to peer learning with adult expertise is an effective approach for increasing livestock project knowledge, building confidence and broadening youth

understanding of opportunities across goat, lamb, steer and swine projects. Exposure to multiple species also allowed participants to learn about livestock projects beyond their own and may encourage future participation in additional livestock species.

The Future

University of Idaho Extension in Power County will continue to combine adult expertise with youth-to-youth teaching. Future clinics will place additional emphasis on round robin preparation to address the area where participants reported the lowest levels of readiness after the program. Future efforts will also include pursuing sponsorships for showmanship awards to recognize participant growth, reinforce skill development and encourage ongoing involvement in livestock projects.



Experienced 4-H members share peer advice while demonstrating steer showmanship. Photo by Anthony Simerlink.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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