



SHOW SOLUTIONS

10 Daily Care Tips that will make a difference in the show ring

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By: Mari Palacio, Multi-species National Support Specialist

As competitive as the show ring has become, it's more important now than ever before to do everything correctly at home in order to truly shine in the ring. The tips outlined here may seem negligible, but they are all too often forgotten or overlooked — and small daily successes can add up to a big win!

1. Always provide fresh, clean water. Believe it or not, when it comes to nutrition, water is the most important element. If you expect your animals to be healthy and would like to keep them cool while developing crisp muscle shape for optimal performance, they must be well-hydrated. Many factors can affect your animals' intake of water, including cleanliness, the location of water sources, temperature, the watering system of choice and the water quality. Water troughs or barrels that hold a high volume of water can be convenient because you only have to fill and clean them once or twice each month. Imagine, however, how the water inside those tanks will change throughout the summer; it will heat up, grow mold and/or bacteria and become stale. Does that sound refreshing to you on a hot summer day? I don't think so. Whether you have an automatic watering system, a big tank or are bucket-watering, be sure to change the water frequently (preferably every day), clean your water system often (e.g., once per week), set the water source in the shade and out of the sun's rays, and mitigate any opportunities for the water system to potentially injure your animals.
2. Weigh your feed. What does one scoop mean to you? How much does a coffee can actually hold? Weighing your feed eliminates any doubt or uncertainty about how much your animal is really consuming. Knowing the exact amount of feed and supplements your project ingests is crucial for you to be able to manage them properly — it can help you control their weight, maximize their performance and enhance results! And with outlets like Walmart offering digital kitchen scales for as little as \$8.00, there are no excuses for not weighing your feed.
3. Clean your pen. If you wouldn't sleep in your project's pen, they shouldn't have to either! Dirty pens can lead to illness, fungus and stress. Have you ever walked into a hotel room and cringed at the smell, the lack of cleanliness, the dirty floor or dirty bathroom? In that moment, you don't want to touch anything, let alone sleep in that potentially bug-infested bed. Your animals feel the same way about dirty pens! Make them comfortable; keep them dry, healthy, stress-free and clean with a fresh environment and bedding. A clean pen will also help prevent stains on your project come showtime.
4. Spend time with your animal in their pen. It's important for you to establish a bond with your project from the first day you bring them home. If they're going to respect and listen to you, they will first need to trust you. There are no tricks or easy ways out to build this trust in them; it is fostered by simply spending time together. Hang out with your animals while they eat, brush their bodies and give them treats. Just as you wouldn't be comfortable around strangers, neither are your animals, so familiarize yourself with your project — and let them familiarize themselves with you.
5. Practice showmanship. Have you ever walked out of your showmanship class wishing that you hadn't made that one small mistake or feeling disappointed with either your animals' or your own performance? Avoid this regret by practicing showmanship from the second you and your project step out of the pen.

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Headed to the wash rack at home? Pretend the judge is watching you. Taking your pig for a walk? Pretend the judge is watching you. Always staying on your "A-game" at home will help you show off in the ring. Don't let your animal think that coming out of their pen is playtime; it's showtime. Training your animal to think this way will help weed out their bad habits before they even have a chance to test the limits.

6. **Keep them cool.** Keeping your animals on feed, gaining and stress-free during the summer months can be a challenge, but you can proactively mitigate this problem by keeping them cool from the start. Adjust the temperature of their environment by allowing a breeze to pass through the barn, providing shade, putting up fans and blocking any direct sunlight. Misterters and Portacools, while very effective, can sometimes create too much moisture in the environment, leading to bacteria and fungus, so track the humidity levels in your pen if you use one of these tools.

7. **Rinse often.** Rinsing can be a huge help when attempting to keep your animal cool. Not only does rinsing often help lower the animal's body temperature, it is also healthy for their skin and hair. Additionally, rinsing can help prevent ingrown dirt in hogs, and it is essential for hair growth in the haired species, cattle and goats. When prepping for a show during the summer, rinsing daily is a good routine.

*Sheep are an exception to this rule — because of the lanolin in their wool, it is NOT advisable to rinse their bodies, as it will strip their natural oil. Instead, simply rinse their legs.

8. **Work hair.** Regardless of the species, hair is an important trait of show livestock. If you have hogs, using a leave-on conditioner and brushing it into the skin will help hydrate the skin and will train the hair to lay properly. With sheep and goats, working leg hair is important for stimulating new growth, as well as for maintaining the existing hair supply. For cattle, working hair is essential. If you want something to actually fit and clip on come showtime, you better be combing and blowing dry correctly at home.

9. **Exercise.** Whether exercising your hog to build more stamina or sprinting your lamb, exercise is important. After all, these projects are athletes, and we must treat them as such! Aside from the physical benefits, exercise also provides another opportunity for you to work with your animal and for both of you to become more comfortable with you taking a hands-on approach.

10. **Utilize a deworming program.** Keeping your stock free of internal parasites is crucial. If left untreated, internal parasites will steal nutrients from your project, thereby decreasing their performance potential. Work with a vet to establish an effective and consistent deworming program for your animal.

For more tips on how to be successful in the show ring, please visit www.showrite.com or contact a Show-Rite representative.

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