

Showing your Jacob Sheep



Getting into the Show Ring

As Jacob sheep have become more popular, more are entering the show ring – at 4H fairs, wool festivals, and other venues.

Why show?

- To learn a bit about your sheep from an experienced judge of livestock.
- To exhibit your sheep to the public, and introduce the breed to others.
- To introduce your flock to other Jacob breeders.
- And hey – it's fun!



Jacob Sheep in the Show Ring: Information for Judges

JSBA produced this guide to assist show judges who may not be familiar with the breed.

It may also be helpful to breeders who are showing Jacobs.

JACOB SHEEP IN THE SHOW RING INFORMATION FOR JUDGES



JACOB SHEEP BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

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Where do I find the Judges' Guide?

- Look at the very top of the home page on the JSBA website, and click on “Guide to Showing”

OR

- Click here: <http://www.jsba.org/JudgesPacket.pdf>
- Feel free to print or email the Judges' Guide, and to provide it to your show chairman to pass along to the judge.

Some Highlights of *Jacob Sheep in the Show Ring*

You will notice that the guide sounds a lot like the breed standard. This is because judging should reflect the Jacob standard.

The scorecard (pages 4 and 5) is a summary of all of the criteria in the judge's guide.

The guidebook suggests that judging be based:

30% on conformation

30% on wool quality

30% on breed character (like spots and horns)

10% on showmanship

Some shows will set their own criteria – for example, judging 40% on conformation and 60% on wool. In this case, the show criteria are followed.

Are you new to the show ring?

Most of us learn as we go.

You may want to start by watching a sheep show at your county fair or another venue.

Talk to breeders or to your county extension agent. It helps if you can find a mentor.

And become familiar with the breed standard – it lists the criteria by which your sheep will be evaluated.

The next few slides offer some additional suggestions.

Getting ready

Pick your show sheep:

Not every *GOOD* sheep is a show sheep.

- Some are shy, or difficult to handle.
- Some have an obvious fault (example – very light or dark) even though they are highly valued for breeding purposes.
- Your best, most favorite sheep may not be “showy” but this should not change your opinion of them.

“Fitting”

Make them Look their Best

Keep it “natural” looking. Jacobs should not be clipped or blocked to change their shape. They *may* need a *gentle* rinse with cool water a few days before the show to remove excess dirt, but should not be washed in a way that removes the lanolin and softness from the wool. Don’t rub them dry; you may matt the wool.

They should have clean hooves and horns (wipe them off with a wet rag); have sweat tags and manure tags trimmed off; , and have clean legs and knees. As much hay, straw, and debris as possible should be picked out of the wool.



Training

- Halter train your sheep, and get it used to being handled.
- Search on line for information on halter training, or ask someone at a show or in a 4H club to advise you. See references at the end of this presentation.

However, there are some standard practices that should be avoided. Some sheep people may suggest that you just tie up the sheep – but an athletic Jacob may harm itself or break horns if tied before training. Please hold the line on your sheep and handle it gently but firmly until it calms down.

- You can use treats (a handful of grain) to encourage your sheep to move with you, but don't overdo it. Go for walks with your sheep until it walks with you in a relaxed manner, and stands quietly. It may seem that this will never happen during your first lesson but it will.
- Take turns holding the sheep and being the “judge.” Get your sheep used to being handled by strangers. Feel it down the back and sides, lift legs, check teeth.

Typical Ring Procedures

This is how it usually goes.

- The ringmaster will show you where to line up.
- The judge will walk down the line for a first look, and then examine each sheep.
- The judge will watch the sheep walk.
- The judge will place the sheep, giving reasons for placing one sheep over another.



First Steps Into the Ring – The Look you Want

Hold your sheep by the head (chin and back of neck) or halter, and keep it calm.

Show the judge your sheep. Watch the judge and don't get between him or her and your sheep. Move to the front or the other side as s/he comes by.



Pay attention to how your sheep is standing, and try to keep it calm.

You can squat or stand.

Move your sheep around gently until it stands squarely.

Try putting a knee in front of your sheep's chest to keep it steady when the judge examines it.

Stay calm; your animal is more nervous than you are.



Halter or no halter – under control



Sheep may be shown with or without a halter – show traditions vary.

If your sheep acts up, just calmly reposition it.

Pay attention to the judge and ringmaster – they will let you know what to do next.



What the judge wants to see

The judge will usually start by looking at heads and ask to see each animal's bite.

Show him like this (hand over muzzle and spread two fingers).



The judge will then examine each sheep, feeling along the back, and looking at wool. S/he may ask you the animal's birth date.

The judge may or may not make comments about your sheep during this process.



Smile!

Walking

- At most shows, the judge may ask you to walk your sheep in front of the line and back. Or s/he may ask all of the sheep to walk in a circle.
- The judge is looking at the legs among other things.
- Try not to walk between the sheep and the judge – move to the opposite side if needed.
- If your sheep balks, just stop and encourage it or reach back and push on the base of the tail. Avoid dragging it.

Listen to the Judge's Comments



Different judges may notice different things. They typically give *reasons* for their placing; this is your opportunity to learn from an expert.

You may agree or disagree but of course you won't argue with the judge.

You can, however, politely ask for clarification if you don't understand the judge's comments. They are there to help you learn.

Criteria: 30% Conformation

This is an evaluation of how the sheep is “put together.”

Legs: relatively square.
Not flat on its pasterns.

Back, relatively level, but with a sloping rump.

Reasonably well-muscled, and so on.



Help your sheep to look good. If it is fighting you like this, the judge simply won't be able to see its true conformation. Try to get it to stand squarely and quietly without fighting you.

Criteria: 30% Fleece

The judge will part the wool at several different points to look for:

- **Texture:** is it correct for a Jacob (not too fine or too coarse)?
- **Uniformity:** is it consistent front to rear, and black to white?
- **Handle:** is it soft? Is there some luster?
- **Lock formation and crimp or springiness:** correct for a Jacob?
- **Staple length:** depends in part on when it was shorn, but long is desirable and it should be long enough to evaluate.
- **Strength:** does the wool show breaks or appear to be tender?



Think “handspinning”
fleece.

Criteria: 30% Breed Characteristics

This is where we fit in the things that make a Jacob a Jacob – especially correctly placed and attractive horns, and correct marking patterns.

(Many ewes break a horn, and the “Judge’s Guide” indicates that this should not be strongly penalized.)



Criteria: 10% for Showmanship

SHOWMANSHIP is...

- Presenting a clean and reasonably well trained sheep in the ring.
- Paying attention to your animal, and helping it look it's best.
- Paying attention to the ringmaster and judge. Don't block the judge's view of your sheep.
- Handling your animal intelligently – if it panics or gets stubborn, remain calm and just do your best. Don't blame the animal for problems.
- Being courteous to others in the ring. Don't crowd others. Congratulate the winner.
- If you ARE the winner, thank the judge.

Winning and “Not Winning”

You should feel proud of winning a class, or generally placing well. This means that an expert thinks highly of your sheep.

Placing well can reinforce the decisions you have been making about your Jacobs.

However...

“Not winning” is *NOT* the same as losing.

Not everyone can be in first place, but all of the sheep in a class may be outstanding.

Each judge will have his or her own opinions and preferences.

Your sheep might place very differently on another day or under a different judge.



Some References

Jacob Sheep in the Show Ring: Information for Judges <http://www.jsba.org/JudgesPacket.pdf>

Your Sheep: A Kid's Guide to Raising and Showing. (Garden Way Publishing)

Showing sheep: A Selecting, Raising, Fitting & Showing Guide. Laura Lawson.

Google “showing sheep” for lots of tips