

Quick guide

# Dairy Cattle Parading



The young paraders competition provides 15 to 25-year-olds the opportunity to develop lifelong skills while building their confidence and providing networking opportunities with leaders in the agriculture industry.



This competition gives young people the unique and important opportunity to work directly with cattle, implementing their knowledge and initiative in handling and presenting an animal in front of a judge and a show audience.

These skills can open the door to career pathways in the dairy industry, lead to future steward or judge opportunities in the Australia-wide show circuit and give young people the chance to meet likeminded individuals in the competition, which progresses from a local level through to state and national. Some states also include regional or sub chamber finals.

While parading gives young people the chance to develop their confidence and experience with handling livestock and competing in front of an audience, it's also a valuable tool for breeders to publicly showcase their animals.

While many young people become involved in young parading and other agricultural show competitions through their school, tertiary education institution or from a farming background, there are other ways to become involved. By approaching a local show society, members can provide guidance and support to anyone interested in participating. Many shows now hold education days and there are opportunities to connect with farms, studs, saleyards and other local shows to learn more. Many states also hold other events featuring cattle handling and parading, such as Heifer Expos. It would be worthwhile attending one of these or watching videos online to become familiar with how they work.

This is intended to be a general guide and there may be some variations in rules and expectations between shows. Individual shows will provide further advice and clarification.

## Further reading

To find out more about local shows near you visit: [agshowsaustralia.org.au/shows](https://agshowsaustralia.org.au/shows)

The National Dairy Cattle Young Paraders Championship rules and regulations can be found here: [agshowsaustralia.org.au/member-resources/national-competitions-guidelines](https://agshowsaustralia.org.au/member-resources/national-competitions-guidelines)

## Where to start

It is important to become familiar with handling cattle to build confidence and understand the animal. While cattle for showing will be used to being handled, anyone working with livestock must remain vigilant. If an animal shows signs of becoming distressed, such as bellowing, pawing the ground, lowered head and raised tail, it is important to keep your movements and voice calm and seek help.

### Top tips

- Keep the environment low stress through calm, quiet and confident movement around the animal.
- Quiet and low speech will soothe the animal and allow them to know where you are.
- Firm but gentle handling.

## Further reading

Safe cattle handling guide: [agshowsaustralia.org.au/educational-resources/further-reading](https://agshowsaustralia.org.au/educational-resources/further-reading)



## How judging works

At a local or state level, competitors generally choose what animal they will parade, cow or heifer. In the national championship, competitors will ballot for their animal.

At a National level, competitors have one hour to prepare their animal unassisted for presentation in the ring. However for your local or state competition, the preparation for your paraders competition will often start weeks or sometimes months before.

When competitors lead their animal, they move clockwise around the ring. For dairy cattle, this means the competitor walks backwards. A show cane isn't used for dairy cattle, instead paraders use pressure points to gently guide animals into position. Judges will ask questions about the animal, for example, about its age, breed and weight. The judge may also swap animals between competitors to see how they handle a different animal.

Winners will be determined by who has prepared, presented and paraded their animal before a judge the best.

It's not all about the cattle – competitor appearance is also important and judges can mark down for poor presentation. Competitors must wear a white shirt, long white pants and closed in shoes. Long hair must be tied back and only minimal jewellery is allowed. Male competitors must wear a tie. Female competitors may consider wearing a tie or neck scarf or necklace. Chewing gum and shorts are definitely not permitted.



## How to prepare the animal

- Competitors will wash, clip and groom their animal.
- The key is to clip areas to accentuate the desirable characteristics, but also hide any faults. For example, trimming hair on the high points along the back and leaving the low points to create a straight and even spine.
- Remove the hair off the top and front of the head, bringing the clippers down between the ear and the eye.
- Top half of the tail is then trimmed and blended into the back.
- Tidy up the belly, legs and behind the ears.
- The animal is then washed, using a comb to get the cleaning foam through the hair.
- After drying, brush upwards brushes to expose long hair for trimming. Pay particular attention to the back, but be careful not to take too much off.
- Blending with the clippers will help give the trim a natural appearance.
- Back comb the bottom of tail to fluff the hair.
- Rub soap, show shine or oil across the animal and comb in upwards strokes again.
- When exhibiting a milking cow, the udder will need to be clipped to display the milking vein.
- Adjust the halter so it fits well. The band across the nose should be about halfway between the eyes and the nostrils and the metal clasp should be facing out so it doesn't dig into the animal.
- Roll up the leather strap when leading the animal for a neat appearance.

### Top tip

- When defining the shape of the animal, brush hair back to fluff and hide, brush hair forward to smooth and show.



## What judges look for

Judges will be looking at presentation, confidence and technique in handling the animal. They will also assess a competitor's knowledge about their animal and use of cattle terminology.

- Hold the head in a natural position, aiming for a straight line between the poll to the nose to the competitor's elbow.
- Walk in unison with the animal and aim for it to always have a straight back.
- The pace of the walk should be slow, as this aids in concealing flaws in the udder carriage and confirmation.
- The judge will signal to competitors to stop walking by raising their hands. Aim to set up the animal so the back leg nearest the judge is furthest back – this makes the body appear stretched and long – and the front feet are apart and parallel to each other.
- The judge will individually approach each animal and feel it. Ideally, pull the head away from the judge to stretch the skin for a better feel of the ribs.
- When the judge approaches the front of the animal, the competitor should move away from the animal to give the judge a full view of the animal's conformation.
- When the judge moves around to the other side (outside), switch the back legs so the leg nearest the judge is furthest away on this side.
- After the judge has finished this inspection, the competitor will move on and a steward will assist by indicating where to stand.



### Top tips

- Be confident with the animal and show you can stand up to it, but also be confident within yourself – shoulders back and keep your eyes up and on the judge.
- Keep one eye on the judge and one eye on your animal. Make eye contact with the judge where possible, while showing attentiveness to the animal at all times.
- Watch out for directions on starting, stopping and standing from the steward.
- Try to walk the widest circle possible from the judge (under the directions of the stewards), this gives the judge a long look at your parading abilities.
- Make sure to keep a distance of approx 1.5 cattle body lengths between yourself and the parader in front.
- Judges will have space to see all of your work parading, and stewards can move between paraders if needed.
- Rehearse the movements and patterns of parading in the ring before judging day. Be familiar with walking, stopping, standing the animal and seamless transitions. Make sure the movements you use to showcase the animal's best traits are well practiced to look natural, subtle and seamless.



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