

Coolness in the Cattle Show World

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If you want to be cool in the cattle show world, you should start by blasting your music in the stalls. Maybe it's a way to get back at your parents, or maybe it's just for getting pumped up for the show. Who knows? If a group of people is listening to really soft country music, like Willie Nelson, for example, they would definitely be considered dorks in this context. Being part of Opie Campbell's crew is something I always wanted to do because of his rockin' sound system that he brings with him to the shows. Whenever I go to a show, I always try to get my cattle stalled by him. He is always playing remixes, whether it is pop, rap, or rock. Artists like Soulja Boy, Nickelback, and Kid Rock are played a lot. Everyone else at the show just walks past his stalls laughing, because he and his crew know how to par-tay!

The clothes you wear at a cattle show better be the right ones, or else. In the show ring, women must wear a shiny belt and belt buckle. They want to stick out and be fashionable but also fit in by wearing a belt like the guys. They must also wear tight blue jeans. There are practical reasons to wearing blue jeans, like wearing them to cover up the dirty spots that appear when fitting the calf. They are also worn, so you can look like everyone else at the show. The casual setting of the show calls for casual wear. The judge is usually the only one with different colored pants on. Newly polished ostrich boots and a snazzy Wrangler or Cruel Girl shirt tucked into your jeans so your belt shows is also a must. Cruel Girl brand name shirts and jeans are insinuating that women who wear these are tough and cruel, which is cool in the cattle world. Women must also wear turquoise or Montana silversmith jewelry and have their hair up in some neat design to be cool. Men must wear a belt, baggy brand name blue jeans that have dirty knees (to show they did their own work on their calf), brown boots, and a brand name shirt, usually American Eagle or Hollister. Real farm boys don't do jewelry and consider looking exactly like each other to be their ultimate goal. It is not cool to be eccentric or a nonconformist in the livestock world.

Before going into the show ring, both men and women must be wearing over pants over top of their jeans. They are usually Columbia name brand or any other expensive kind. Over pants are usually worn to keep jeans clean for the show. Some only wear them to be cool, to show they know how to fit their own calf (which most do not). In this case, they hired someone else to do the work for them, which can also be considered cool, because obviously they have more money than the rest of us. People who do not wear these items of clothing are definitely uncool. They would get talked about and made fun of quite often. Rumors could get started on how ridiculously silly that person looked. Someone might even point them out in the make-up arena in front of a whole bunch of "cool" people. That would be tragic!

The equipment used is a key component in order to be cool. It is important to use products that are up to date and not from the 1970's when my parents were showing. For example, a double blower nowadays is a must. The new double blower cuts the dry time on the calf in half. Having a "cool room" is also a good feature to include in a barn. Cool rooms make calves grow more hair, which is very critical at a show. People, and even judges, consistently comment on the amount of hair a calf has, and that is cool. Not having this new equipment would be like a person still using an outdated "house phone" style cell phone, and wondering why people are staring at them and ridiculing them. Staying up to date with technology is very important.

Going out the night before the show and staying out late, then waking up at five o'clock the next cold morning to rinse calves is the shizz also. I know a guy who worked for a ranch that didn't get out of bed the next morning. and man, was he ever sorry. He didn't make it there to help fit for the show or even see the show. His boss obviously was fed up because we did not see him the rest of the week! Most people cannot stay out late the night before a show because they cannot get their lazy butts out of bed the next morning, but the ones who do are considered legends.

The people you hang out with at the show is a major part of being cool. The cool people at the cattle shows are called "steer jocks" or "cattle jocks." Steer jocks know how to do everything necessary at a cattle show. To be seen with a jock would be like being seen with Emeril for people who love cooking, or like being seen with Peyton Manning for people who love football. The uncool people at the shows are called freddies, coming from the term, freddie 4-H'er, meaning one is at the level of a county fair showman. County fair showmen have no skill because they have never experienced the world outside their annual county show. Freddies use the equipment the wrong way, or just do something for no reason. For example, a blower is used to dry the calf and then fluff the calf. A calf's hair is always blown in a forward motion, and one needs to get the calf "bone dry," as cattle jocks would say. A freddie would normally blow the hair straight up or in a swirling motion for ten minutes, not getting to the "hidden" parts, like the belly, the brisket, or the insides of legs. "Cool" jocks know that the calf is not dry and know a freddie when they see one!! Being labeled a freddie would be synonymous with geek, nerd, dweeb, or the ever-famous Steve Urkel! Ewww! I remember a cool jock who once said laughing, while the freddie's calf was getting away, "Hang on, man!" That is just a sarcastic comment to make when the freddie is clearly already having a bad day.

I had similar experience at the Ohio State Fair back in 2003 when I showed a bull that was behaving like a complete imbecile. His name was Lager, and I will never forget the day he darted away from me and sprinted across the show arena, dragging me in front of hundreds of people watching from the grandstand. I was at the end of the halter, scared out of my mind. While I was skiing across the arena, I got mulch thrown in my face and excruciatingly painful rope burns on my hands. I did not want to let go, so I held on. This was not one of my brighter decisions, and man, did I pay! This was definitely uncool. I filed it away under "what not to do if you want to be cool," but it did show I was tough because I hung on tight, baby!

The last and most vital way to be cool is to win, win, win! I have had winning years and losing years. In 2001, I showed Sidney, my favorite heifer still to this day. She was champion thirteen times that year. I got so many awards I couldn't even take it! People who never even spoke to me before talked to me after I did all that winning. I wonder why? Hmmm.... But, I also remember a losing year quite well. I placed dead last at the NAILE, a national show, with my red-roan heifer Reggie. There were twenty-five heifers in my class, and I was D A L, for those of you who know that saying. It was very devastating to me, and to the heifer I think. To be cool in the cattle show world is to be able to identify a freddie when you see one, and to hopefully know you are not one yourself!