



How to Pack a Showbox

Showboxes can facilitate form and function during a cattle show.

Photos & story by *Raney Lovorn*, editorial intern

Combs, brushes, spray bottles, water hoses, health papers, hairspray, curling irons, harnesses, show halters, toy tractors, a bag of chips, feed supplements, wormer, a purse, a camera, cable ties ... It may be impossible to find any of these items when they are really needed. Showboxes fill up fast and become a dumping ground for anything and everything during a livestock show, especially one that lasts as long as the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

Jeff Sargent, a Stock Show University professor with Sullivan Supply Co., shares his tips and tricks for packing a showbox to use the available space efficiently. Showboxes were designed with functionality as a first priority, and understanding the way the compartments were intended to be used helps eliminate some of the mayhem that can come with a disorganized showbox.

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— Jeff Sargent

Superior shelving

"Growing up as a kid, every family had the traditional showbox, which was the chest-style showbox, and there are still a lot of families that use them to this day," Sargent says. "However, if you are like my family, everything that you ever wanted in that showbox wound up being on the very bottom."

The newer "dolly style" showboxes stand upright and got their name from being mounted on a dolly. The design makes the showboxes easier to move and allows them to be larger than the chest-style boxes without putting more strain on the owner.

Upright boxes have one or two doors lined with shelves; the depth of the shelf dictates what size product it was intended for, Sargent explains. The shallowest shelves were meant for aerosol cans, slightly deeper shelves were

meant for spray bottles, and the deepest shelves for gallon-size products.

"A lot of times we may incorporate some things like a water hose down in the bottom shelf or a [water] purifier," Sargent says. "The main thing about this particular box is that it has a nice shelf here that keeps those things in place, not only when you're at the show, but when you've got it in the trailer or on the road, as well."

Halter hang-ups

Some showboxes come with a number of spacious upper compartments in the body of the showbox. These can vary in terms of size, but each has a specific purpose. Typically, one of the compartments will have pegs or hooks on which to hang equipment, while the other compartments will be open space.

"We try to keep our halters in there on the hooks organized by size and by color," Sargent says. "A lot of times we will have our halters in there, and then we will come back over the top of that halter and hang up the comb. That keeps the combs where they are

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handy to reach and grab, and also keeps them organized.”

While the hook compartment has a specific purpose for things like exhibitor show harnesses, halters and combs, some space on the bottom of the compartment could be left for storing smaller items. Make use of every available space to take advantage of the benefits of an organized showbox.

Save space

While open space at the top of the box is a convenient place to throw snacks, show numbers or anything else that doesn't have a designated area, it should be reserved as a storage space for grooming tools.

“I think these top two shelves are very important because that is where we store a lot of our combs and brushes,” Sargent says. “Things get mixed up in these shelves when you roll the box around, but they are still there nice, neat and handy to hold on to.”

Resisting the urge to throw anything and everything into the open shelving provided in the showbox helps tone down stress on show day and makes preparing for future trips easier.

Drawer dilemma

Showboxes are typically made with two pullout drawers. The top drawer is smaller than the bottom drawer, but both take up a substantial amount of space in the showbox and provide the best protection from dust, dirt and hair.

Putting tools like pliers, duct tape, cable ties and three-way water hookups in the top drawer keeps the smaller items easier to find, Sargent says. His preference is to keep tools and his binder of registration and health papers in the top drawer to protect them from being damaged.

The largest, deepest drawer in the showbox is prime real estate, and its use is controversial. With many storage options, the big drawer is just a matter of preference.

“The bottom drawer becomes a controversy for many families, and many people end up using it for products that come in gallons, brushes or harnesses,” Sargent says. “For my family, if my wife is on the show road with us, the drawer is hers. This is where she keeps her purse and this is where she keeps her camera to take pictures of our daughter showing.”

Regardless of who takes ownership, Sargent says the



► Dan Sullivan with Sullivan Supply answers questions during Stock Show University at the National Junior Angus Show.

bottom drawer is a nice deep drawer to take advantage of because it keeps things safe and clean.

Blower box

The last compartment inside the showbox is the largest and is an open space in the very bottom of the box. It is a great place to store large tools or equipment, and can be utilized best using a nesting doll approach. Stacking feed tubs inside each other or consolidating clippers into a bag or box could help maximize the space.

“For myself, I use the bottom for my clipper bag or my clipper box, because then I know that it will be locked up safe and out

of the way when people are working in and out of this box,” Sargent says. “I think you've got to make a decision about what you put down there. It's a very spacious bottom compartment, and it works very well.”

If showmen choose not to keep their blower in the bottom compartment to lock it up, Sargent suggested locking it to the outside of the box after it is closed. Using that approach takes advantage of the space, but also adds security for valuable equipment.

Showstick stack

“Another key thing is how many times has your youngster gotten to the show and forgotten one of the main tools that they take to the ring with them?” Sargent says, pointing out a rack on the back of the box where showmen can lock a showstick into place. “It's always there — every time you get to the show.”

The back of the box normally has slots for several different showsticks, and bringing along an extra or two might be a good idea.

Using a showbox as it was intended should bring added efficiency to stock shows and help the entire family relax during the show. Planning ahead and staying organized could be the difference between a good and a great show experience.



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PHOTO BY SARAH HARRIS

