



SHOW SOLUTIONS

5 tips for pushing a project

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By Mari Morris

Some general management tips for all species that can help you make up for lost time when pushing a project to make weight. By Mari Morris, Show-Rite specialist

It's been an unpredictable show season, to say the least — am I right? With that being said, some of us are in a sticky situation, with our projects peaking either too early or too late. In this article, we will focus on animals who are tracking behind and looking to peak too late. Although we can't make up for lost time or maturity — and, unfortunately, there's no magic supplement to make an animal gain what we need them to in the last 30 days — we will go over some reasonable management tips to help you accomplish your goal. These may seem like minuscule details and tasks, but many small wins add up when you consider the big picture.

1) Feed smaller amounts more often

Have you ever heard a doctor tell someone to eat less but to eat more often throughout the day? Take this same approach with your project. We cannot expect them to eat the maximum amounts of feed only one or two times throughout the day; they simply don't have the stomach capacity to do so. However, the most important element to pushing weight on a project is to maximize consumption! So, make it happen by feeding smaller amounts more often. Change your feedings from twice a day to three or four times per day, and lower the volume you feed. With this technique, you should ultimately be able to get more feed into them during the day.

) Keep them cool

Controlling your project's environment and temperature may be the most important part of the "pushing puzzle". Just like us humans, an animal's appetite decreases when the heat hits — but unlike us, they don't have the ability to hang out in an air-conditioned house all day to re-stimulate that appetite. So, we must create the most comfortable environment for them that we can! Here are a few tips for all species:

- Keep them out of the sun. I don't care how; just do it! Don't have an indoor pen? Get some shade cloth. Only have a three-sided building? Put a gate on the outside to keep them inside and shaded. Don't have a cooler? Use fans. I had a customer who moved their goats into a small pen they created in their garage for a day until temperatures cooled down. That's commitment. There should be a solution to whatever obstacle is stopping you from keeping them out of the sun. Get creative!

- o *Port-a-cools are great tools for keeping animals cool, but be sure to monitor the moisture in the environment if you use them as they tend to create humidity, and too much humidity can create the optimal growing conditions for fungus and bacteria.

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- For cattle and hogs ONLY: Rinse often. When I say rinse, I don't mean to just spray your animals down. I mean: Let the hose run over their body for at least 10 minutes to completely cool them down and actually lower their body temperature. You can do this during the heat of the day, before feedings, after exercise, etc. I'm not sure that "rinsing too often" exists, as long as you're also conditioning often to keep their hide and hair in good shape.
- For sheep and goats: Knock the warm hair off and maintain low humidity levels. Make sure you've rough-sheared your projects to give them some relief in the summer heat.
- Provide cool and fresh water. I cannot stress this point enough. Without hydration, nothing in the body works correctly. Would you want to drink hot tea on a hot summer day? Heck no! That doesn't sound refreshing at all. Well, news flash: neither does your animal. So, move their water source into a shaded spot and refill it multiple times a day with cool and fresh water.

3) Find something they like the taste of

When I was a kid, I liked to eat the mac and cheese on my plate much more than I liked to eat the broccoli. Who am I kidding — I'm still that way! Our projects can be picky, too. In order to maximize consumption and make them eat more aggressively, we must find something they love to consume. This may be as simple as adding something like Fat-N-Fluffy, Accent or Stamina — all of which most animals seem to love the taste of — or it could be a texture change, like slopping the feed for pigs or switching from texturized feed to pellets. Find something that works and won't negatively affect the animal's show ring look.

4) Use Show-Rite feeds for improved efficiency

We could spend this whole article just breaking down the Alltech ingredients that are included in Show-Rite products to help make your project healthier and more efficient, but for time's sake, here's a quick recap of what these products are doing for your animal that you won't find in other feeds:

- Maximizing nutrient utilization
- Maintaining digestive function and enzyme activity
- Providing mineral nutrition in a form as close to nature as possible
- Optimizing tissue status in the animal
- Supporting gut integrity
- Building immune defense

5) Minimize exercise

Exercise is an important factor when it comes to your project. It's essential for building muscle, stamina and endurance for all species. But if you're behind the 8-ball and playing the game of catch-up, something's got to give. In these circumstances, we must conserve as many calories as possible, so I tell my customers to minimize exercise. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't ever take them out of their pen; this means that you should practice your showmanship and make sure they're broke, but don't exercise them like you normally would. Don't drive your pig for 40 minutes at a time.

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Don't treadmill your sheep or goat forward daily. You get the point. Now, on the other hand, exercise can help stimulate appetite; we just don't want it to be so intense that we begin to burn fat and pounds. For example, for sheep, treadmill backwards a few times per week is great! Just don't run them forward, as that will burn all of your fat.

*I want to stress that exercise is crucial to maximize your project's genetic potential; however, when you're in a situation where you're just trying to hit the minimum weight, some sacrifices must be made, and this is one of them. *

To conclude, keep in mind that proper management and preparation from the very beginning of your project will always set you up for success. However, we've all been in the situation where, for whatever reason, we aren't getting the gains that we need. I hope these tips can help you push your project along and reach your goals. Don't forget: The Show-Rite team is always available to help customize a diet or feed program for your animal. So, if you find yourself in uncharted waters with a project, let us know and we'll help you map things out. Find our contact information here: <https://www.showrite.com/staff/>. Good luck, exhibitors!

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