

# CAT SHOWMANSHIP

## **The Purpose of Cat Showmanship is to**

- Provide a means for youth to learn, practice, demonstrate, and improve their knowledge of cats;
- Provide a means for youth to learn, practice, demonstrate, and improve the correct way to handle cats;
- Provide a means for youth to demonstrate how to present their cats to a judge, emphasizing their animals' best traits according to their cats' appearance and/or breed type;
- Help youth learn, practice, and improve in their abilities to present their cats;
- Teach youth good sportsmanship, experiencing winning and losing among their peers;
- Provide a reason for youth to interact with their cats, forming a closer human-animal bond;
- Improve young people's communication skills; and
- Increase young people's self-esteem and self-confidence.

## **As a 4-H member, it is Important for You to**

- Have a cat that is appropriate for your abilities;
- Handle all aspects of the care and grooming of your cat;
- Learn and practice the steps involved in cat showmanship;
- Participate in a year-round wellness program, keeping your cat vaccinated and free from internal and external parasites;
- Spay or neuter your cats that are not purebred, and purebred cats that are not used for breeding purposes;
- Socialize your cat prior to bringing him or her to a show;
- Accustom your cat to a harness and leash, cat carrier, and being transported in a vehicle;
- Put an identification tag on your cat's harness incase he or she should be lost;
- Learn as much about cats as possible from your project book and other resources; and, most of all,
- Have fun with your cat!

## **Appearance and Conduct Count!**

You, as well as your cat, are on display the entire time you are in the show ring. Besides representing 4-H, you are presenting an image to the judge, as well as the spectators. Therefore, your appearance and conduct are important.

- Wear clothing that is neat and clean.
- Hair should be neat, clean and out of your face. Tie long hair back.
- Nail polish is fine provided it is not chipped.
- Do not chew gum.
- Listen for your number or your class to be called to the judging table.
- Be on time.
- Watch the steward or judge for instructions.
- Politely follow the instructions.
- Be considerate of other people and their cats in your class.

### **During Judging**

- Keep the harness and leash on your cat; loop the end of the leash over the wrist of one arm;
- Be aware of where the judge is; however, remain focused on your cat and not on the judge;
- Be able to take direction from the judge if called for;
- Be polite to those around you and to the judge; and
- Keep your cat a safe distance from other cats to prevent a confrontation or fighting

### **The Judge will**

- Observe the relationship between you and your cat;
- Assess if the cat is responsive to you and your actions;
- See if you are keeping your cat under control;
- Assess if both you and your cat are relaxed;
- Try to determine if you were responsible for the majority of your cat's care, completing the project with minimal help taking into consideration your age and abilities; and
- Evaluate how well you answer the questions during your interview, and how well you and your cat complete the other exercises.

## **SHOWMANSHIP STEPS**

(Refer to the 4-H Cat Showmanship Score Sheet and the illustrations after this section)

### **Entering the Judging Area**

- When called, hold your cat in the *safety carry* and approach the judge or follow the judge's or ring steward's directions.
- Keep the end of the leash looped over your wrist.
- Set your cat on the table facing the judge either in a sitting or standing position.

### **The Interview**

- You will be asked approximately five questions about cats. These questions should come from the cat project book you are taking, with consideration given for the number of years you have taken a cat project, as well as your age.
- You should have a general knowledge of 4-H, such as the pledge, motto, description of the emblem, etc.

### **Cat's Appearance and Temperament**

- The judge will be assessing your cat's general health and overall condition. He or she will take your cat's age into consideration. Cats should not be obese, nor should they be unusually thin. They must appear healthy. They must not have any ocular (eye) discharge, runny noses, dirty ears or ear mites, fleas or other external parasites, patchy fur, open sores, or other health problems.
- Cats should be well groomed. Claws must be trimmed, regardless of whether or not they are outdoor cats. Their coats must be free from mats and burs. Cats should not shed excessively. The eyes and nose must be free of discharge (matter). The ears must not show any signs of mites or have any dirt in them. The teeth should be reasonably clean and free of tartar.

- Cats must allow the judge to examine them without clawing, hissing, or growling. The judge will make 3 attempts to examine the cat before moving on. If a cat continues to exhibit a threatening temperament, he or she may be excused from judging for the safety of the exhibitors (including yourself), other cats, and the judge.
  - Practice having a family member examine your cat. If your cat allows a family member to do this, next ask a friend who is not familiar with your cat to examine him/her.
  - After your cat becomes comfortable with a stranger examining him/her, have another cat project member bring his or her cat over so your cat has the added distraction of another cat in the near vicinity while being examined. By socializing your cat with other cats, you will reduce the chances of your cat showing fear or aggression while being judged.
  - Once your cat is accustomed to being examined with another cat present, take your cat to a 4-H meeting or place where some friends also have their cats. Accustom your cat to being examined by a stranger away from the safety of his/her home. Doing this before the show will allow you to see how your cat will probably react at the show. If your cat is aggressive or fearful, you will have to expose your cat to different environments with other cats to try to help him/her overcome his/her fear or aggression. In reality, some cats may never get used to being around other cats, a strange environment, and handled by a stranger.

### **Presenting Your Cat for Examination**

- You, as the exhibitor, will be asked to show the judge how to:
  - Properly pick up a cat
  - Hold the cat in the safety carry position
  - Open your cat's mouth to show his/her teeth and gums
  - Show your cat's nose
  - Show both of your cat's eyes
  - Show both of your cat's ears
  - Show the claws on all four feet of your cat
  - Ruffle the coat on your cat's belly to show cleanliness and good grooming
- As you are presenting your cat to the judge, explain what you are showing him/her as well as actually showing how to open your cat's mouth and show teeth and gums, for example.
- Practice all of the above exercises many times with your cat before the actual judging.

### **Showing Your Cat**

- You will be asked to present your cat to the judge in a manner that emphasizes your cat's best traits and overall appearance. Your cat does not need to be a purebred animal. He or she does not have to resemble a certain breed. However, if he/she does, research the breed standards for the breed your cat is or resembles. Learn how someone showing that breed of cat emphasizes his/her attributes and minimizes his/her faults.
- You must have control of your cat. Remember to keep the loop of the leash over your wrist. Your cat should be calm and attentive to you. He or she should not be clawing, hissing or growling. You should be able to set or stand your cat on the table facing the judge.

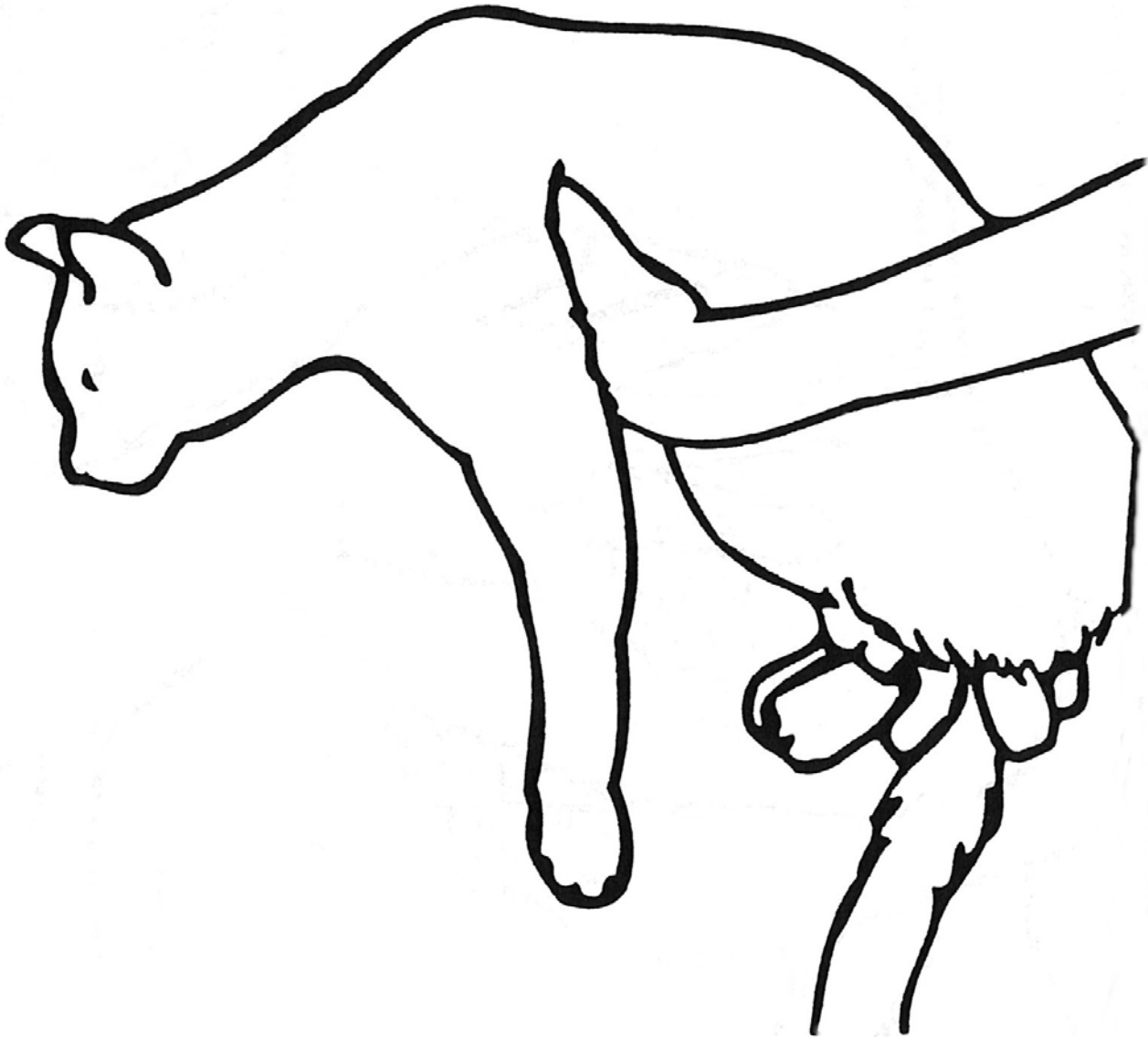
- Show the judge your cat's conformation in the following order:
  - Head shape (wedge-shaped face or round face)
  - Body (long body – oriental, foreign, semi-foreign or cobby body – semi cobby, cobby); substantial body
  - Tail or lack of tail
  - Coat texture
  - Show other attributes of your cat in the manner your cat's breed, or breed resemblance, requires.

### **Your Appearance and Attitude**

- Your appearance and conduct is discussed in a previous section.
- It is natural to be nervous. Remember that your cat is very aware of your nervousness, which can make him/her nervous or afraid. Try to relax and enjoy the showmanship contest. Consider yourself a winner just because you have made it this far!
- Cats can be unpredictable at times. If your cat does not behave well like he or she did at home, do not get mad at him/her. Remove your cat from the judging area if your cat becomes uncontrollably upset. The judge or steward will help you. It is a good idea for a parent/guardian or 4-H advisor to have your cat's carrier nearby, just in case your cat must be taken out of the show area. Your cat should calm down once back in his/her carrier.
- You are your cat's friend and advocate. Your cat depends on you for his/her food and care. This means you must take care of your cat all the time, including while being shown. If he/she becomes very stressed, remove him/her from the situation, put him/her in the carrier, give him/her a drink of water, and put the carrier in a quiet, cool, secluded area. NEVER leave your cat in the car when it is warm or hot outside!

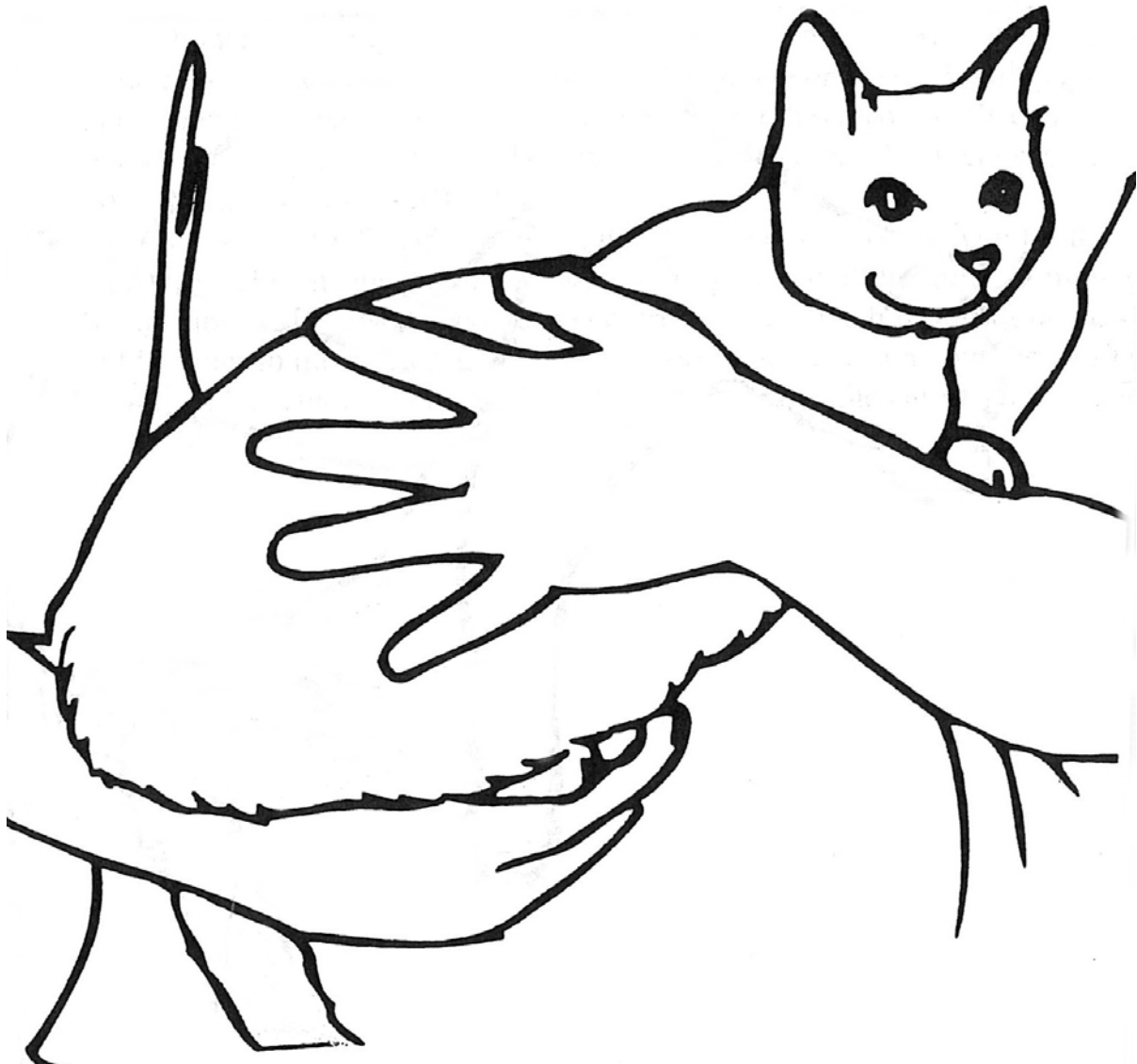
## PICKING UP A CAT

Grasp under the cat's belly behind his/her front legs with one hand. With your other hand, grasp the cat's rear legs and tail, holding the tail between two of your fingers. Once you have picked the cat up, position him/her in either the *holding position* or the *safety carry*.



## HOLDING A CAT

Once you have picked up your cat, you should either position your cat in the *holding position* or *safety carry*. In the holding position, grasp the cat's rear legs with one hand, supporting his/her rump on your arm. Hold the cat close to your body with your other hand, allowing the cat to rest his/her forelegs on your arm.



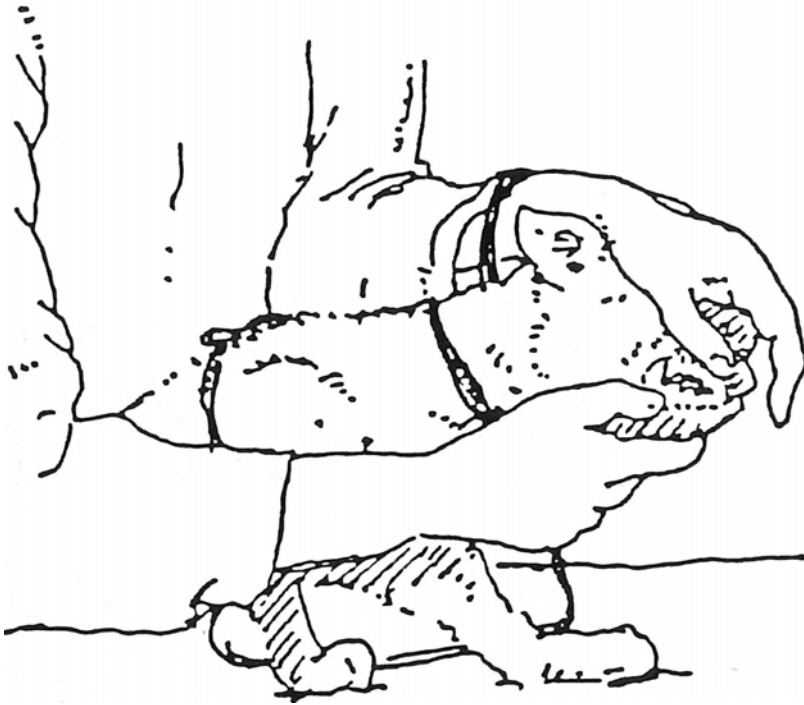
## SAFETY CARRY

Grasp the cat's forelegs between your thumb and fingers with at least one finger between the cat's legs. Support the cat's chest in the palm of your hand. Then, you may either tuck the cat's rump and rear legs under your elbow against your body or riding on your hip, or you may hold the cat's rear legs in the same manner as the cat's forelegs.



# SHOWING A CAT'S MOUTH, TEETH, AND GUMS

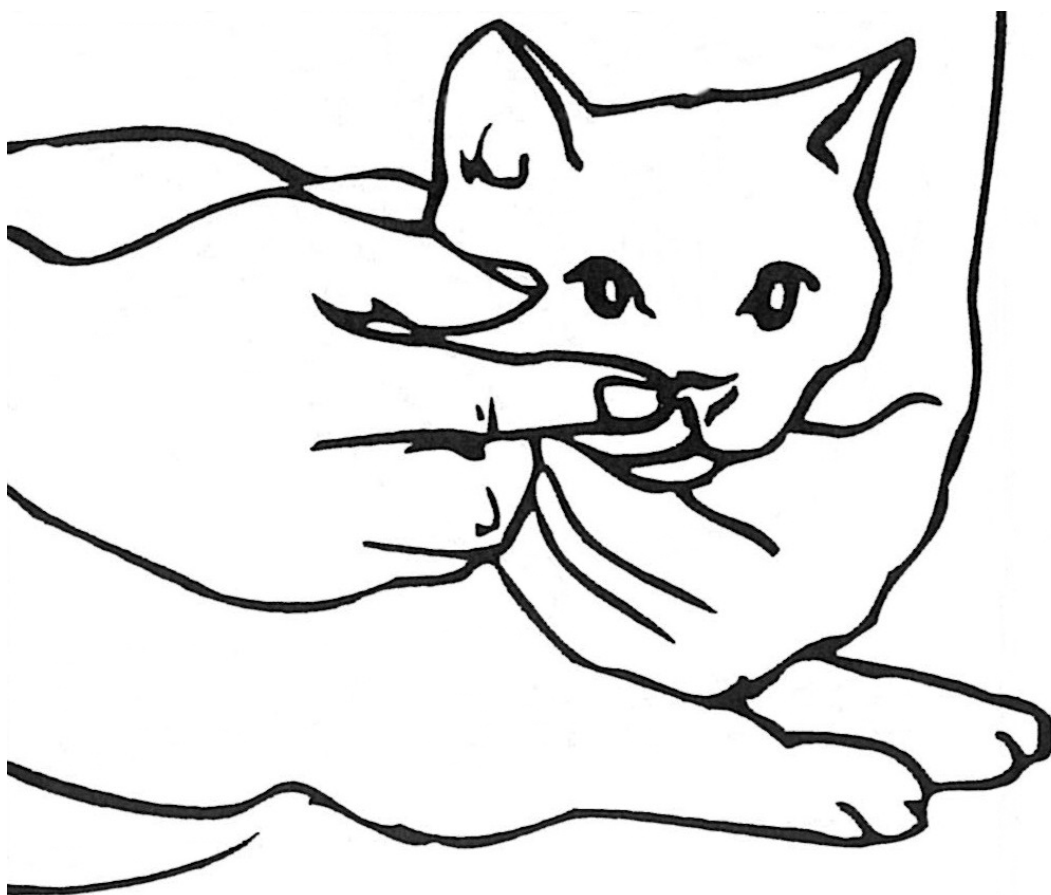
Have the cat face the judge. Show the judge your cat's mouth, teeth, and gums as shown in either illustration below.





## SHOWING A CAT'S NOSE

Have the cat face the judge. Show the judge your cat's nose as shown in either illustration below.



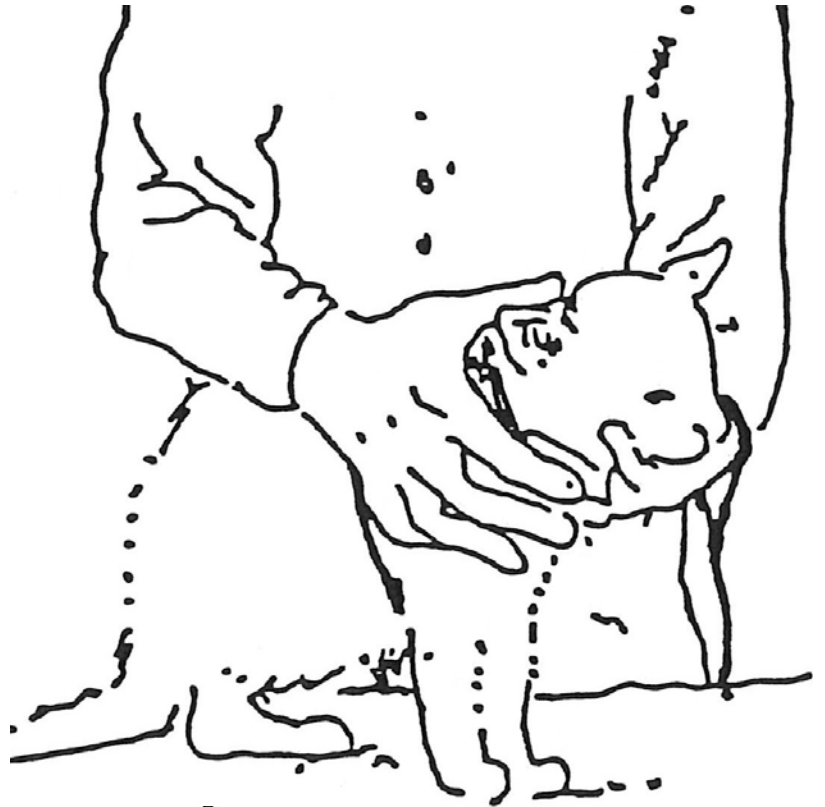
## SHOWING A CAT'S EYES

Have the cat face the judge. Show the judge your cat's eyes as shown in either illustration below. Show the judge both of your cat's eyes.



## SHOWING A CAT'S EARS

Turn the cat so the judge can see the cat's side view. Show the judge each ear as shown in either illustration. Be sure that the judge can see the cleanliness of the inside of the ear.



## SHOWING A CAT'S CLAWS

## SHOWING A CAT'S COAT

To show the cat's *claws*, slide your hand down over the cat's shoulder and leg, grasp the paw and gently squeeze it to show the claws. Show the claws on all four paws. Refer to the illustration below.

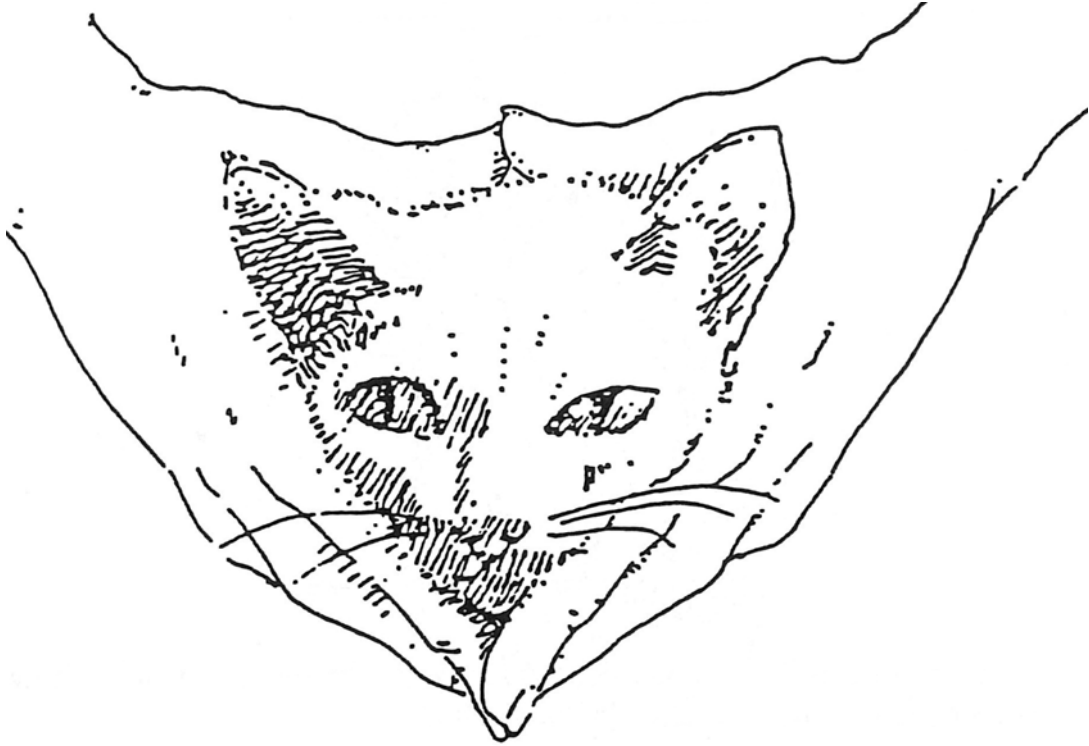


To show the cat's coat, hold the cat on his/her rump with the belly facing the judge. Ruffle the coat to show *cleanliness* and *grooming*. Refer to the illustration above.

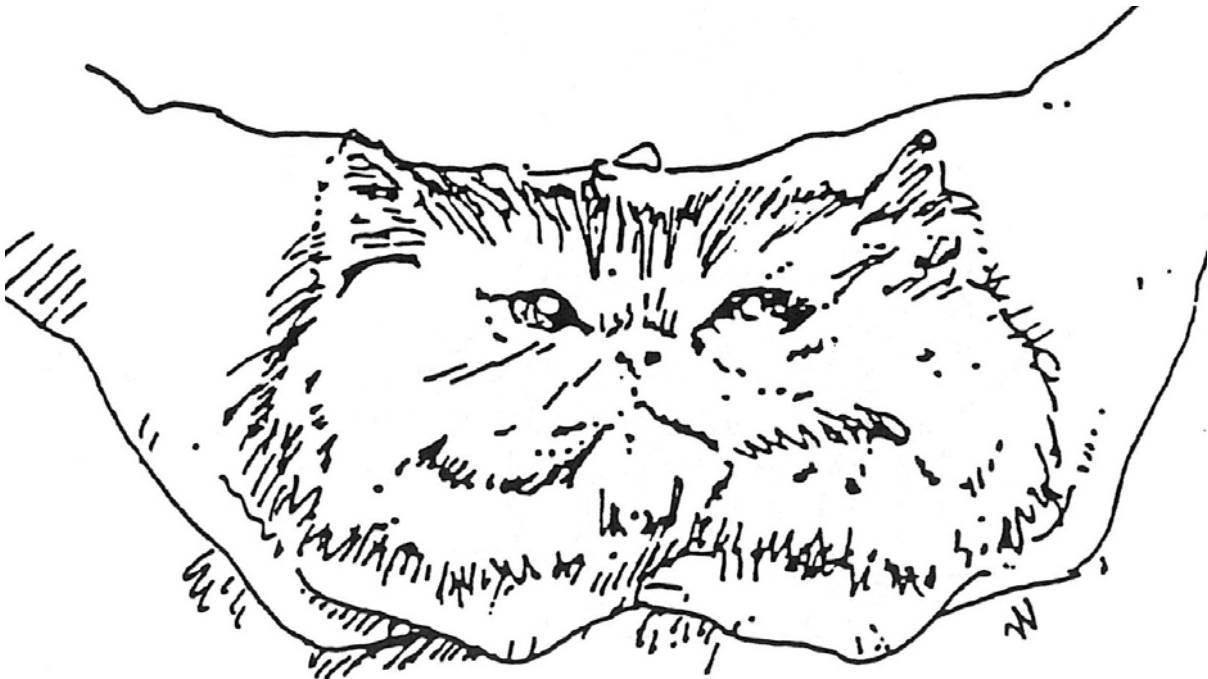
## SHOWING THE CAT'S HEAD SHAPE

Pose the cat in a sitting or standing position facing the judge. Show the conformation of your cat's head as follows:

TRIANGULAR (WEDGE) FACE



ROUND FACE

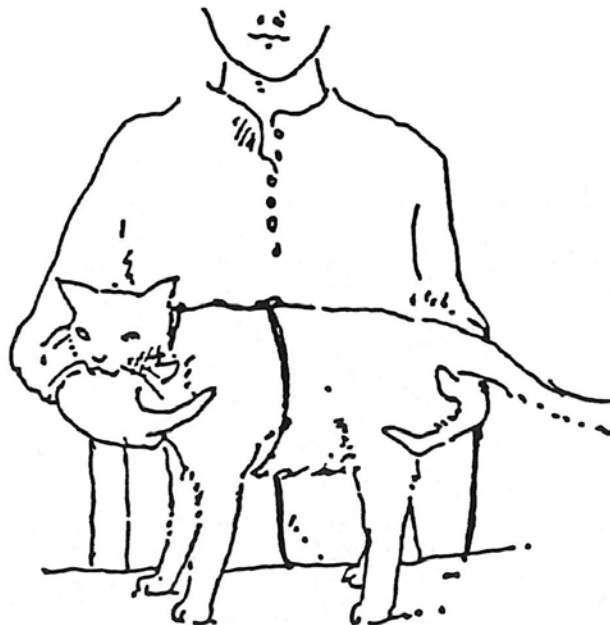


## SHOWING THE CAT'S BODY TYPE

To show a cat with a *long body*, you can either leave all four feet on the table or lift the forelegs as shown in the illustration. If you leave the cat stand on the table, allow him or her to stand elongated to show the length of the body.

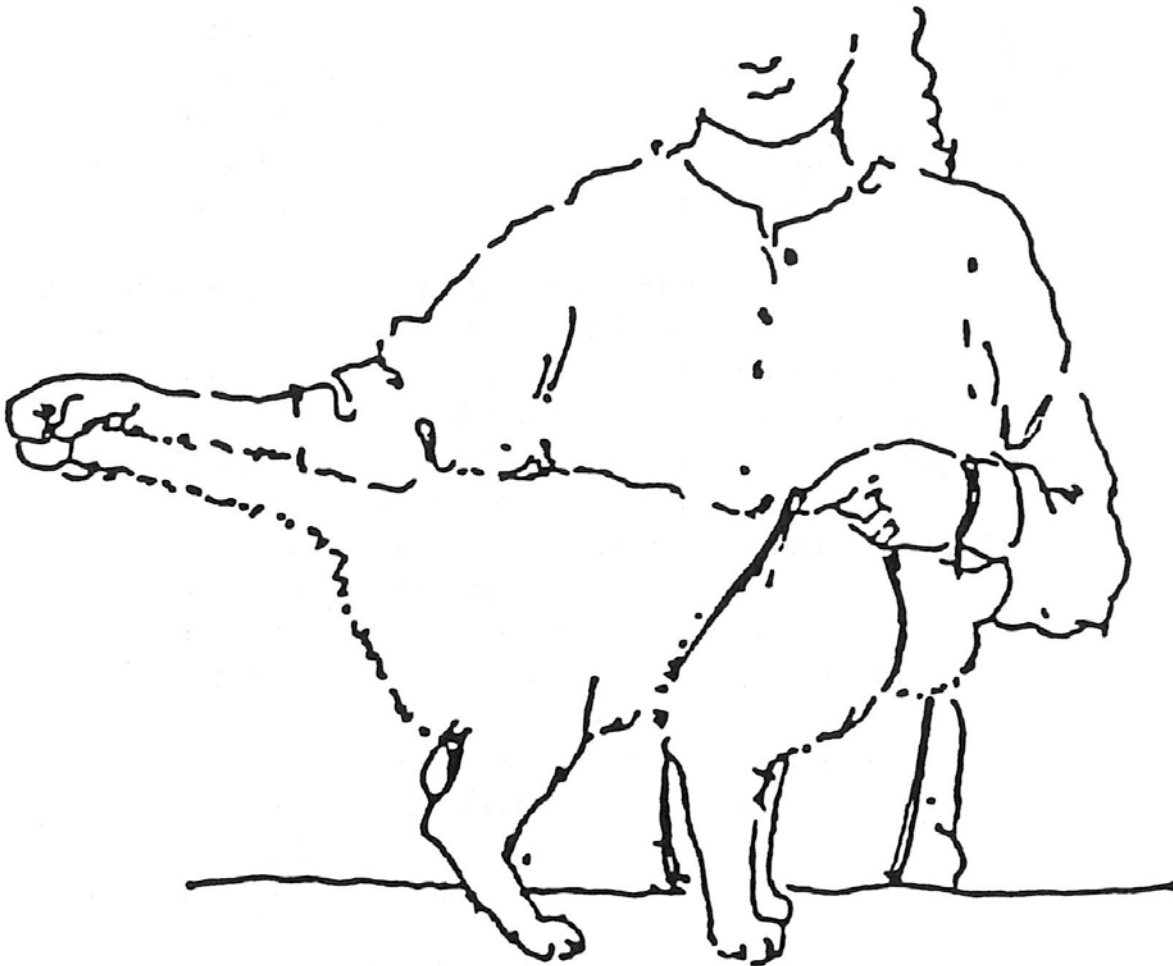


To show a cat with a *cobby (short) body*, stand the cat on the table, showing his short body length as depicted in the illustration.



## SHOWING THE CAT'S TAIL & COAT TEXTURE

Show your cat's *tail* by grasping the tip and showing its length. If your cat does not have a tail, show where the tail would be. Refer to the illustration below.



**COAT TEXTURE:** Keeping the cat with his/her side toward the judge, *run your hand against the lay of the coat and then back down the body* to make it smooth. Let your cat stand on all four feet while you are doing this.