

Ready. Aim. Shoot.

The Photographer's Mental Checklist

By Jennifer Clark ©2007

READY:

Mental Checklist for before you start shooting.

- What type of shots do you need (full-body, front, head, mouth, fleece)?
- Is the animal groomed?
- How bright is it outside?
- What direction is the light coming from?
- Where is the best location free of obstacles?
- Is a handler available to hold the animal on a lead line?
- Is there a halter that matches the color of the animal's face?
- What props are available (dog, cat, noise maker, other attention getter)?

AIM:

Mental Checklist before taking the shot.

- What direction is the light coming from?
- Is the background going to interfere with the color of the animal?
- What are the animal's strengths to emphasize?
- What are the animal's weaknesses to avoid?
- Are the eyes, nose, and mouth clean?

SHOOT:

Shooting Full-body Shots

The idea behind a full body shot is to capture the animal's eye appeal, show correct conformation and balance, coloration, wool coverage, a beautiful head and ear traits. The easiest way to achieve this is by shooting the animal on a lead line. Have the lead line painted out by your graphic designer.

- Is the fiber pulled over the back of the halter and are the flaps tucked in?
- Are the eyes, nose and mouth clean?
- Where do the shadows fall on the animal (minimal)?
- Is the animal positioned on level ground (not standing downhill)?
- Can you see all four feet (standing squarely and not twisted)?
- Is the animal leaning too far forward (lacking presence)?
- Are the ears up?
- Is the animal looking in your direction?
- Are you at eye level or looking up at the animal (not shooting down)?
- Is your camera set for f/4 or less (to blur background)?
- Is your shutter set at 250 or greater (to stop action/movement)?
- Is your exposure meter where it should be?
- Is the animal in focus?

Shooting Head Shots

The purpose of taking head shots is to accentuate the animal's inherent beauty, show length of neck, face wool coverage, fleece structure, and desirable ear and nose traits. It is best to take head shots without a halter on.

- Are the eyes, nose and mouth clean?
- Are the teeth visible (not chewing or too nervous)?
- Where does the shadow fall (can you hide it)?
- Is the animal facing toward the camera?
- Is there light in the eye?

Shooting Fleece Shots

Taking photos of the fleece is a topic for an entire article, so bear in mind that what is included here is just the tip of the iceberg. The purpose of fleece photos is to show fleece characteristics such as the frequency, uniformity and type of crimp (lock structure for suri types), luster, density, and bundling. Fleece shots require two, preferably three, people to handle the animal and part the fleece. It is possible to get good shots of fleece that has already been shorn too. In either case, the angle and quality of light is critical in order to get an even exposure that shows the fleece character.

- Is the fleece worth photographing?
- Is the sun too bright or not bright enough?
- Where is the best and cleanest sample area?
- Is the fleece type better shown in a circle or a line?
- Is the crimp clearly defined in the viewfinder?
- Does the sample show density and/or bundling?
- Is the shutter speed set over 250 to stop action?

