Livestock Judging

An Introduction to Livestock Judging and Oral Reasons

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December 8, 2009

• One of the most educational activities of the livestock project
• Livestock Judging helps 4-H’ers to:
  - Develop communication skills
  - Make decisions based on facts and observations
  - Compete with a sportsmanlike attitude
  - Develop self-confidence
Placing Animals

- Place each animal in a class
  - 4-H contests use four animals in each class
  - Place animals 1st through 4th
  - Break down class into pairs
    - Top pair, middle pair, bottom pair
    - Make easiest placing first
  - Cuts are penalties for placing the class different than the official placing
    - Total of three cuts cannot exceed 15 points

Oral Reasons

- Orally defend your placings
  - An explanation to another person why you placed the animals the way you did
  - Points are awarded on the overall fluency and correctness of the reason
    - Even if your placing is different than the official placing
Steps to Judging

- Know the “ideal” of what you are judging
- Compare animals in the class to the “ideal”
- Compare animals to each other
- Place the class
- Take notes on the class
- Learn your reasons
- Present your reasons

This is an “Ideal” Heifer

- Characteristics of this “ideal” cow
  - Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs, 4 feet
  - Strong top line
  - Heavily muscled
  - Feminine through head and neck
  - Sound feet and legs
Class of Green Angus Heifers

#1
- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs, 4 feet
- Strong top line
- Heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Sound feet and legs

#2
- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs
- Strong top line
- Not as heavily muscled
- Lacks femininity
- Sound feet and legs

#3
- Strong top line
- Heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Sound feet and legs

#4
- Strong top line
- Spring of rib, depth of body, mature
- Not as heavily muscled
- Lacks femininity
- Sound feet and legs

Compare “Ideal” to #1

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs, 4 feet
- Strong top line
Compare “Ideal” to #2

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs, 4 feet
- Strong top line
- Heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Sound feet and legs

#2
- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs
- Roaches her back
  - Structure problem
- Not as heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Not as sound on feet and legs

Compare “Ideal” to #3

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs, 4 feet
- Strong top line
- Heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Sound feet and legs

#3
- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs
- Strong top line
- Depth of body
- Heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Sound feet and legs
Compare “Ideal” to #4

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs, 4 feet
- Strong top line
- Heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Sound feet and legs

#4

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, 4 legs, 2 feet
- Weak top line
- Longer sided
- Lightest muscled
- Lacks femininity

How did you place this class?

#1

#2

#3

#4
Official Placings

2nd 3rd
#1 #2

1st 4th
#3 #4

Steps to Judging

• Know the “ideal” of what you are judging
• Compare animals in the class to the “ideal”
• Compare animals to each other
• Place the class

SURPRISE!

• Take notes on the class
• Learn your reasons
• Present your reasons
Compare “Ideal” to #1

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs, 4 feet
- Strong top line
- Heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Sound feet and legs

#1

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs
- Strong top line
- Spring of rib, depth of body, mature
- Not as heavily muscled
- Lacks femininity
- Sound feet and legs

Compare “Ideal” to #2

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs, 4 feet
- Strong top line
- Heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Sound feet and legs

#2

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs
- Strong top line
- Reaches her back
- Structure problem
- Not as heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Not as sound on feet and legs

Compare “Ideal” to #3

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs, 4 feet
- Strong top line
- Heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Sound feet and legs

#3

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs
- Strong top line
- Depth of body
- Heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Sound feet and legs

Compare “Ideal” to #4

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, tail, 4 legs, 4 feet
- Strong top line
- Heavily muscled
- Feminine through head and neck
- Sound feet and legs

#4

- Has head, ears, eyes, mouth, neck, body, 4 legs, 2 feet
- Weak top line
- Longer sided
- Lightest muscled
- Lacks femininity

Brief to Complete Reasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Name</th>
<th>Placing</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>3-1-2-4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>4/2</td>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Notes and IDs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Notes and IDs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Notes and IDs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Notes and IDs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keys to Oral Reasons

- Refer to animals by their number or other description
- Compare animals
- Most important things first
- Back up placings with detail

Keys to Oral Reasons

- Grant areas where the lower placing animal is better
- Use a variety of terms
- Reasons length should not exceed 2 minutes
Number or Descriptive Term

• When describing the animal, refer to the animal by it’s number
  - 3 is more refined about her head

• Or refer to it by a distinguishing characteristic
  - Now I admit the black baldy is more productive in his look

• Try to avoid saying “Number 1 is…”

Compare Animals

• Use er words or est words
  - 3 is heavier muscled, longer bodied
  - 4 is the poorest structured, flattest ribbed

• Never just describe the animal
  - 3 is broody, eye appealing

• COMPARE!
Most Important First

- Describe the most important/most obvious first
- Back it up with details and move on to less important traits
  - 3 is clearly a more powerful wether as he works more dimension of muscle down his top & maintains this advantage out to his dock and wraps with more circumference of leg compared to the other wethers in this class. Also, 3 ties a longer neck into a smoother shoulder.

Remember to Grant

- Grant back the lower placing animal to the higher placing animal
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd} to 1\textsuperscript{st}
  - 3\textsuperscript{rd} to 2\textsuperscript{nd}
  - 4\textsuperscript{th} to 3\textsuperscript{rd}
- There is always one thing better about the lower placing animal!
Use Variety

• Use different terms throughout your reasons
• Instead of always saying “heavier muscled”, use...
  - Thicker, wider, dimension, shape, tone
• Instead of “I grant”, use...
  - Concede, admit, realize, at the same time, recognize

Top Pair

• How you start to describe your top pair will vary depending on the class
  - If you have a clear winner, you would want to start with a broad description of your class winner
  - If you have a top pair of similar animals, you would start with a descriptive term about them and then why you preferred one over another
Grant

• Describe something that your 2nd place animal is better at than your 1st place animal
• Do this for every pair!

Criticism

• You just got done telling the official how much better this animal is than the one above it, so you need to use a transition
  - Although, but still, in spite of this, on the other hand, does not compensate for the fact
Criticism

• Describe why that animal is in that spot

• These negative things might just be compared to the animal above it, of the initial three, or in the entire class

Middle Pair

• Need another transition as you start to describe your middle pair, and a big descriptive term

• “Even so, it’s 1’s soundness that places her over 2 in my intermediate comparison.”

• Grants and criticisms are treated the same as the top pair
Final Pair

• Another transition and big term to describe

• “Nevertheless, it is her decisive advantage in power that places her over 4 in my concluding pair.”

• Grants are treated the same

Last Place Criticism

• This is the last place animal, so she probably is the worst at something

• Use est terms and you might want to end with “of any in the class.”

  - She is the smallest patterned, shortest bodied, and least eye appealing heifer of any in the class.
Official Placings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Placings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>#1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>#2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>#3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>#4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appearance

- Make your 4-H’ers look professional!
- Males and females
  - At least wear a collared shirt, tucked in
  - Preferred to wear shirt and tie (males) with dress slacks; jacket or blazer optional at state contest
- **DO NOT ALLOW YOUR 4-H’ERS TO WEAR:**
  - Hats or caps, jeans, pants tucked into boots, t-shirts, shirt not tucked into pants
  - NO CELLPHONES
Presenting Your Reasons

• Be confident in your reasons
  - DO NOT USE NOTES!

• Stand straight (or slightly bent forward at the waist), about 2 paces from the judge

• Keep hands behind your back or at your side

Presenting Your Reasons

• Look directly at the judge

• Speak clearly and boldly

• Do not yell but do not whisper either

• Be pleasant and courteous

• Be prepared for questions
Other Tips

• Learn terms that are applicable
  - Market livestock
    • Muscle mass, condition, thick topped, carcass characteristics (leaner, more red meat)

Other Tips

• Learn terms that are applicable
  - Breeding livestock
    • Females
      - Stylish, femininity, long neck, angularity, trim/clean navel, eye appeal
    • Males
      - Masculinity, scrotal circumference, rugged design, cleaner/neater sheath
Other Tips

• Learn terms and parts for each species
  - Cattle
    • Bull, heifer, cow, steer
  - Swine
    • Boar, barrow, gilt, sow
  - Sheep
    • Ram, wether, ewe

Other Tips

• Understand how to use expected progeny differences (EPD)
  - Takes into account the relationship in a pedigree and predicts how progeny or offspring of a particular animal should perform relative to animals from an average parent
  - Maternal EPDs: Birth weight, maternal milk
  - Growth EPDs: Weaning weight, yearling weight, carcass characteristics
Final Thoughts

• Make oral reasons fun!
• Keep it simple for new judgers
  - Learn terms of species that they show
• Visualize animals when practicing and presenting reasons
• Study terminology and transitions
• Keep professional appearance

Credits

• Ann Leed, Instructor
  - Livestock Judging Team Coach, MSU
• Kathy Nash and others
  - 4-H Horse Judging Contest DVD
• Mississippi 4-H Livestock Judging Manual
• Kipp Brown, Area 4-H Livestock Agent