

How to Plan, Organize, and Administrate a Livestock, Dairy, or Horse Judging Contest



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Since the early 1900s, judging contests in the United States have

been an effective means of measuring a team's or individual's ability to evaluate dairy cattle, horses, and livestock. Judging competitions are enjoyable as well as educational. They evaluate contestants' ability to make logical decisions, in a fixed amount of time, with a given scenario and a selected group of animals. First, students must learn to evaluate the desirable and undesirable points of conformation and performance for four animals per class. The students must perceive the differences in structural correctness, muscularity, and fat deposition. After weighing the placing factors, the students must persuasively present a set of oral reasons explaining the factors that influenced their class placing. Points are awarded to the contestant for accuracy, organization, and speaking ability. A judging contest, therefore, builds character and instills self-confidence. Both of these traits are important in helping students develop leadership potential, a basic long-term goal of the activity.

Coaches across the country invest a large amount of time each year developing their students' general livestock knowledge and leadership potential with extensive decision-making and speaking experiences. Many hours of practice are required to teach students to consistently and correctly place animals in the same order as the official judges, and to deliver a persuasive, truthful, and organized set of oral reasons. A well-organized judging contest is an important component in this training process. A judging contest is similar to a classroom test. It helps reinforce the lessons taught by the coach and gives the students a chance to test their skills and compare their abilities to other competitors.

An effective judging contest must be well-planned, well-organized, and timely to provide a sound educational experience. The purpose of this publication is to present some guidelines and workable methods for meeting these criteria. Below is a list of objectives of a competitive judging program and characteristics of a well-run and effective judging contest.

Objective #1: To cultivate public speaking abilities, develop poise, and instill confidence through the contestants' oral defense of their placings.

Objective #2: To train contestants to be knowledgeable livestock-oriented individuals who are honest, diligent, and capable of communicating their standards and viewpoints to others in a professional manner.

Objective #3: To train contestants to observe and recognize differences in livestock, to make sound judgmental decisions, and ultimately to arrive at a logical placing, given a current set of criteria (industry standards).

Objective #4: To instill in contestants the fundamental awareness that all market animals simply cannot, from an economic standpoint, be placed strictly on cutability or marketability, because other factors such as structural soundness and growth rate are of equal importance.

Objective #5: To ensure consistency among contests by paralleling the Indiana State 4-H/FFA Judging Contest, and all of the county and area contest that precede it, to the national judging contests and the collegiate judging contests held across the country.

The first criterion for reaching these goals is to have a superintendent or committee in charge of the event. This person(s) *must* be contest oriented, and should be both organized and articulate. Appendix A at the back of this publication is a checklist of actions a contest superintendent should complete to assure a successful contest.

The contest superintendent is responsible for many things, including:

- Choosing an appropriate contest site.
- Selecting placeable classes. *
- Recruiting qualified official judges. *
- Displaying judging classes. *
- Numbering the animals.
- Ordering placing cards and materials.
- Obtaining awards.
- Notifying coaches about the contest.
- Finding experienced group leaders and other helpers.
- Designating reasons classes.
- Assigning judging groups and reasons orders.
- Giving contest instructions.
- Recruiting capable people to tabulate. *
- Planning and ordering lunch.
- Critiquing the classes.

* **These are the keys to a successful contest.**

Choosing an Appropriate Contest Site

Very often, the county fairgrounds is the most convenient place to hold a judging contest. It is equipped with loading and handling facilities, livestock panels for making pens, buildings in case of inclement weather, and plenty of parking for trailers and buses. (Be sure that the buildings you would like to use are well-lighted, unlocked, and heated, and that restroom facilities are in working order.) Offices, restrooms, storage rooms, or concession areas can be used for reasons rooms. If the weather is agreeable, reasons takers can also be stationed outdoors. If the contest is held on a weekend, a local school is the ideal place to serve lunch and hold the oral reasons session. The school cafeteria can double as a lunchroom and a holding area for contestants before they go to give oral reasons. If more than one holding area is needed for contestants, the gymnasium works well for this purpose. Classrooms are usually just the right size for reasons rooms. The school

workroom or teacher's lounge is often an ideal place to conduct tabulation. Make the necessary arrangements to use the fairgrounds and/or school at least six months ahead of the contest. The local agriculture education instructor is often a good contact at the school and can make many of the arrangements.

Selecting Placeable Classes

The mechanics of the contest are critical to its smoothness and effectiveness. However, in the final analysis, the success of a contest will depend on the quality of the classes and the competence of the individuals who officiate the classes. We will discuss recruitment of official judges later. As for placeable classes, they should be carefully selected several days (or weeks) ahead of the contest, and usually at a breeder's farm. Classes must be established with logic and a placing in mind. A high quality class *must* contain at least one high quality animal. The best classes have either two outstanding individuals and two lesser quality animals, or they have an outstanding individual, a poor animal and two similar animals of good quality. The classes should test (hence the word *contest*) the contestants' ability to evaluate them, but they should not be confusing or lacking in logic.

The most common problem with poor contest classes is that they are made up of animals that neither fit together nor belong in the same class. These classes are frustrating for contestants and officials alike. Just because a producer has four animals that are similar in size and close in age does not mean these animals will make a placeable judging class. The ideal arrangement is to borrow classes from reputable breeders who have at least 10 animals of similar age and weight to select a class from. Once several breeders have agreed to provide animals, a selection committee (of at least two people with prior judging experience) should go on a tour of the farms and select the classes for the contest. These classes should then be evaluated again on the morning of the contest to ensure that they are still placeable. If you know the producers have judging experience and you have good reason to trust their judgment, you might just ask them to

select a placeable class and bring it to the contest. This option should only be used when you don't have a selection committee available to put the classes together. Another option (if the breeder is willing) is to ask the producer to select six animals and bring them to the contest, where the official judges can select four of the animals for a class.

Two Common Mistakes

Contest superintendents often make two mistakes when lining up classes for judging contests. The first mistake occurs when the superintendent calls a 4-H member and asks, "Do you have four steers we can use in our upcoming judging contest?" The 4-H member responds, "Yes, I have four steers that you're welcome to use" or "I have several steers, would you like me to bring four of them to your contest?" Without ever seeing the cattle, the superintendent has arranged for the steer class. Often, however, the superintendent is so relieved to have a class lined up that he/she forgets to inquire about several important considerations, such as:

- Are the steers similar in weight, breed, and conformation?
- Do they fit together as a class?
- Are they placeable?

The other common mistake occurs when a local breeder has several animals to select from and the superintendent agrees to let the owner select four animals to make a class. Some breeders want to bring their four "best" animals in order to make a good impression on the contestants. They don't realize the importance of having logical classes that were selected with a placing in mind. They are also unaware that contestants have a much better impression of classes they can place, as compared to a difficult class of four very high quality animals.

Problem Areas

Probably the three biggest problem areas for most county and area contests involve market steers, market lambs, and hogs. Almost without exception, the steer class is comprised of a 4-H member's prospect steers that are targeted for the county or state fair in mid to late summer. These

steers are simply not market ready in March and April, when most of the county and area judging contests are held in Indiana. These steers are acceptable to include in the contest, as long as they are called "prospect steers" and not "market steers." As prospect steers, the contestants must project them to their final endpoint and speculate which steers will be the best market animals after they have gained an additional 200 to 300 pounds. This is often difficult for contestants to do. The contest superintendent's first choice for a steer class should be a group of farmer-raised market steers weighing 1,150 to 1,350 pounds. These steers can be judged loose in a pen and need not be shown at halter.



Market lambs are often difficult to locate for a spring contest. Sheep are seasonal breeders, which means they breed in the fall when the days are getting shorter, and they lamb in the spring. A few Indiana sheep producers breed part of their ewes to lamb in the fall. These fall-born lambs should weigh over 100 pounds by March and April, and thus make good market lamb classes. The Purdue University Sheep Unit usually has some fall-born lambs, and the shepherd is more than willing to furnish them for county and area contests. Spring-born lambs are sometimes used as prospect lambs, but these young lambs are difficult for contestants to project to acceptable market weights, and thus

should be avoided for judging contests. Market lambs should be closely shorn and presented to the contestants in a judging rack, held by volunteers, or tied to the fence. They should not be judged loose.

Swine classes can also be difficult to locate for judging contests. Although Indiana is a leading swine-producing state, many breeders have SPF (Specific Pathogen Free) herds. The producers neither want people coming to their farm to select hogs nor do they want to haul their hogs to a fairgrounds and have them exposed to other hogs or to people who have been around other hogs earlier in the day. Swine producers will be more willing to provide hogs for judging contests if arrangements can be made to deliver these hogs directly to market or to a local hog-buying station after the contest. It is a good idea to select at least one extra pig for each of your swine classes. The “extra” pig you select should be as good as the pig you plan to win the class, if possible. Hogs have a tendency to bruise or crack the pads on their feet while being transported. Thus, it not unusual for hogs to walk normally the day before the contest, but to turn up lame on contest day.

It is even more challenging to get good quality gilt classes for judging contests, because of these same reasons. Swine producers are unwilling to bring replacement quality gilts to a judging contest and take the risk of these gilts contracting a disease and bringing it back to the herd. These gilts could be quarantined before re-entry into the herd, but most producers will not go to this extra work and expense for a judging contest. Thus, the best gilts a superintendent can hope for are ones with short underlines (less than seven nipples on each side of the gilt’s underline) or gilts that fail to meet breed requirements for color markings. However, placeable classes can still be constructed with average gilts, as long as there are at least two poor quality gilts to go in the bottom pair.

Performance Data

Performance data should be provided on at least one cattle class and one swine class in a livestock judging contest. This data can be actual performance data, EPDs (expected progeny differences), or a combination of both. Purebred breeders should have both types of data, and

commercial producers should have actual performance data. If EPDs for cattle are available, they should be provided for birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight, and milk. For swine, EPDs should be provided for days to 240 pounds, number born alive, and 21-day litter weight. In addition, the animal’s birth date should be provided along with a production scenario outlining the environmental conditions and management scheme the animals will be raised under. If gilts are used, their dam’s SPI (sow productivity index) should be included with the above-mentioned data. Bulls’ scrotal circumference should be included with the EPDs listed above.

Planning for Emergencies

It is always good to have at least one back-up class for a judging contest. You never know when a producer will have a family emergency or another reason that prevents him/her from following through with his/her commitment to furnish a class. This advice is especially true if you are planning a horse judging contest. It is not uncommon for a horse to come up lame, throw a shoe, or be sold.

A few days before the contest, the livestock providers should receive an itinerary containing the pertinent contest information, particularly where they are to deliver their animals and what time you would like them to arrive. If time permits, it is a good idea to call all of the livestock providers the day before the contest to make sure they know when and where to bring their animals the next day. Providers of haltered cattle classes should be asked to bring four show sticks, four show harnesses, scotch combs, and a blower. Swine providers should bring water pans and spray bottles or a sprinkling can (to cool down hogs during the contest). Make a special effort to personally thank each of the individuals who brings animals to your contest sometime before they leave to go home. A follow-up thank-you note should also be sent a few days after the contest. If possible, have a list of all the livestock providers’ names and addresses available to hand out to each of the coaches, and ask each team to send a thank-you note to all of the livestock donors. This effort

will make your job much easier the next time you need animals for a contest.

Recruiting Qualified Official Judges

Serving as a contest official should be considered an honor, because the person will have the opportunity to influence many youths who are interested in the livestock industry. Youths who have a positive experience may move on to a lifelong involvement with livestock, while a negative experience may significantly diminish their interest.

Great care should be taken to invite competent officials to place the classes at your contest. If you select high quality, placeable classes and line up knowledgeable officials, you have taken care of the two most important requirements for a successful contest. You should select judges who meet these criteria:

- Have prior judging experience (preferably college experience).
- Have knowledge about the species they are asked to judge (give preference to individuals who have raised the species they are judging.)
- Are honest and dependable.
- Are capable of listening to and giving oral reasons.
- Enjoy working with youth.
- Are up to date and active in the livestock industry.
- Work well in a committee environment.

A good official committee is usually made up of a combination of successful livestock breeders and recent college livestock judging team members. If possible, official judges should see the classes for the first time on contest day and under the same circumstances as the contestants. Official judges should not be involved in class selection, except as a last resort. You can generate a list of potential officials by polling the coaches who attend the area Ag Judging Committee meeting in the fall. Names of additional officials can be requested from the coaches at this year's contest. Each Extension area should have a list of potential officials for each of the contests they host. The coaches who attend the area contest

should edit this list each year.

Some areas have hired a collegiate team (either from Purdue or an out-of-state team) for a fee to officiate their area contest. This option can work very well, as long as you have a good relationship with the coach of the collegiate team and you specify the minimum number of officials needed for your contest. It is also important to remind the collegiate coach that you are hosting a youth event and the adult volunteers (including the official judges) are expected to abide by a list of behavioral expectations. Furthermore, it is a good idea to ask the collegiate coach to attend your contest as a mentor for the students he/she is sending to serve as officials. Having the collegiate coach attend your area contest is reassuring to the 4-H/FFA coaches and usually results in better officiating.

Breeders who supply animals for judging contests are usually very knowledgeable, but they naturally tend to be biased in evaluating their own animals. Livestock suppliers can be used as officials, but they should only be used on a committee of three or more people, and then only as a second or third option.

Most area contests operate on a limited budget, but enough money should be charged for entry fees to cover the expenses (meals and mileage) of the official judges and the livestock providers. Without these individuals, it would be impossible to hold the contests. Official judges should be contacted by telephone or e-mail at least 60 days before the contest date, to ensure their availability. A follow-up letter should be sent to the officials within 30 days of the contest. This letter should explain when and where you want the officials to report on contest day, and it's a good idea to include a map of the local area with this letter.

On the morning of the contest, the official judges should meet with the contest superintendent before viewing the classes. This meeting can be held immediately after the contestants are divided into groups and sent to their first class. Officials should be instructed to place every class right along with the contestants. This will ensure that classes are judged as they are on contest day and not how they appeared at a previous time. Officials should take care that none of their notes or placings can be seen by

contestants standing nearby. Hand or facial gestures, relative to the livestock, should also be avoided.

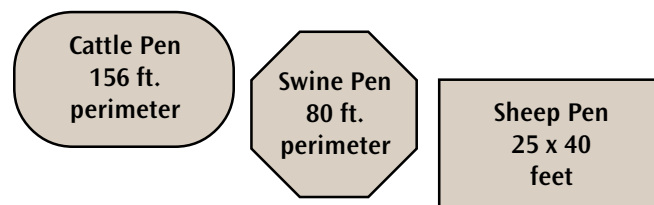
Official judges should place the classes independently, and then hand in their cards to the referee judge. The referee should take the official placing cards and compile a composite placing, before leading a discussion with all of the officials to arrive at a final placing. The referee may then suggest cuts based on the final placing. The referee judge or the official committee should review the classes during one of the last two rotations of a round to make sure the class has not changed. If a problem does arise, the committee should adjust the cuts of a class, even if the placing remains the same.

The officials should understand what is expected of them during the reasons session. Appendix C at the back of this publication is a sample of the material that should be sent to officials before their arrival at the contest. Appendix D describes reasons room philosophy and a suggested scoring scheme for reason takers to utilize during the reasons session. If a “split reasons session” is utilized (where two officials are listening to reasons on the same class, and each hears reasons from half of the contestants) it is important for the two officials to listen to the first four sets of reasons together. This allows the two officials to get in synch with one another and, hopefully, end up with a similar range of reasons scores.

Displaying Judging Classes

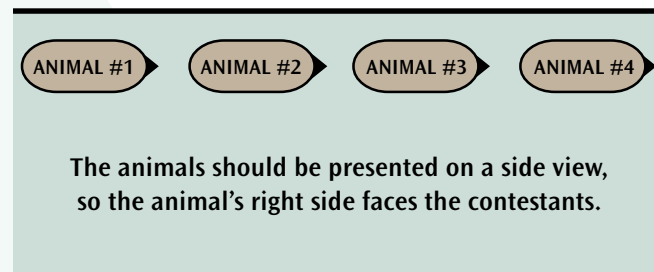
Properly displaying the classes is essential for having a successful contest. One of the most common mistakes made by a contest superintendent is not planning how he/she will display contest classes until the morning of the contest. A second mistake is often committed when pens are too small for proper evaluation of the animals. Frustration sets in very quickly when contestants are not able to properly view the animals they are asked to judge. When it comes to judging animals, “long distance is better than being there.” It is very important that the

contestants be far enough away from the classes so that they can correctly evaluate the animals. The larger the animals, the greater the distance required for contestants to be able to distinguish the important “differences” between the animals. The following pen shapes and sizes have been found to work very well for beef, sheep, and swine classes that are judged loose:



When animals are judged loose, the pen size determines how well the contestants will be able to view the animals, and the panels keep contestants at a set distance. Sheep pens should be positioned so that one of the long sides of the pen is against a wall. This arrangement allows contestants to stand on only three sides of the pen and gives the sheep (who have a natural flocking tendency) a chance to spread out along the wall, so contestants can get a good view. Swine pens should be placed on concrete, if possible, to prevent hogs from digging holes. Hog pens should be bedded with wood shavings. If possible, the hogs should be washed before the contest (either by the swine provider or by the contest committee). Washing the hogs makes them much more presentable and also makes them easier to mark, particularly if they were muddy before the contest. Cattle pens should be placed outside on a level grass surface, if the weather permits.

When cattle (beef or dairy) or horses are shown at halter, they should be displayed in the following manner:



The heavy black lines represent lines on the ground. They might be made with spray paint, or you might use ropes, hoses, or extension cords.



Photos by Amanda Greenwood, 4-H summer intern

Contestants should stay behind the line and view the animals from approximately 40 feet away. If they are viewing the classes outside, contestants should be positioned so the sun is coming over their shoulders.

Halter classes should start on a side view, except for market steers, which should start on a rear view. One person should be assigned to monitor haltered classes to ensure that all groups are given the same amount of time and the same views. The following schedule can be used to time the views of beef cattle classes when 15 minutes are allowed per class:

Breeding Beef Classes	
2 minutes	side view (right)
1.5 minutes	walking (two laps)
2 minutes	side view (left)
2 minutes	rear view
2 minutes	close inspection (evens)
2 minutes	close inspection (odds)
1.5 minute	walking (two laps)
2 minutes	side view (right)
Market Steer Classes	
2 minutes	rear view
2 minutes	side view (right)
1.5 minutes	walking (two laps)
2 minutes	rear view
2 minutes	close inspection (evens)
2 minutes	close inspection (odds)
1 minutes	walking (one lap)
2.5 minutes	rear view

Market lambs should be placed in a specially designed “sheep rack.” The ideal rack has a “headpiece” for each of the four lambs that is very similar to the headpiece on a sheep trimming stand. The headpiece is important because it holds the lamb in a stationary position, with its head up, and unable to swivel to either side. The lamb rack also spreads the lambs out so they are about two feet apart. This method of displaying the lambs allows the contestants a good view of each animal, as well as an opportunity to go through and handle each lamb. Market lambs should be closely shorn a few days before the contest. One person should be appointed to time contestants (15 seconds per contestant per lamb) as they handle the market lambs.



Numbering the Animals

Properly numbering animals for judging contests is very important. Animals should be clearly marked so there is no confusion among contestants about which animal is #1, #2, #3, or #4. If marks are placed on the animal's body, it is important to choose a marker color that contrasts with the animal's natural hair or fleece color. This allows colorblind individuals to compete equally with other contestants. For example: Duroc hogs are red and should be marked with a yellow, white, or teal marker, rather than a red, black, or dark blue marker. When classes are selected, animal owners should be consulted about their preference for marking the animals for the contest. If performance data is included on a class, particular attention must be paid so that animals are assigned the correct number on contest day to match the performance data on the sheet that will be given to contestants and officials.

Haltered cattle (beef and dairy), sheep in a rack, and horses are numbered left to right when viewed from behind. Although this is a nationally understood principle, it is still recommended that the showmen of haltered animals wear a show harness containing the animal's number on both their back and chest. This procedure helps the contestants keep the animals' numbers straight, especially when the animals are being moved. It is best to use computer-generated numbers, approximately seven inches tall, and to laminate them so they can stand up to repeated use.

Loose sheep classes can be marked (1 through 4) with various colors of dust chalk, a colored grease marker, numerical paint brands, or by a numbered elastic collar (two inches wide) around the sheep's neck. If the sheep are entered in a show in the near future, most owners prefer the elastic collar as a means of individually identifying their sheep for judging contests. Sheep owners should always be asked, before marking begins, which method they prefer to identify their sheep. Chalk marks can be placed as stripes over the sheep's back. Paint brands should be placed on the animal's left and right shoulder blades, just down from the neck-shoulder junction.

Loose cattle classes can be marked with a

grease marker, paint brands, spray paint, or numbered index cards attached to the animal's hip with back-tag cement. Numbered plastic collars have also been used to number cattle classes. Ear tags can be used, but they do not work well for judging contests, because the contestants can only identify the animals when they can see the animal's ear tag. Specially designed spray paint is available in bright colors for marking animals and is a good choice for loose cattle classes, as long as it is applied within 24 hours of the contest. When using spray paint or a paint stick to mark cattle classes, stripes (1 through 4) should be placed on each side of the animal's tail head, perpendicular to the animal's backbone and between the hip bone and pin bone. These stripes should be six to eight inches long. This is also the best location to apply index cards with back tag cement. Back tag cement works well, but it leaves a sticky spot on the animal for several weeks after the contest. One tube of back tag cement is sufficient to put numbers on four to six head of cattle. The numbers (1 through 4) on index cards should be at least six inches tall and in a color that contrasts with the color of the card itself.



Swine classes are usually marked with a grease marker or paint brands. The key to properly marking a swine class is to be able to restrain the hogs during the marking process. Restraint can be accomplished by collapsing the eight-sided swine pen around the animals to limit their movement. Marking should not be done until the swine class is unloaded, to be sure all of the hogs are moving freely and the final class is selected. Starting at the pig's backbone, six-inch-long stripes (1 through 4) should be placed at a 45-degree angle to the

backbone, coming backwards and down on each side of the backbone. When properly done, these marks have an inverted “V” shape when viewed from behind. Each “V” should be three to four inches apart. Due to the hair pattern on a pig’s back, this pattern of marking looks better and goes on easier than stripes placed straight across the pig’s back, at a 90-degree angle to the pig’s backbone. Paint brands also work well on hogs. They can be placed on each side of the pig’s loin or on the pig’s left and right shoulder blade.

Ordering Placing Cards and Materials

Blue, green, orange, and yellow placing cards are readily available from the Media Distribution Center at Purdue University for \$3/package of 100. The following numbers should be used to order placing cards: 396b (blue cards), 396g (green cards), 396o (orange cards), and 396y (yellow cards). A separate color should be used for each of the divisions in your contest, i.e. yellow for juniors, green for senior 4-H, and blue for FFA. Placing cards should be ordered at least one month before the contest. Remember to order at least one card per contestant per class. A one-pound box of No. 19 rubber bands should be on hand to place cards in packets (one card per class to be judged) for contestants. A Hormel card is a handy tabulating tool to have on hand, just in case the electricity goes off or in case there are computer problems. Hormel cards, which work like a slide rule, can be ordered from the National FFA by calling 1-888-332-2668 (Ext. 280).

Obtaining Awards

Depending on your preference and budget, awards can be simple or elaborate, expensive or low cost. It is customary to solicit award donations from local businesses, agricultural organizations, producer groups, breed associations, or private individuals. Awards should be ordered four to six weeks before the contest. Thus, award donors need to be solicited even earlier. Be sure to invite sponsors to send a representative to present awards

during the awards ceremony, and don’t forget to introduce them and properly recognize their support. The contest superintendent should send thank-you notes to award sponsors by (because you are the individual who will be soliciting awards again in the future). The contestant who wins the award also should send a thank-you note. Superintendents can increase the chances of contestants sending thank-you notes by including the names and addresses of award donors on the back of plaques or on the bottom of trophies. Also, the superintendent should make a verbal reminder about sending thank-you notes just before announcing results.

Notifying Coaches About the Contest

County educators, agriculture education instructors, and other area coaches should be notified of the contest date, time, and location at least three months before the event. If possible, the contest should be scheduled for the same date each year (i.e. third Friday in April). It is appropriate and advisable to require advance registration, particularly if you are hosting an invitational contest. The pre-registration deadline should be one week before the contest. Coaches should be encouraged to send registrations electronically. Advance registration allows you to have a better idea of how many contestants to plan for and will also speed up final registration the morning of the contest.

Within 10 days of the contest, coaches should receive another letter with the details of the number and types of classes you are planning to offer, the number of reason classes, and which classes will include performance data. A map of the local area should also be included to help coaches navigate their way to the contest site. You should also include a phone number where you can be reached on contest day, just in case a coach is running late or having vehicle problems. This same number can be used for coaches to call to confirm whether the contest has been cancelled because of inclement weather. It is not necessary at this time to tell the coaches the names of classes, official judges, or livestock providers.

Finding Experienced Group Leaders and Other Helpers

Group leaders are an important component of a successful judging contest. The best group leaders frequently are former livestock judging team members. To be an effective group leader, an individual must understand the contest from a contestant's perspective. For instance, in the breeding sheep classes, the contestants need to see the sheep spread out on the far side of the pen, along the wall. However, an inexperienced group leader tends to stand on the backside of the pen and push the sheep up against the contestants, making it difficult to properly evaluate the animals. Inexperienced group leaders also have a tendency to be afraid to get in the cattle pens, and they often drive the hogs too much and wear them out before the contest is over.

Group leaders need to be capable of taking charge of the contestants in their group. They begin by instructing the contestants to start with their backs to animals until the timekeeper gives the signal that "time is in." The group leaders must keep the contestants from talking to one another and from looking at each other's notebooks. Group leaders should be instructed by the contest superintendent to pick up the contestants' cards upside-down, to prevent other contestants from simply watching the cards come in before forming their own opinion of how to place the class. Group leaders should also be instructed not to give cards back to contestants once the cards have been turned in. Group leaders should not attempt to look for unmarked cards, for by doing so, they are accepting the responsibility of finding all of the unmarked cards, which may not happen. Each group leader should be given rubber bands (in a quantity equal to the number of classes) before the contest begins to secure the contestant's cards at the end of each round. The superintendent should brief the group leaders (before the beginning of the contest) about his/her expectations and about how the groups will rotate through the classes as the contest proceeds. Group leaders should be knowledgeable about the classes and capable of

answering questions about the performance data. Coaches are often used as group leaders, but this should only be done as a last resort. When coaches serve as group leaders, they are setting themselves up to be accused of assisting their team members in placing the classes.

If market lambs are displayed in a rack, someone should be in charge of timing the contestants as they handle the lambs. This individual should be provided with a chair, so he/she can sit beside the #1 lamb and "manage" the class. After having two minutes to look at the lambs from a distance, the contestants should be instructed to line up in a single file line behind the #1 lamb. Once the line is formed, the first contestant in line should be given 15 seconds to handle the #1 lamb. The class manager should use a watch to keep time, and should say "move" every 15 seconds, until all of the contestants have handled all of the lambs. After this point, the contestants should be kept at a reasonable distance (15 feet) from the lambs, and they should not be permitted to handle the lambs a second time. The class manager ensures that every group is given the same opportunity to evaluate the market lambs.

If possible, it is a good idea to have a similar person "manage" the haltered cattle classes. This person would keep time on the class (described earlier under "Displaying Judging Classes") and tell the cattle handlers when to move the animals to give the contestants the required views of the animals. The class manager would once again ensure that all groups are treated exactly the same with regard to their particular cattle class.

A timekeeper is also needed to keep the overall contest moving and on schedule. This person should blow a whistle twice when two minutes are left to judge the class (the two-minute warning) and then give one long blow of the whistle when the 15 minutes per class has expired. The timekeeper should blow the whistle a third time when all of the groups have moved to their next class and are ready to begin. A car horn works better than a whistle, if the contest is held outside. An additional individual should be appointed to gather cards from the group leaders at the end of each round and take them to the tabulation room.

Designating Reasons Classes

The contest superintendent must decide before the contest begins which classes will be reasons classes. The most placeable classes should be used for reasons classes, and the most challenging classes should be avoided. If three sets of reasons are to be given in a livestock contest, they should include one class per species and a mixture of market and breeding classes. In a dairy-judging contest, the reasons classes should be a mixture of dry heifers and producing cows. In a horse-judging contest, reasons should be given on a combination of halter and performance classes.

Assigning Judging Groups and the Reasons Order

A good way to divide contestants into judging groups is to assign letters to their contestant numbers. For example, if the superintendent wants to divide the contestants into six groups, he/she could use A, B, C, D, E and F to designate the six groups. This method of assigning groups assures equal group sizes and prevents teammates from being in the same group. When the superintendent is ready to break the contestants into groups, he/she can simply ask for all of the “A’s” to go in the first group, the “B’s” to go in the next group, etc. The preferred numbering system for contestants is as follows:

Contestant Number	Contestant Name
Team #1 11A	John Jones
12B	Mike Smith
13C	Jane Miller
14D	Tom Baker
Team #2 21E	Rick Lewis
22F	Sue Johnson
23A	Kevin Edwards
24B	Dave Moore

Team numbers progress upward as high as necessary. Junior teams can be assigned team numbers from 1 to 99. Senior teams can go from 200 to 299, etc. If any contestants judge only as individuals, their contestant numbers can start with 5001A and increase to 5002B, 5003C, etc.

The number of groups that contestants are divided into depends on how many classes will be in the contest. If there are six classes, the contestants should be divided into six groups. If there are seven to nine classes, the superintendent should consider dividing contestants into one or two fewer groups than the number of classes, so the various classes will have intermittent times to rest throughout the contest. If there are 10 or 12 classes in the contest, the superintendent may want to divide the contest into two “go rounds” of five or six classes each. If this procedure is followed, then the number of groups should be equal to the number of classes in each “go round.”

The reasons order can be devised in various ways. The most important thing to remember when putting this order together is to be certain that teammates *never* follow each other into the reasons room. Following are two examples of reasons orders (non-randomized and randomized), both using the same contestants. For simplicity, five teams and four individuals (not on a team) are used in the example.

Non Randomized		
Cattle	Sheep	Swine
11	12	13
21	22	23
31	32	33
41	42	43
51	52	53
14	24	34
44	54	5001
5002	5003	5004

Explanation: Contestant #11 begins giving cattle reasons. He/she is followed by #21, who is followed by #31, etc. Contestant #11 then begins preparing his/her sheep reasons and follows #5003

into the sheep reasons room. Again #21 follows #11, etc. (since #5001 and #5004 are individuals, not teammates, they can follow each other into the reasons room.)

Randomized		
Cattle	Sheep	Swine
5001	54	12
14	13	24
34	33	51
52	11	32
5003	22	44
23	53	21
42	41	5004
31	5002	43

Explanation: To make a randomized order, simply put all of the contestant numbers in a hat, and draw them out. To remove any bias, you should make sure that at least one and preferably two contestants are between teammates. The randomized order is preferred, because Team #2 does not always follow Team #1, as they do in the non-randomized order. If, for example, Team #1 is very good at giving reasons, Team #2 will always enter the reasons room at a disadvantage. This bias is removed by randomization.

To make the reasons session run smoothly, several preliminary steps need to be taken. To start with, the holding room for contestants should be arranged so that there is a row of chairs for each set of reasons to be given. The number of chairs in each row should equal the total number of contestants divided by the number of rows. The chairs should be arranged so that each chair is about two feet apart from the one in front of it. The rows of chairs should be about five feet apart. Next, the chairs should be labeled to match the randomized reason order described above. Using a Magic Marker, write each contestant's number on a stick-on nametag label and place the labels in the seats of the chairs in the holding room for contestants. When contestants find their assigned seat, they can apply the label to their lapel. The number on the contestant's lapel will help the reasons taker make sure they mark the reasons score next to the proper contestant number on their

score sheet. Rather than sort placing cards, superintendents can print the reasons order (as shown above) and give it to the reasons takers to record their scores next to the appropriate contestant numbers. These same reasons order sheets can be copied and handed out to contestants as they finish judging their final placing class. This will help contestants locate their chair in the holding room and help them know which set of reasons to start preparing first.

Reasons rooms should be close to the holding room for contestants. This helps contestants locate the rooms easily and keeps them from feeling rushed or being out of breath when they reach the reasons rooms.



Giving Contest Instructions

When registration is complete and the classes are in place, the superintendent should give some general instructions to the contestants and coaches. Points to include are: a brief welcome, a reminder for contestants to write their contestant number in their notebook, and a warning that turning in cards will be just like dropping a letter off at the post office: Once the card is turned in to the group leader, it is gone. Contestants should also be advised that group leaders have been instructed to pick up their cards if they insist on talking to one another or if they are caught cheating. Talking between contestants should not be allowed from the beginning of the contest until the end of the oral reasons session. Group leaders should be introduced, and contestants should be divided into groups according to the letter listed after their contestant number.

Recruiting Capable People to Tabulate

You will need three or four people to tabulate a contest of 100 to 150 contestants. Your most capable and qualified office help should be in charge of tabulation. Some areas use Extension educators to help with tabulation. Appendix B at the back of this publication is a checklist of actions the tabulators should complete to assure a successful contest. This is an area that you, as the superintendent, do not want to worry about. During the contest, you must be able to completely rely on the tabulators to do their job. You want to be assured that the results are accurate when you announce them to the group at the conclusion of the contest. A computer tabulation software package is available from the State 4-H Youth Development Department at Purdue University. The Purdue program will generate a randomized reasons order and produce readable results when the tabulation is complete. If at all possible, this program or another computerized program should be used to tabulate your contest, because it will speed up the tabulation process and minimize mistakes. **Even though they are using computers, it is imperative that the tabulators systematically check and double-check their work to ensure its accuracy.**

The individuals who tabulate should also be in charge of registration. They should ensure that contestants' names are spelled correctly and that the proper fees are collected from every coach. The superintendent should provide the registration table with sheets to pass out to every contestant, listing the class names and which classes will be reasons classes.

Planning and Ordering Lunch

Whenever possible, the best solution to the question, "What should we do about lunch?" is to have it catered to the contest site by groups such as Homemakers, Porkettes, Cowbells, Pork Producers, Cattlemen, church groups, or a local

caterer. These groups are usually willing to provide a nourishing lunch at a reasonable price. Some areas have the contestants bring sack lunches from home or ask the coaches to go out and purchase lunches for the contestants. Any of the above options are preferred over allowing everyone to go out to eat on their own, because some coaches may use this time to "prepare" or "polish" their team's oral reasons.

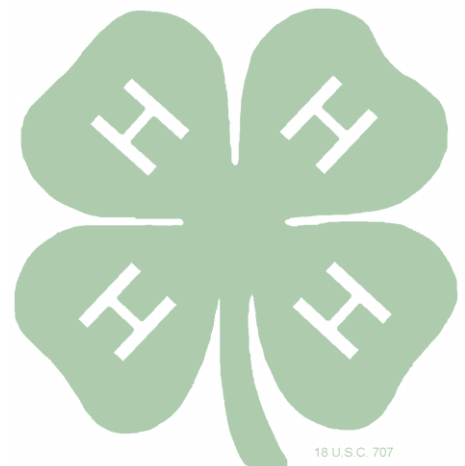
If you are ordering lunches, be sure to include enough extras so that your helpers (including tabulators, group leaders, timers, and class managers) and officials are provided with a good lunch. Whether or not you feed the coaches is your decision, but they should be made aware of your intentions when they are notified about the contest. During the reasons session, officials should be provided with a beverage, and contestants should have access to a cooler of water or a fountain.

Critiquing the Classes

When the last contestant is finished giving reasons, it is time to introduce the official judges and ask them to give the placings, cuts, and reasons for each class. A simple form can be given to the officials during lunch for them to list their name, address, phone number, the class they will discuss, and a short list of their accomplishments and/or qualifications. This information can be used to introduce each official as they come forward to discuss a particular class. As the contest superintendent, you should assemble all of the contestants and coaches before starting the critique. It is important to remind contestants and coaches that the officials are donating their time to help with the contest. They are our guests and should be treated with respect and given our undivided attention. Once the critique has started, you should introduce all of the officials from one species before proceeding to the next group. It is essential for every contestant and coach to remain until the end of the critique in order to fully benefit from the educational aspect of listening to the officials describe and discuss the classes. At the end of the critique, you should ask the group to join you in a round of applause for the officials.

After all of the official placings have been given and the tabulators have broken any tied overall scores based on higher oral reason scores, it is time to announce the contest results. Even if you do not have enough awards, it is a nice gesture to recognize the top ten individuals overall and in each respective division (juniors, seniors, and/or FFA). Before delivering the results, it would be proper to introduce the tabulation crew. Be sure to recognize any award donors as their respective awards are presented. This is also a good time to recognize livestock providers for bringing in the classes for the contest. At the end of the results, thank everyone for participating, congratulate the winners, and advise the eligible teams of the next level of competition (area, state, or national). During the next week, write thank-you notes to every person who helped with the contest in any way.

Finally, pat yourself on the back for a job well done!



Checklist for the Contest Superintendent

Ahead of the Contest

- Reserve rooms (6-12 months ahead)
- Contact tabulators (2-3 months ahead)
- Recruit official judges (2-3 months ahead)
- Organize the content of the contest (i.e. classes, specimens, and tests) (1 month ahead)
- Order cards for the contestants (1 month ahead)
- Order lunches (2 weeks ahead)
- Communicate with tabulators (i.e. number of classes and the class names, number of reasons classes, number of groups, number of cards/packet, number of contestant labels, and the number of team rosters needed) (2 weeks ahead)
- Arrange for tabulator to register contestants (1 week ahead)
- Enter contestants into computer database (check spelling of names) (2 to 7 days ahead)
- Make registration books for check-in (Provide a book, containing the complete contest roster, for each person who will be at the check-in table. A minimum of two people are needed here) (2 to 7 days ahead)
- Make signs (2 to 7 days ahead))
- Prepare official placing cards (2 to 7 days ahead)
- Get cash to make change and a cash box (2 to 7 days ahead)
- Check on room setup and get needed keys (2 to 7 days ahead))
- If you plan to take pictures of the winners, arrange for a sign and backdrop for the pictures and designate a person to take the photos with a digital camera (2 to 7 days ahead)
- Gather needed supplies (i.e. calculator, tape, staples, markers, pencils, pens, and computers) (2 to 7 days ahead)
- Do a final check with the head tabulator (2 to 7 days ahead)
- Double check the division teams are entered in (2 days ahead)
- Make card packets and labels for contestants (2 days ahead)

- Make coaches' packets (tape roster on the front of each envelope) (2 days ahead)
- Address coaches' packets for results (2 days ahead)

On Contest Day

- Make sure people are in place to handle registration
- Set up classes
- Do an overview with group leaders
- Coordinate officials
- Check in with the head tabulator (both should have a cellular phone)
- Get the contest started on time
- Oversee the flow of the event
- Organize reasons' rooms (put labels on the chairs with the contestants' numbers on them)
- Make sure lunch has arrived
- Oversee the reasons session
- Check results
- Arrange for coaches to check the results before they are announced
- Copy results for coaches' envelopes
- Introduce award sponsors
- Announce and congratulate the award winners
- Clean up (i.e. rooms re-set, signs down, computers and supplies removed, and doors locked)

After the Contest

- Deposit income from the contest
- Consider posting results (and photos) on the Web
- Mail results to coaches who did not pick them up after the contest
- Put away supplies
- Make a list of suggestions for next year's contest
- Fill out the necessary forms to pay the people who are owed money
- Follow up on any IOUs from the contest

Checklist for the Tabulator

Ahead of the Contest

- Make preparations for entering contestants into database
- Check on the levels of contestants (Jr., Sr.)
- Check on the number of contestants per team
- Check on the number of groups contestants will be divided into
- Check on the number and names of classes
- Check on the number of reasons classes
- Check on the number of reasons groups
- Check on the cost per contestant
- Check the *4-H Ag Judging Handbook* for rules for breaking ties
- Check to see if there are any team scores
- Check to see if there are species awards
- Check on the number of contestant labels
- Check on the number of coaches' labels
- Print contestant roster for check-in (one copy for each person at check-in table)
- Print page showing the next number that's available if an unregistered team shows up
- Get cell phone number of superintendent
- Make last-minute check with superintendent

On Contest Day

- Warm up computers
- Make sure printer and copier are working
- Make roster changes in the computer
- Print out the reasons order for each level
- Print out receipts for entry fees
- Oversee the data input and double-check cards
- Input official placing and cuts
- Deal with unmarked or mismarked cards
- Print out coaches' check sheets
- Supervise the input of reasons scores
- Organize packets of cards for coaches' check
- Tabulate the contest
- Print out results

Guidelines for Contest Officials

Serving as a contest official is an honor, because you will have the opportunity to influence many youths who are interested in the livestock industry. Youths who have a positive experience may move on to a lifelong involvement with livestock, while a negative experience may significantly diminish their interest. Therefore, it is very important that all contest officials approach their tasks with a positive outlook on the opportunity to improve the future of the livestock industry with the addition of more knowledgeable and confident participants.

Officials should place every class right along with the contestants. This will ensure that classes are judged as they are on contest day and not how they appeared at a previous time. Officials should take care that none of their notes or placings can be seen by contestants standing nearby. Hand or facial gestures, relative to the livestock, should also be avoided.

The official judges should place the classes independently under the same exact viewing conditions as the contestants. After the officials have marked their placings independently, their cards should be handed to the referee judge. The referee should take the official placing cards and compile a composite placing, before leading a discussion with all of the officials to arrive at a final placing. The referee may then suggest cuts based on the final placing.

Philosophy and Objectives for Giving Oral Reasons

Livestock judging programs teach students to objectively evaluate cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses, but equally important is a student's ability to discuss and defend those evaluations. The combined process of placing classes, then defending those placings, teaches students to be totally objective, honest, and fair in their approach to evaluating livestock.

Another major purpose for giving oral reasons in judging contests is that it offers an opportunity for students to learn how to think, organize their thoughts, and speak about those thoughts in a refereed environment. Students who master those skills find them useful in many ways for the rest of their lives. Many leaders in the field of animal science had judging team experience, and they frequently point to the reasons process as significant in developing leadership abilities.

Giving reasons should be a positive, pleasant learning experience for students. Students should be encouraged, not discouraged, when giving reasons, and they should gain confidence in themselves through practice. Performance in the reasons room by students who are prepared should be evaluated from a positive view, rather than a negative view, giving every advantage possible to students who do a good job. Reasons judges should never use a negative, penalizing "fault" system for scoring reasons. Their actions toward students and their scoring method should reflect a positive approach.

Scoring Oral Reasons

Reasons scores should reflect the organization, relevancy, accuracy, terminology, and presentation of reasons, regardless of the student's placing of the class. A bad placing must not automatically result in a low reasons score. If students see the differences in the livestock and reflect those differences accurately in their reasons, they must not be penalized on the reasons score because their placing of the class was different from the official judges. Placing scores will adequately reflect incorrect emphasis in placing the class.

Guidelines for Contest Officials (continued)

Etiquette in the Reasons Room

Reasons judges must be continually aware that their actions and mannerisms can be stimulating or distracting to the student presenting oral reasons. Judges should be polite and encouraging to the student, and should never present a harsh, critical attitude. Judges must be aware that any personal action can have either positive or negative influences on the students as they prepare for their next set of reasons or future contests. Emphasis should be on a positive attitude, not on excess criticism.

There is no need for reasons judges to attempt to educate contestants individually during the reasons session. Teaching is the responsibility of coaches. Judges should focus their attention on the accuracy and quality of the reasons presented, irrespective of the class placing. Remember that contestants have already been awarded points for their class placings. Also, reasons judges should never tell contestants the correct placing of a class.

Reason judges should not ask questions, unless they need to clarify a statement or a point made by the contestant. Contestants are requested not to wear team-identifying articles during reasons; therefore, **reasons judges should not ask a contestant's team name until after the entire competition is complete.**

It is particularly important that judges avoid any mannerisms that may be distracting to students. Eating, drinking, smoking, chewing, etc. must be avoided while students are presenting oral reasons. Also, judges must not stand, move around, use excessive eye and head movements, yawn, etc., while students are presenting oral reasons. Judges must be aware that the student who is presenting oral reasons is trying very hard to concentrate on the class of livestock, and mannerisms or actions of the reasons judge should not break their concentration.

Standardized Reasons Scoring

In an effort to increase the consistency of scores given during the oral reasons session, the following scale has been developed for oral reasons listeners to use. Adherence to this guide will also help coaches and contestants better understand their oral reasons' scores and allow them to identify their weaknesses, so they can focus their efforts during future practice sessions.

When scoring oral reasons, it is helpful to think of the score in terms of a percentage that relates to the grades used in traditional classroom settings. A percentage is easily obtained by simply doubling the oral reasons score. A 35 on a set of oral reasons converts to 70% (35×2), which is a

low C in most grading systems. Any reasons scores below a 30 would result in the contestant earning less than 60%, which is considered a failing grade.

Contestants who are reasonably well prepared and deliver a complete set of reasons should receive at least 25 points for their effort. Contestants who use notes should be scored from 20 to 25 points, regardless of how well they deliver their reasons. If a contestant simply states how they placed the class and fails to give any reasons, they should be given a score of 10 for coming in the room.

Reasons' Score	Percentage	Grade	Criteria
45 - 50	90 - 100	A	Reasons are accurate, well organized, and delivered in a pleasing manner. The upper end of this range is reserved for those contestants who prioritize the main placing factors, but still cover minor details.
40 - 44	80 - 88	B	Reasons are smooth and organized, but contain an occasional inaccuracy; or they are accurate and descriptive, but the delivery could be improved.
35 - 39	70 - 78	C	Reasons are smooth, but unorganized, or they are choppy and rough, but accurately describe the class.
30 - 34	60 - 68	D	Reasons are "canned" and well delivered, but fail to describe the appropriate class; or they are rough and poorly delivered, but contain some truth.
25 - 29	50 - 58	F	Reasons are inaccurate, unorganized, poorly delivered, or any combination of the above.
20 - 24	40 - 48	F	Any use of notes should result in a score from 20 to 24. The actual score within this range would be determined by accuracy, delivery, and content.



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