

Judging Dairy Cattle

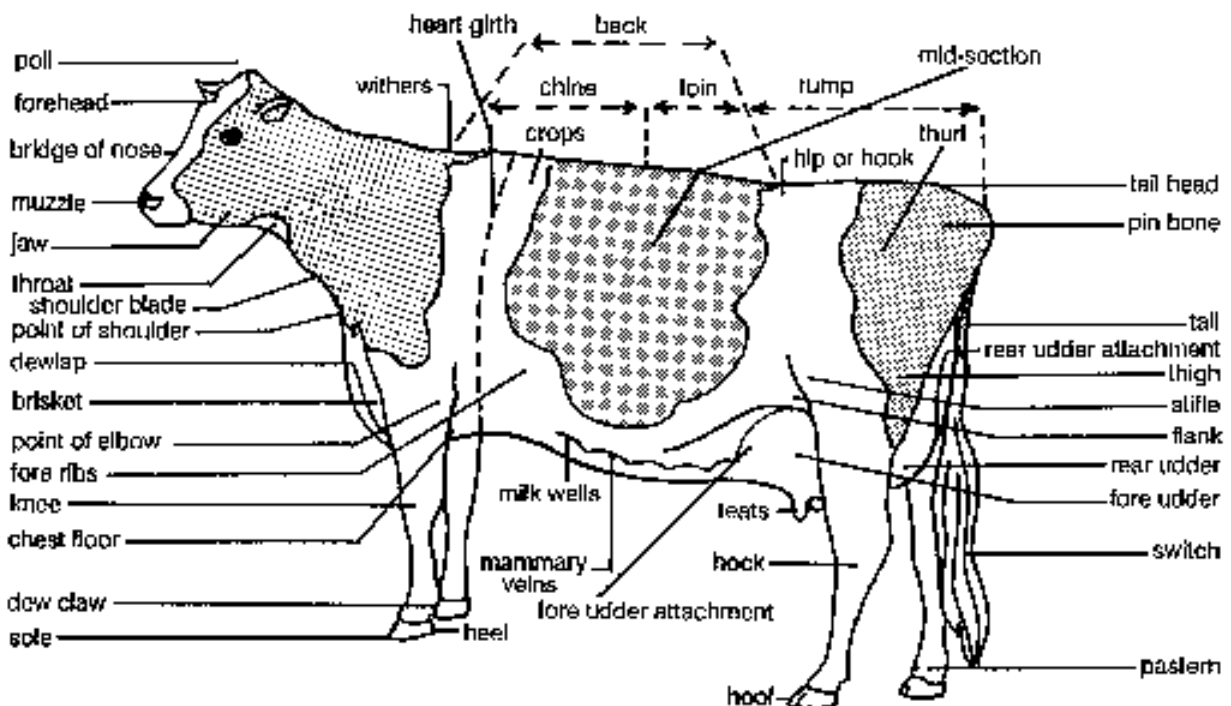
The primary function of the dairy cow is the economical production of milk. It has been proven that quality type or form is directly related to function. In other words, a dairy cow with good quality type has the potential to efficiently and economically produce milk.

This unit will assist you in being able to assess the conformation of a dairy cow by helping you to:

1. Learn the desirable points of conformation in a quality dairy cow and heifer.
2. Show you how to determine if a particular animal possesses these desirable points.

The first step is to learn the parts of the dairy animal.

Parts of the Dairy Cow



Judging the Dairy Cow

Once you know the parts of the body, the next step to becoming a successful dairy judge is to learn what the ideal animal looks like. In this section, we will work through the parts of a dairy cow and learn the desirable and undesirable characteristics.

When you judge, do not assign numerical scores. Use the card for relative emphasis only. When cows are classified by the official breed classifiers, classifications and absolute scores are assigned.

Canadian Holstein Cow Score Card

	Perfect Score
1. Mammary System	40
2. Dairy Strength	25
3. Feet and Legs.....	25
4. Rump.....	10
Total	100

Canadian Jersey Cow Score Card

	Perfect Score
1. Capacity.....	17
2. Rump.....	10
3. Feet and Legs.....	14
4. Mammary System.....	16
5. Dairy Character	17
6. Fore Udder.....	10
7. Rear Udder.....	16
Total	100

As you can see, the score cards for each of the different breeds differs slightly. The individual characteristics looked for by each of the breeds is the same, they just place different emphasis on the component parts. Because Holsteins are the predominant breed in Canada, the following information will be based on the Holstein Score Card.

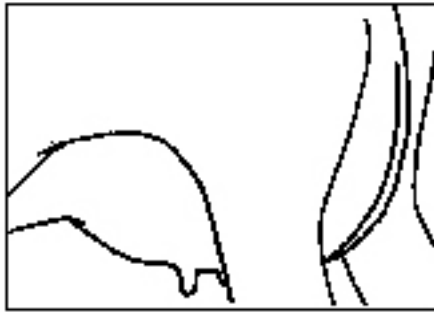
Mammary System

“A strongly attached, well balanced, level udder of fine texture indicating heavy production and a long period of usefulness.”

The mammary system accounts for 40% of the relative merit, making it the single most important part of the dairy cow. This should be no surprise as the most important economic function of the dairy cow is milk production.

The mammary system includes all of the parts of the body of the dairy cow which have a role to play in the production of milk. Each individual part has its own function and its own specific desirable qualities.

The udder should be symmetrical and well balanced with evenness of all four quarters. It should be securely attached to the body and be capacious, but not necessarily large. This will give the udder a “milky” appearance.



Excellent Udder



Tilted Udder

Udder

- symmetrical of moderate length, width and depth
- slight quartering on sides

The udder should be of intermediate depth. The udder should never hang below the hocks of cow of any age.



**Extremely deep udder,
hangs below hocks**

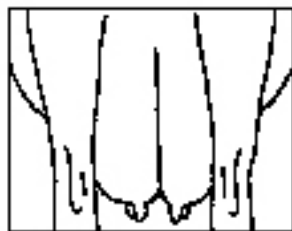


**Udder floor level with
hocks**



**Extremely shallow
udder**

The Median Suspensory Ligament is the strong supportive ligament which runs lengthwise through the center of the udder. It should be strong but not overly tight, giving a definite cleavage or crease between the halves of the udder. If this ligament is not strong enough, the floor of the udder will bottom out, causing the udder to weaken and the teats to point outward.



Extremely strong median suspensory ligament.



Intermediate strength median suspensory ligament.



Extremely weak median suspensory ligament.

Udder texture should always be soft, pliable and elastic. After milking, the udder should be well collapsed.

The Fore Udder is composed of the front parts of the udder. Most important here is the moderately long, firm and smooth attachment of the fore udder to the body wall. A longer fore udder attachment provides for a more capacious udder. With a well attached fore udder and a strong median suspensory ligament, the quarters will be evenly balanced. A strong fore udder attachment corresponds to a longer lasting dairy cow.



Desirable fore udder

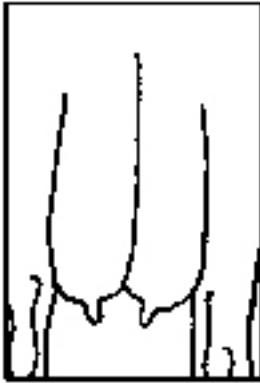


Short fore udder

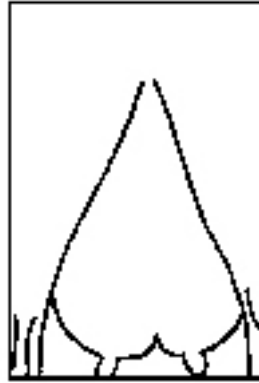


Bulgy, loose fore udder attachment

The Rear Udder is composed of the hind parts of the udder. Most important here is the high, wide and firm attachment of the rear udder. It should be balanced in proportion to the fore udder attachment. The rear udder should have a slightly rounded appearance and be uniform in width from the top of the attachment to the floor of the udder with even balance of the quarters.



Desirable rear udder with high, wide rear attachment

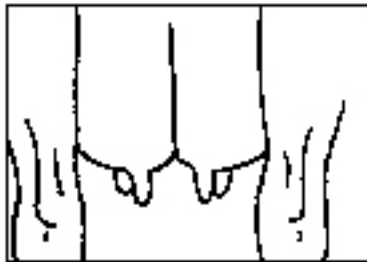


Low, narrow rear udder attachment



Rear udder tucked inward limiting rear udder capacity

There should be four fully functional Teats of uniform size and medium length and diameter. The teats should be cylindrical and plumb and should hang perpendicular to the floor of the udder. From a side view, the teats are placed in the center of each quarter. From a rear view, the teats are slightly closer to the inside than the outside of each quarter.



Ideal udder with 4 evenly placed teats



Teats too long

The Mammary Veins should be long, tortuous (winding) and branching. Prominent udder veining, although it is attractive, is not associated with higher milking ability.