

Judging

The Judge's Seat

Introduction to Judging

Judging teaches you how to analyze a situation, make decisions and then back up those decisions with solid reasoning. Judging activities give 4-H members a chance to develop these important life skills, practice public speaking and gain self-confidence.

Judging is an important part of dairy farming – not just in the show ring. Assessing conformation often helps farmers decide who to cull or keep in their milking herd.

Judging doesn't always have to be about cows!

There are many ways to incorporate judging into your 4-H dairy project. At a meeting on Milk Marketing, members could judge four milk ads to see which one is most effective. At a meeting on nutrition, members could judge grain, hay or silage.

Whatever you are judging, you need to follow these steps to prepare a class:

- Gather four objects that can be compared to one another. As an introduction for new members, comparing two objects first will help familiarize them with the concept of judging without being too intimidating. More advanced judges may want to judge more objects. While most competitions use four objects, Dairy Evaluation Clinics often have six animals in each class. If members ever judge a show themselves, they would be asked to judge any number of animals at once.
- Create a set of criteria for judging the objects.

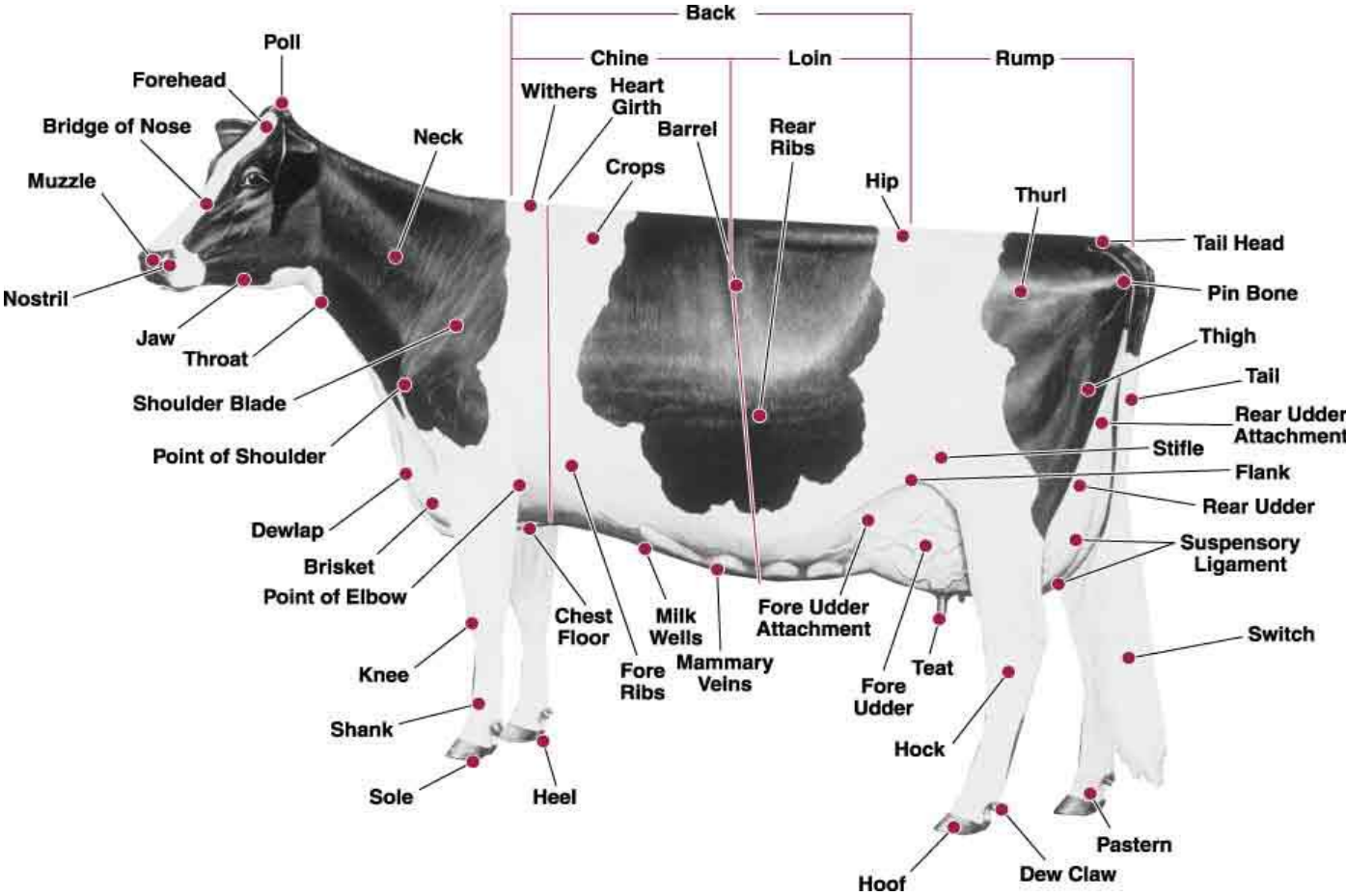
Sometimes, you can judge the same objects with different sets of criteria. This type of exercise is a good way to prove a point about the importance, or lack of importance, of a particular criterion. For example, if you're judging cows on their ability to milk, simply looking at the cows' conformation won't allow you to make an accurate decision. You need to judge them by another set of criteria, such as by their genetic indexes or production records.

Be flexible with judging topics and activities. Let older members design some of them. Get the rest of the club involved too! Younger members may benefit from different types of classes or by judging a class based on just one criterion instead of a set of criteria.



First Thing's First – Learn the Parts of the Cow

In order to judge dairy cattle, or even to work with them every day, it is very important to know the parts of the animal.



DAIRY COW SCORECARD

MAMMARY SYSTEM

PERFECT SCORE

40

Strongly attached, well balanced, level udder of fine texture indicating heavy production and a long period of usefulness

Udder - symmetrical, wide, deep, moderate length, slight quartering

Median Suspensory Ligament - strong with definite cleavage

Udder Texture - soft, pliable, elastic

Fore Udder - firm, smoothly attached, balanced quarters

Rear Udder - attached high, wide and strong; slightly rounded; uniform width from top to floor, balanced quarters

Teats - medium size, uniform, hanging plumb

Mammary Veins - long, tortuous, branching

FEET AND LEGS

25

Clean, strong-boned, resulting in proper movement

Feet - short, well-rounded, deep heels

Legs - strong, flexible pasterns, straight square fore legs

- hind legs straight, wide, clean hocks

- flat, clean, strong bone with well defined tendons

DAIRY STRENGTH

25

Vigour, strength, stretch, size and stature with desirable

blending and balance of parts. Head indicates femininity and

strength, mid-section is large and provides ample capacity. Evidence of milking ability, angularity, openness, free from weakness and coarseness, considering stage of lactation

Head - broad muzzle, large nostrils, strong jaw, broad forehead

Shoulder Blades - set smoothly against chest and withers

Chest - wide floor, ample width between legs

Heart Girth - large and deep, full elbows and well sprung rib

Crops - well filled

Back - strong and straight with vertebrae well defined

Loin - broad and slightly arched, attached high and wide

Mid-section - long and wide ribs highly and widely sprung



Steps in Placing a Class

- ✦ 4-H judging classes will always have 4 articles to compare.
- ✦ They will be numbered from 1 to 4, left to right when viewed from behind in livestock classes)
- ✦ Read the class title correctly; it will give you clues for points to consider. (mature cows will look different than first-calvers, etc.)
- ✦ Learn and practice using the correct terms of the articles that you will be judging. (Pin bones, flat boned, angular, upstanding, etc.)

Judging Steps:

1. Picture in your mind the "ideal" sample or animal. (If it is a class of cows, think of the True Type Model)
2. Start by comparing each article in the class with the other articles, keeping in mind the ideal sample. Stand back and look at the whole class from a distance, then examine each article closely. The article that most resembles the ideal will be first, and so on.
3. See the articles in the class as they are, not as you'd like to see them. Don't get caught up on one characteristic only. You must keep in mind all of the strengths and weaknesses of each exhibit.
4. Remember the scorecard for the class. If the mammary system is worth the majority of the scorecard, make sure that it is the most important trait you consider when judging the class. Remember to use scorecards as a guide. Do not assign numerical values.
5. Work on your own. Discussing the class with others can confuse you, and is often not allowed, especially at competitions.
6. Don't read anything into the class or play hunches. Don't spend your time trying to out-guess the official judge. You'll end up out of time and without a placing.
7. Try to have a tentative placing before too much time has passed, or you may find yourself without any time to make reasons.
8. Make your easiest placing first. Some people like to start at the top of the class; others like to start at the bottom. Often, it's easier to select your top and bottom placings and then place the middle.
9. Remember that your first impression is usually the best. Don't change your placing unless you find that you've missed an important point.
10. In order to make your comparisons easier, make note of a close top pair, an easy bottom or a close middle placing.
11. Look more closely at the animals' or articles' important characteristics and base your placings on these. If there are two articles that are very similar in main features, look for less important points. Often you hear judges say there was only one characteristic that separated the first from the second, and sometimes it is a minor characteristic.
12. Remember to be practical when you're considering the flaws in the articles. (A stylish dairy cow won't last in the herd if she has weak legs).
13. Make sure you look at the animals (or other items) from all angles.
14. Make your own decision and ignore comments from other members. Don't compare your placings to other members or you may be tempted to change them.
15. After placing the class, make sure that you have notes or point form reasons prepared if you're giving oral reasons on the class. Make sure you also have a clear picture of the class so you can recall it while giving reasons.
16. Before handing in your card, check that the placing on your notes matches the placing on your card.
17. Take a few minutes to practice your reasons.



Judging in 4-H Competition vs. at a Real Show

When judging at a real show, the same techniques should be used when judging a class; however, the reasons format differs slightly. When giving reasons at a 4-H meeting or competition, you typically start with "I place this class of cows 4, 3, 2, 1". At a show, instead of referring to entry numbers, placings should be giving referring the placing within the class, such as "placing first over second, second over third", etc.

JUDGING FORMAT

Sir/Madam, I place this class of

, _____ , _____ , _____

I place _____ on the top because

I place _____ over _____ because

I place _____ over _____ because

I place _____ over _____ because

For these reasons, I place this class of

_____ , _____ , _____ , _____

TIP: Advanced judges should limit the use of the word "because" when comparing reasons.



Insert You Be The Judge Document from Holstein Canada.

