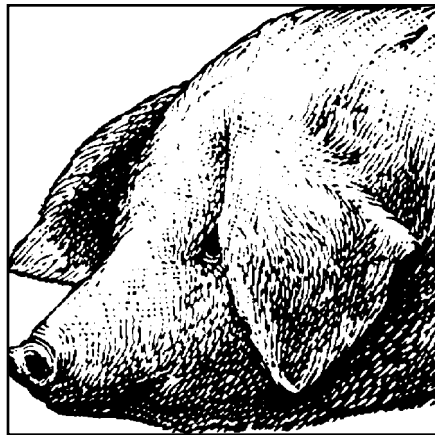

Livestock Judging



BASICS

After learning why livestock are judged, you can begin to appreciate why it takes considerable practice to become a good judge of livestock. In this section, the placing card, a class of livestock, and the livestock judging contest will be discussed.

Placing Card

The placing card is the official record of how a person placed a class. Every time you judge a class of livestock, you will be given a placing card. The type of placing cards used in Mississippi contests is shown in Figure 1 (below). Other contests may use similar placing cards. In contest block A, indicate which division you are competing in (most likely, Junior or Senior). Block B is for your team number and contestant number (example 1-A). Block C is for the class name and the class number. Put the name of the class in this block (for example, Angus Heifers). The blocks for D and E are for official use only and should remain blank. Finally, draw a circle around your desired placing in the bottom section of the card.

In the example, a Junior contestant (1-A) placed Class 4, Angus Heifers, 3-1-4-2. This placing indicates the most desirable animal is number 3 and the least desirable animal is number 2.

Be sure each card you turn in has your contestant number and that you have indicated the name of the class. Circle only one placing on your judging card, and check your placing before turning in your card.

Figure 1: Placing Card

	A	B	C	D	E				
Mississippi 4-H Livestock/Horse Judging Contest		Team No. and	Class		Reason				
<p style="text-align: center;">DIRECTIONS - Below are all the possible placings for a class of four individuals.</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>A=1-2-3-4</p> <p>B=1-2-4-3</p> <p>C=1-3-2-4</p> <p>D=1-3-4-2</p> <p>E=1-4-2-3</p> <p>F=1-4-3-2</p> </td> <td style="width: 25%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>G=2-1-3-4</p> <p>H=2-1-4-3</p> <p>I=2-3-1-4</p> <p>J=2-3-4-1</p> <p>K=2-4-1-3</p> <p>L=2-4-3-1</p> </td> <td style="width: 25%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>M=3-1-2-4</p> <p>N=3-1-4-2</p> <p>O=3-2-1-4</p> <p>P=3-2-4-1</p> <p>Q=3-4-1-2</p> <p>R=3-4-2-1</p> </td> <td style="width: 25%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>S=4-1-2-3</p> <p>T=4-1-3-2</p> <p>U=4-2-1-3</p> <p>V=4-2-3-1</p> <p>W=4-3-1-2</p> <p>X=4-3-2-1</p> </td> </tr> </table>						<p>A=1-2-3-4</p> <p>B=1-2-4-3</p> <p>C=1-3-2-4</p> <p>D=1-3-4-2</p> <p>E=1-4-2-3</p> <p>F=1-4-3-2</p>	<p>G=2-1-3-4</p> <p>H=2-1-4-3</p> <p>I=2-3-1-4</p> <p>J=2-3-4-1</p> <p>K=2-4-1-3</p> <p>L=2-4-3-1</p>	<p>M=3-1-2-4</p> <p>N=3-1-4-2</p> <p>O=3-2-1-4</p> <p>P=3-2-4-1</p> <p>Q=3-4-1-2</p> <p>R=3-4-2-1</p>	<p>S=4-1-2-3</p> <p>T=4-1-3-2</p> <p>U=4-2-1-3</p> <p>V=4-2-3-1</p> <p>W=4-3-1-2</p> <p>X=4-3-2-1</p>
<p>A=1-2-3-4</p> <p>B=1-2-4-3</p> <p>C=1-3-2-4</p> <p>D=1-3-4-2</p> <p>E=1-4-2-3</p> <p>F=1-4-3-2</p>	<p>G=2-1-3-4</p> <p>H=2-1-4-3</p> <p>I=2-3-1-4</p> <p>J=2-3-4-1</p> <p>K=2-4-1-3</p> <p>L=2-4-3-1</p>	<p>M=3-1-2-4</p> <p>N=3-1-4-2</p> <p>O=3-2-1-4</p> <p>P=3-2-4-1</p> <p>Q=3-4-1-2</p> <p>R=3-4-2-1</p>	<p>S=4-1-2-3</p> <p>T=4-1-3-2</p> <p>U=4-2-1-3</p> <p>V=4-2-3-1</p> <p>W=4-3-1-2</p> <p>X=4-3-2-1</p>						

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Class of Livestock

A class in a livestock judging contest consists of four animals of one particular breed, sex, and age group, such as Suffolk Yearling Ewes, Dorset Ram Lambs, Crossbred Market Hogs, Duroc Boars, Summer Yearling Hereford Bulls, and Brangus Heifer Calves. The animals will be numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4 so they can be readily identified. Numbers will probably be on the backs or arms of the people holding the animals. A possible exception to this system is when judging beef cattle or sheep and the animals are haltered or are being held in racks. When this is the case, number the animals from left to right as you stand behind them.

Livestock Judging Contest

A livestock judging contest includes classes of beef cattle, sheep, and swine. You may judge either market or breeding classes or both. If you place the class correctly, you will receive a score of 50 points for the placing. If you incorrectly place one or two pairs, or if you make other placing errors, your score will be determined by the seriousness of the error.

In many judging events, you will have the opportunity to give oral reasons. Oral reasons allow you to justify your placings to an official judge. The official judge will score you on accuracy, completeness, length, presentation and delivery, and terminology. A score of 50 points is the highest awarded for oral reasons. Detailed information on reasons can be found in the following "Reasons" section of this manual.

A livestock judging contest is simply a collection of various classes of livestock. There can be as many classes in a contest as the officials desire; usually, there are at least two classes.

Always follow the instructions of your group leader or the person in charge of the contest. If you have any questions, ask your group leader and not another contestant. No talking between contestants is allowed during the contest.

As you approach a class of livestock, you will probably be told to turn your back toward the class and to label your placing card. Do not begin judging until told to do so!

Once "time is in," begin judging. You will have from 10 to 15 minutes to place a class, with most classes being 15 minutes. With approximately 2 or 3 minutes remaining in a class, you will be asked to mark your card. Make certain that your contestant number, class name and number, and placing are on the card. When "time is out," turn your back toward the class, check your placing one last time, and hand your placing card to your group leader.

HOW TO BEGIN

Before you start judging livestock, try to make a mental image of the perfect animal. Do this by recalling the most desirable features of the high-quality animals that you have seen and by thinking of them as belonging to one animal. You can also study pictures of champions, show reports, current livestock magazines, or ideal-type pictures from the breed associations.

In the contest system, four animals are typically in each class. As you judge, divide the class into three pairs: a top pair, a middle pair, and a bottom pair. Make comparisons between these pairs. As you look at any class, have five animals in mind: the four in the class and the ideal animal of that breed, sex, and age group.

DEVELOPING A JUDGING SYSTEM

Each time you judge a class of livestock or analyze a group of livestock, rely on a system of observing the animals.

Following are a few pointers for judging a class of livestock:

- X Stand Back** – Allow enough room between yourself and the animals so you can see all four animals at once. Usually, 25 to 30 feet is a good distance from which to view the class. Become skilled in placing the classes from a distance, and handle the animals only to confirm your observations. It is a mistake to place a class only with your hands. An exception is market lambs, which are often placed on visual appraisal as well as on handling.
- X Three Angles** – Try to look at the class from the side, front, and rear views. Compare each animal to the others in the class and to the “ideal” animal that you have pictured in your mind.
- X Big Things First** – Always look for and analyze the good and bad characteristics of each animal in the major areas such as frame size, volume, condition, muscling, balance, structural correctness, movement, and breed character. Learn to study the animals carefully. Concentrate on the parts of the animal that yield the high-priced cuts. A keen judge of livestock is orderly and is never haphazard. Make your placings according to the big things, unless a pair of animals are very similar, causing you to analyze the minor differences between the animals.
- X Place the Class** – Once you have analyzed the important factors that go into placing a class, place the class. Mark your placing at the top of your notebook or reasons card, and begin taking notes. A more thorough discussion of note taking and reasons format is in the “Oral Reasons” section of this manual.
- X Close Inspection** – Usually, you will be given some time for close inspection of a class. When you are near the animals for close inspection or handling, simply confirm the decisions you made at a distance. If an animal appears different (or handles differently) from what it looked like from a distance and if the difference merits consideration, then change your placing. Close inspection is different for each species, so they will be dealt with separately.

Beef Cattle – During close inspection of beef cattle, you probably will not be permitted to handle breeding animals, but you may be allowed to handle animals in a market class. If you are permitted to handle the animals, move quietly and cautiously so you don’t excite or frighten the animals (See “Handling Market Steers”).

Sheep – During close inspection of sheep, you may or may not be permitted to handle breeding and market classes. Again, move quietly and cautiously so the animals do not become nervous or excited. A section in this manual deals with the preferred method of handling sheep (See “Handling Market Lambs”).

Swine – There are no predetermined guidelines for close inspection of swine because hogs are usually judged loose in a pen. At any time during the class, you may kneel and look at underlines, ear notches, or feet and legs. Make this part of your normal routine for judging pigs.

Stand Back and Take Notes – Even if it is not a reasons or questions class, write down a few notes on why you placed the class the way you did. If it is a reasons class or a class with questions, stand back from the class and write your notes for reasons. If you are unsure of something, either try to look at it again or omit it. If you are unsure and guess, you will probably be wrong. Try to be accurate and descriptive when writing notes, and remember what the animals look like.