

## REQUIREMENTS FOR THE LIVESTOCK JUDGING TEAM MEMBER

By Steven M. Jones  
Associate Professor – Animal Science

### Benefits of Competing on a Livestock Judging Team

1. Most of the master breeders down through purebred livestock history have been top judges in their own right. If your goal is to breed great livestock, it is imperative that you develop great judgment.
2. You will learn how to make accurate decisions and defend those decisions with logical reasons. Presenting oral reasons will train you to think on your feet and will help make a more effective speaker of you.
3. Judging work builds character and will make a better person of you. It instills confidence in those prone to be timid and humbles those who tend to be conceited.
4. Competing on a team affords you an opportunity to associate with future leaders of the livestock industry – young people with many the same goals and aspirations as yourself. Friends made at this time will often last a lifetime.

### What is Livestock Judging?

It consists of making a careful analysis of animals and of measuring them against a standard, commonly accepted as being ideal. Livestock judging has also been defined as a study of the relationship between form and function.

### Steps Required in Judging Livestock

1. **Information:** You must have a basic understanding of live animal and carcass anatomy, skeletal correctness, economic value of various body parts, breed character, sex character, soundness, plus many other pieces of information. In general, you must develop a mental image of the ideal for the species, breed and sex involved.
2. **Observation:** Proficient judging requires extremely keen powers of observation. Furthermore, these observations must be *complete* and *accurate* in every respect. You as a livestock judge may possess a correct mental image of the ideal and yet fail to recognize a good animal when you see one.

3. **Comparison:** The next step entails comparing each animal in a class against all the others. A judge must be able to balance the good and the bad features of each animal with those of the other animals and then select the one with the “most of the best.”
4. **Decision:** The final and perhaps most difficult step involves a decision on how the class ought to be placed. Many people have the necessary information and they may possess the ability to observe and compare, but they lack the skill and courage required to make the correct decision. A judge’s decision must not only be accurate, but it should be made within a reasonable length of time.

### HINTS ON JUDGING LIVESTOCK IN CONTESTS

1. Listen carefully to any instructions that are given concerning a class of animals. They may have an important bearing on how that class is placed. The same applies to any general instructions given prior to a judging contest.
2. Don’t waste time. Start on the class as soon as the first animal walks into the ring.
3. Make every look count. Develop a system of observation. Avoid repetition.
4. Try to get an overall impression of the class as soon as possible. On cattle and sheep classes, it may be necessary to situate yourself at a 45° angle with the class; in this way, you can obtain a partial view of the rear, side, and front of the animals.
5. If you cannot observe the class adequately where you are standing, then move to a better spot.
6. See the animals exactly as they are – not as you would like to see them. Don’t “read” anything into the class! Don’t play hunches! Don’t try to out-guess the official judges; place the class exactly as *you* think it should be placed.
7. Analyze each class and try to break it down into two pairs; or an easy top, easy bottom, and close middle pair; or a top pair, easy bottom, and logical third; etc.
8. If you recognize one or more of the animals in a class, do not let previous placings influence your judgment. You must realize that every class is different and that animals change with time (even within hours or minutes).
9. Depend entirely upon your own judgment. Don’t pay any attention to anything you hear someone else say about a class, with the exception of the officials or your instructors.
10. Try to have the class tentatively placed before very much time elapses. Otherwise, you may get caught short of time on a difficult class.
11. One of the worst things a judge can do is become rattled. If you get confused and nervous, stop, back away from the class a moment, and relax. Place the class on fundamentals; don’t become entangled in minor details.

12. Your first impression of a class is usually correct if it is the result of careful analysis.
13. Never talk or whisper to anyone while placing a class. Judging livestock requires complete concentration 100% of the time.
14. For general observation, keep plenty of distance between yourself and the animals – a minimum of 20 feet if possible. If the rest of the students push in too close, ask your instructor or group leader to move everyone back.
15. In handling cattle and sheep, devise a well organized system so that you do not waste time. Concentrate on what you are doing. When you leave a particular animal, you should know exactly what you have just handled.
16. Compile a good set of notes on each reason class. Notes are necessary in a contest where you have several reason classes (usually eight sets of oral reasons in collegiate contests and two to four in junior contests).
17. On reason classes, make certain the placing you turn in on your card agrees with your notes.
18. Always check your card before turning it in. Beware of turning in a blank card! Be sure the placing you have on your card is the one you want.
19. If there is any time lapse in a contest, do not let it go to waste! Either start looking at the next class or else go over your notes on previous classes. But if you are getting tired or nervous, relax for a moment.
20. After all the classes have been judged, start preparing for the oral reason session by reviewing your notes.
21. Never argue with an official judge even though you may not agree with his placing. On the other hand, questions asked in a spirit of learning are certainly permissible and encouraged. Always be a gentleman!
22. Nearly all students go into a slump one or more times during their judging careers. When this happens to you, don't become discouraged with yourself or bitter at your instructors. If you keep your wits and maintain the proper attitude, you will pull out of it.

## **GIVING REASONS**

### **Evaluating a Set of Reasons**

There are several schools of thought concerning style of reasons. Which style you use is probably not very important. The truly important factors to consider in evaluating a set of oral reasons are listed as follows:

1. Accuracy of statements.
2. Completeness. All important points must be brought out.

3. Ability to emphasize the most important differences between two animals.
4. A complete vocabulary of stockman-like terms.
5. Terminology appropriate to the class of animals under consideration.
6. Variation in the use of terms. Avoid too much repetition.
7. Use of correct grammar.
8. A delivery that is sincere, emphatic, and persuasive.
9. Clear enunciation.
10. Use of voice inflection for emphasis.
11. A modulation of the voice that is in keeping with the size of the room.
12. A logical reason organization that is easy for the listener to follow.
13. Good eye-to-eye contact.
14. Correct posture.
15. No distracting movements.

### **Organization of Reasons.**

There are two major styles of reasons: (1) giving admissions (grants) first within a pair; (2) giving admissions last within a pair. A third alternative is to use a combination of these two styles. Which style you choose is largely a matter of personal preference.

When going into detail on a pair of animals, there are two main methods of organizing that detail: (1) most important differences first, leaving the minor differences last; (2) anatomically – front to rear, or vice versa. Organizing a set of reasons anatomically is probably the easier method for a beginner to master; however, this system often lulls a student into giving “canned” sets of reasons. We prefer the method of giving the most important points first and putting the least important points at the end. Many students like to use a combination of these two methods, which is perfectly acceptable.

Following is the basic organizational outline that is often used. In this example, we shall assume that the placing on this class of Angus bulls is 3-1-4-2 and is probably the best alternative of all.

1. Introduce the class: “I placed this class of Angus bull 3-1-4- and 2.”
2. Introduce the top pair: “I placed 3 at the top of this class and over 1 because...”
3. Reasons for placing 3 over 1.
4. Admissions for 1 over 3.
5. Faults (criticisms) of 1, if any. *Only* the most glaring faults should be mentioned.
6. Introduce the second pair and give reasons for placing 1 over 4.
7. Admissions for 4 over 1.
8. Faults of 4, if any.
9. Introduce your bottom pair and give reasons for placing 4 over 2.
10. Admissions for 2 over 4.
11. Faults of 2.

### **Detailed Breakdown of a Set of Reasons**

Using the same class, we shall break a set of reasons down into detail in the following paragraphs.

1. After introducing the top pair, “I placed 3 at the top of this class and over 1,” complete the sentence by giving from two to four general reason why 3 was placed over 1.
  - a. For example: “...because 3 is a heavier-muscled, straighter-lined, more nicely balanced bull.”

- b. Do not use more than four terms in succession, because it is difficult for the listener to hear and evaluate all of them.
  - c. A great deal of care should be taken in developing a powerful opening statement for each pair. Like the lead sentence in a good new story, it should accurately summarize the main reasons for placing the higher animal over the one placed below him.
2. After giving your general opening statement on the top pair, go into detail on that pair.
  - a. Be specific. Don't deal in generalities after the opening statement. For example, stating that "3 is more correct on his legs than 1" is not specific enough. You should indicate what is wrong with the legs of 1. Also, you should point out whether it is the hind legs or front legs.
  - b. Your detail should be organized into about three or four sentences. If you are under three sentences, each sentence is probably too long. If you go over four sentences, your reasons will sound too choppy.
  - c. In a market class (steers, barrows or wethers), the final statement prior to admissions should deal with any advantages the higher animal may have in carcass cutout over the lower animal. If you are not sure of yourself, omit the carcass statement. Too many students get themselves into trouble by guessing on carcass cutout.
3. Following are a few phrases that may be used in introducing your grant statement.
  - a. "I will admit that..."
  - b. "I will grant that..."
  - c. "I will concede that..."
  - d. "However, I realize that..."
  - e. "However, I recognize..."
  - f. "On the other hand, I admit (grant, concede, etc.) that..."
  - g. Always choose a grant statement with "than" plus a number.
4. The fault statement should immediately follow the grant statement. For example: "I will admit that 1 is a stretchier, growthier bull that stands on more rugged bone. One is also more masculine about his front end than 3. But I fault (or criticize) 1 because he is droopy in his rum and sickle-hocked on his hind legs."
  - a. The word "fault" is usually preferred to "criticize."
  - b. Another method of faulting is to mention the fault when you are talking the details of 3 over 1. For example: "3 stands more correctly on his hind legs, faulting 1 for being sickle-hocked." When discussing underpinning, this is often the preferred way of handling a fault.
5. The next step is to introduce the middle pair as follows: "In regard to my middle pair, I placed 1 over 4 because 1 is a ..."
6. Then, go into detail on 1 over 4; give the admissions for 4 over 1; and give the faults of 4, if any.
7. Proceed to the bottom pair as follows: "Now, in coming to my bottom pair, I placed 4 over 2 because 4 is a..."
8. Always conclude the bottom pair with some faults of the bottom animal. For example: "But I fault 2 and placed him at the bottom of this class because he is a wasty-fronted, fine-boned bull that lacks the size and scale of the bulls I placed above him." You should always plan to fault your

bottom animal because he is bound to have a few definite weak points. However, many students make the mistake of being overly critical of their bottom animal.

9. It is not necessary to conclude your reasons with the statement: "For these reasons, I placed this class of Angus bulls 2-1-4-2."
  - a. If you lower your voice properly at the conclusion of your bottom pair, the listener will know you have finished.
  - b. However, many people are not able to do this correctly, so it is better for them to conclude with, "For these reasons..."

### **Presenting Oral Reasons**

1. Be prompt when your turn comes up on a set of reasons. However, when you get caught short between sets, ask the official for more time if you really need it. He may or may not give it to you.
2. Never carry your notes into the room.
3. Enter the room with an air of confidence but not cockiness.
4. Most officials will offer you your placing card. If so, take the card, thank the official, place the card behind your back and begin talking. (Some people prefer to hold the card out in front of them, which is perfectly acceptable.)
5. Don't stand too close to the official. Eight to ten feet is about right, depending upon the strength of your voice and size of the room.
6. Stand with your feet spread to about the width of your shoulders. Keep both hands behind your back unless you have been taught to hold your card out in front in one hand or the other.
7. Stand erect. Try to avoid leaning over too far as you talk.
8. Look the official squarely in the eye when you talk, or at least give him that impression. Above all, do not let your eyes wander.
9. Talk in a louder-than-conversational voice, but do not shout.
10. Try to talk with utmost conviction and sincerity.
11. Beware of talking too rapidly. A good set of reasons may be spoiled by too rapid a delivery, because the official cannot catch everything that is said.
12. Vary your delivery. Make your main points impressive and emphatic.
13. You may gesture slightly with your head. Any other body gestures or movements are distracting to the listener.

14. Use description sparingly. It is most effectively used in faulting or in emphasizing a strong point on an animal. Description may also be used in making a general statement about the entire class or two or three animals within the class.
15. Avoid mixing numbers.
16. When talking a close pair, it is important to give nearly as many advantages to the lower animal as to the one placed above him.
17. Through practice, you should eventually train yourself to “se” the animals as if they were actually in front of you while giving your reasons.
18. If you hold your card behind your back, never pull it out and refer to it after you have once started talking.
19. If you hold your card out in front of you, refrain from looking at it any more than is absolutely necessary. It is important to maintain as much eye contact as possible.
20. Always introduce your set of reasons with the name of the class exactly as it was given to you. Do not abbreviate names of breeds, such as “Hamp” for “Hampshire.”
21. In breeding classes, mention the name of the breed when talking about breed character. For example, “Two shows more Shorthorn character about her head...”
22. Look for identifying characteristics and use them in your reason. For example, “a white Shorthorn heifer” or “an off-belt Hampshire barrow.” This demonstrates to the official that you really saw the class.
23. Never exceed 2 minutes on a set of reasons. This is a rule in most judging contests.

### **A List of Objectionable Words and Phrases**

1. **“Number”**: Refrain from saying the word “number.” If the animal’s number is 4, then call him “4” just as if that were his name.
2. Avoid excessive use of **“he”** or **“she”**. The official may not know which animal you are referring to.
3. Never use the neuter pronoun, **“it”**. Every animal has a sex.
4. **“Better”**: This word is not specific enough.
5. **“Animal”** or **“individual”**: Instead, say steer, bull, barrow, ewe, etc.
6. **“Is a steer that is”**: For example: “4 is a steer that is thicker and heavier-musclcd.” This is too wordy. Instead say “4 is a thicker, heavier-musclcd steer.”
7. Use the words **“lacks”** and **“lacking”** sparingly. For example, “I fault 2 because he lacks muscling.” It would be more effective to take the direct route and say, “I fault 2 because he is light-musclcd.”

8. **"For being"**: Instead of saying, "I fault 2 for being light muscled," say, "I fault 2 because he is light muscled."
9. **"I would like to see"**: This is too wordy and informal. It sounds too much like an editorial.
10. **"Placing"**: Instead say, "I placed..."
11. **"Faulting"** or **"criticizing"**: Instead say, "I fault" or "I criticize...."
12. Beware of **words ending in "-ing,"** such as those just mentioned above. These are weak words.
13. **"Kind of"**: Instead of saying, "a stretcher kind of bull," say, "a stretcher bull."

### **Taking Notes on a Class**

1. Unless you are gifted with an unusual memory, good note taking is a must on reason classes.
2. A stenographer's spiral notebook measuring 6" x 8" is a good size to use. It is small enough to slip into most coat pockets. Purchase one that opens like a book, because this will permit you to fill up two pages per class without turning any pages.
3. As illustrated below, divide the left-hand page into four equal sections, one for each animal in the class. This page should be used to write down the distinguishing characteristics, strong points, weak points, etc., of each animal.
4. By drawing two horizontal lines with your pencil, divide the right-hand page into three equal sections, one for each pair. Then, run a vertical line, dividing this page into six sections. Allow slightly more room in the sections to the left of the vertical line because these are to be used to compare the higher animal over the one placed below him. The three smaller boxes are used for the admissions and faults within each of the three pairs.
5. Some students complain they do not have enough room on the right-hand page for all of the comparisons that must be made. If this is the case, two pages will have to be used to develop comparisons, and a third page used to write down descriptive statements about each animal.
6. In order to save time, it is wise to develop a system of abbreviating certain terms. For example:  $\frac{1}{4}$  = quarter; dr = droopy; mus = muscle; th = thicker; tw = twist; spr = spring; cl = cleaner; tr = trimmer; hvy = heavy; wa = wasty; str = straighter or stronger; ru = rump; sq = squarer; na = narrow; de = deeper; lt = light; carc = carcass; cr = crooked; ll = longer legged; upst = upstanding; fem = femininity; mas = masculinity; ch = chest; fr = front; pas = pasterns; ni = nipples; mi = middle; bal = balance; prom = prominent.