Using Performance Information in Livestock Judging

In livestock judging, it is very important to understand selection priorities, or the traits of economic importance in a particular species, class of livestock or situation. When selecting breeding stock, it is essential to know the following steps to arrive at the best ranking and justify your decision.

- **Understand the class description, situation, or scenario**
  - How are the selected animals being used?
  - What is their purpose?
  - How will their offspring be marketed?
  - Under what conditions are the animals expected to perform?

- **Incorporate information from the situation to aid in your decision making process**
  - What traits are important?
  - What are the selection priorities?

- **Evaluate the performance records**

- **Evaluate visual traits**

- **Decide on final rankings**

A production scenario will be given in livestock judging when classes consist of breeding stock with performance information. This scenario should depict the purpose and situation in which the animals will be utilized. Understanding the scenario is essential to accurately determine the selection emphasis in performance breeding classes.

Production situations are not always the same, in fact, most cases are somewhat different. Certain details of scenarios can have a strong bearing on selection criteria. In beef production, you should understand the impact of the following factors:

- bulls mated to virgin heifers versus mature cows
- supervision available during calving season versus limited labor
- limited versus abundant forage resources
- merchandising calves at weaning versus finishing
- rotational versus terminal sires
- *Bos Indicus* versus *Bos Taurus*
- Exotic breeds versus British breees
- mature cow size:
  - Below 1,000 lbs. = small
  - 1,000-1,200 lbs. = moderate
  - Above 1,200 lbs. = large
Because swine production predominantly occurs in confinement, there is less variation in the production environment. Nevertheless, scenarios will still define the selection priorities in swine breeding classes. For example:

- Lean value marketing versus feeder pig production
- Rotational versus terminal sires
- Total versus partial confinement
- Commercial farrow-to-finish versus purebred