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Livestock Judging Contest "How To" ... Guide to Running a Local Livestock Judging Contest

Have you ever thought about having a livestock judging contest at your county fair? Follow the steps laid out in this document to guide you through successfully running your own livestock judging contest.

General Supplies:

- 4 beef cattle about the same age
- 4 sheep
- 4 hogs
- Possibly 4 meat goats depending on county goals
- Penning/fencing materials adequate for various species
- Official to determine correct placing of each class
- Cards to write placings on (download from http://4h.msue.msu.edu/resources/judging_cards)
- Pencils
- Calculator
- System for tabulating scores
- Tabulation sheet or computer program
- Stopwatch or clock
- PA system
- Awards for top placing contestants

Some important concepts are:

- Animals are numbered from left to right.
- The animal on the far left is number one.
- Numbers for hogs can be done with paint chalk or with skin colors, example – lightest (1) to darkest (4) or reverse
- If moving livestock with handlers, make sure to stay in the same order. Consider wearing numbers (1-4) to help participants.
- Participants should be instructed to stay at least ten feet from the animals at all times, unless instructed otherwise.
- If judging market lambs and the owners have allowed them to be handled, the lambs need to be handled in order. Starting with the first lamb (lamb 1 on the far left), the contestant has fifteen seconds to handle the lamb. A volunteer should be there saying switch every fifteen seconds. Once the contestant has handled lamb 1, they move to lamb 2 and repeat this until they have handled all four lambs. Once a contestant has handled the lambs once, they are not to touch the lambs again and must move back the 10 feet to allow others to view the lambs.
- Tabulating the results is sometimes confusing. For additional information about tabulation, utilize the Utah State University Extension *Scoring Livestock Judging Classes* document: <http://extension.usu.edu/cyberlivestock/files/uploads/Scoring%20Livestock%20Judging%20Classes.pdf>.
- For a free online calculator to determine placings scores, utilize: <https://www.judgingcard.com/Resources/Hormel.aspx>.

Possible classes may include:

Beef - Market steers, breeding heifers, bulls, bred heifers, prospect beef

Sheep - Market lambs, yearling ewes, rams, ewe lambs

Swine - Market hogs, gilts, boars

Goats - Market goats

Before the contest begins:

- 1 - Pass out placings cards, one per participant per class being judged.
- 2 - Instruct contestants to write their name on each card, age (if awards are broken by age) and the name of each class (one class per card).
- 3 - Instruct the contestants on how to mark their cards so that they only mark one placing.
- 4 - Instruct participants that there is no talking to other contestants until the contest is complete. If they have questions, they should ask the people coordinating the contest.

Judging Beef Cattle:

- 1 - Select four animals that are similar in size or age depending if the class is based on market or breeding cattle.
- 2 - Gather all four animals in one area so that they can be viewed. Use one of the following options:
 - A. Create a secure pen to contain all four animals loose at one time. One volunteer may be needed to move the animals so that participants can view each animal.
 - B. Use a location that the four animals can be tied up so that contestants can have at least a rear and side view of each animal.
 - C. Seek four volunteers and have them hold the four animals in a line how they would be held if the animal was being shown. Volunteers should have show sticks and be setting up the feet to the best of their ability and the animals' cooperativeness.
- 3 - If in a pen, participants can stand outside the pen. If being viewed tied or on the halter, make sure participants stay at least ten feet away from the animals.
- 4 - Allow contestants ten minutes to view the animals.
- 5 - At the conclusion of the ten minutes, have contestants turn in the correct specie card, with their placing on it.
- 6 - Once all cards are turned in or at the conclusion of the contest, have the official explain why he or she placed the class that particular way. This helps add to the learning experience when contestants are able to evaluate their own placing and again critique the livestock.

Judging Sheep:

- 1 - Select four animals that are similar in size, age, or weight depending if the class is based on market or breeding sheep.
- 2 - Gather all four animals in one area so that they can be viewed. Use one of the following options:
 - A. Create a secure pen to contain all four animals loose at one time. One volunteer may be needed to move the animals so that participants can view each animal.
 - B. If they are market lambs and the owners have approved them to be handled, there are two options.
 1. Seek four volunteers and have them hold the four animals in a line how they would be held if being shown. Volunteers should set the feet up to the best of

their ability and the animals' cooperativeness. Volunteers should not brace the animal when they are being handled.

2. If available, put all four animals in a metal or wood rack created to display the animals.
- 3 - If in a pen, participants can stand outside the pen. If being viewed, held or in a stand, make sure participants stay at least ten feet away from the animals.
- 4 - Allow contestants ten minutes to view the animals. If a market lamb class, the contestants should be allowed to handle the animals after four minutes have elapsed. For handling, each contestant should be allowed fifteen seconds per lamb. Once the contestants have handled all four lambs, he/she should step back to continue judging the class.
- 5 - At the conclusion of the ten minutes, have contestants turn in the correct specie card, with their placing on it.
- 6 - Once all cards are turned in or at the conclusion of the contest, have the official explain why he or she placed the class that particular way. This helps add to the learning experience when contestants are able to evaluate their own placing and again critique the livestock.

Judging Swine:

- 1 - Select four animals that are similar in size, age or weight depending if the class is based on market or breeding hogs.
- 2 - Gather all four animals in one area so that they can be viewed.
- 3 - Create a secure pen to contain all four animals at one time. Make sure to have one volunteer in the pen to prevent fights and to move the hogs so that participants can view each hog.
- 4 - Contestants should stand outside the pen and be allowed ten minutes to view the hogs.
- 5 - At the conclusion of the ten minutes, have contestants turn in the correct specie card, with their placing on it.
- 6 - Once all cards are turned in or at the conclusion of the contest, have the official explain why he or she placed the class that particular way. This helps add to the learning experience when contestants are able to evaluate their own placing and again critique the livestock.

Judging Market Goats:

Follow the same instructions as market lambs with observation and handling times.

Adaptations and Extension:

- 1 - Consider having the contestants answer questions (5 to 10) about each class. To do this, have the questions written ahead of time and have contestants turn their back to the class and write their responses on the back of their cards before turning them in.
- 2 - For more advanced contestants, allow participants to give oral reasons to defend their placings and improve their communication skills.
- 3 - Have a set plan for breaking ties in awards. Example: Overall questions/oral reasons score breaks a placing tie
- 4 - To increase the size of the contest, have more than one class of each species.
- 5 - Try and make awards presentation public, before the livestock sale could be a good time.