



Livestock Show Ring Judging Procedure

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Introduction

The use of live animal evaluation is practiced most often in the pen, corral, pasture or sales ring. However, there are times when live animal evaluation is conducted in a show ring where an official is asked to rank individuals on merit as a breeding or market animal. The intent of this circular is to assist the livestock judge and show officials to make a livestock show function as efficiently and effectively as possible. The interests of both the exhibitors and spectators should be considered when planning and staging a livestock event.

Types of Livestock Shows

The type of show may range from a local event to a national show. It may include breeding, market, performance, or carcass classes, progeny or herd groups or other types of events. The judge should ask for and receive a premium book prior to the show and be familiar with the show classifications. Most 4-H and FFA shows have a standard procedure for classes and premiums. All major breed associations have an official class breakdown for their breed. These should be listed in the premium book.

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When showmanship judging is a part of the show, the judge should be familiar with the particular rules that apply to that event. The rules often vary by county, state or specie.

All shows need to have competent people assisting to make the event function properly. This includes a judge, a ring steward, a clerk, an announcer, personnel to line up incoming classes and a person to award ribbons and trophies. Larger shows need to provide areas and backdrops for media use.

Responsibilities of the Judge

A judge is generally selected to officiate a show well in advance of the event. Selection is based on expertise in the livestock industry and on personal integrity when dealing with people. It becomes the responsibility of a judge to prepare for the event both mentally and physically.

To minimize controversy, the judge should limit his contact with exhibitors prior to and during the show. A friendly visit with an exhibitor might well be construed as favoritism by someone not included in the conversation.

To do the best job possible, a judge should arrive at the show early and be well rested. Show management should be informed of travel arrangements and arrival times. The judge should check in with the proper officials a half-hour before the start of the show so show officials will not have to worry about the arrival of the judge. Also, this time gives the judge an opportunity to focus on the upcoming show for a few minutes. He or she should check the general conditions of the judging arena for smoothness and lighting. Looking at livestock into direct sunlight should be avoided.

Responsibilities of the Ring Steward

The ring steward is very instrumental to the success or failure of a show. This position of responsibility requires a person that is knowledgeable about show ring procedures and about livestock psychology. This person is in the ring to assist both the judge and the exhibitor.

A judge should not have to direct the movement of the livestock when judging a class. When an exhibitor needs assistance moving or controlling

livestock, it is the responsibility of the ring steward to help where needed. The ring steward should be especially aware of the exhibitors and the judge and not get in the way of either. The ring steward should not follow or visit with the judge while in the ring. He or she should avoid leaning on the fence visiting with the spectators while the show is in progress. Basically, the responsibility of the ring steward is to assist the judge and the exhibitors in the judging arena in the least conspicuous manner.

Protocol in the Judging Arena

The judge should consult with the ring steward before the show to outline the procedure desired for working and lining up the classes. The procedure used will vary between shows because of differences in facilities (location of entrance, spectators, P.A. system, etc.). The judge, the exhibitors, and the spectators all need to be considered.

The show should progress rapidly, avoiding delays. The show management is responsible for making sure classes are ready when called. The judge regulates the time required for judging and discussion of the class. The judge should view animals as they enter the ring; this helps assess the quality of the class. The normal time for judging a class is 1 to 1.5 minutes per head if there are eight to 20 head per class and somewhat longer time per head in smaller classes. A judge that works slowly makes for a boring show for the spectators and a long show day for the exhibitors.

Some judges prefer to rank classes from last to first. This procedure takes additional time and appears to spectators and exhibitors that the winners are chosen by default and not merit. When the class has been ranked the first time, the judge should review the class and make any final switches between pairs. In a large class, the top three to five animals can be re-evaluated again before making the final placing. When the final placing is complete the judge should briefly discuss the class to the exhibitors and the spectators. Comments should be concise, accurate, in proper grammar and with a minimum of criticism of the animals and exhibitors. It is not necessary to conduct a seminar on the livestock industry while on the microphone.

While placing the class, the judge should not lean on the fence, converse with others or consult the ring steward. A judge should conduct himself or herself in a professional manner and dress accordingly.

Beef Cattle

The animals should initially be lined up side by side in a line facing either the center or the outside of the ring. The spectators will have a

better view of the class if the cattle face the center of the ring. The judge should walk behind the class from left to right, around the front of the class, then, if handling the class for condition differences, start at the head of the class.

Cattle should be handled while they are standing side by side as there will be less movement of the cattle and fewer steps for the judge. Handle the animals from either the right or left side by walking between every other animal. It is not necessary to individually handle breeding cattle and some judges may choose not to handle all the market animals in a class.

When the judge has handled the class, the cattle should be circled past the judge. He or she should be positioned by the last animal in the line up. The first animal handled should be started down the front of the line up as the judge finishes handling the last animal. The cattle may continue to be circled once or twice around the ring and then stopped, facing head to tail along the fence or the center of the ring. From the side view, the judge then places the class by requesting the animals to be brought to the original location, positioned side by side in the desired placing order of first to last place. When the animals are standing side by side, the judge should walk down the class and make any final switches between pairs. In a large class, the top three to five animals can be circled in a small area at the left end of the arena and again lined up head to tail before making the final placing. (see diagrams 1-7)

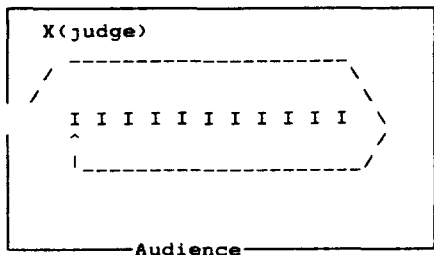
Dairy Cattle

Animals enter the ring and circle in a clockwise direction. Judges differ on how to handle the class. Some will move cattle into place while the class is being led around the ring. Others will have the class stop and then select the animals. The ring steward and judge should agree on the most advantageous place to stand the first place animal. Position of the audience, opportunity to parade the class in view of the audience and convenience to all should be considered when choosing the place in the ring to line up the class. (see diagrams 8-11)

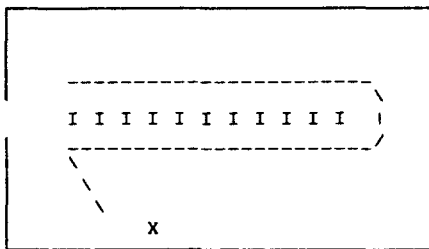
Many judges will bring the top three to eight animals into the center of the ring for a thorough examination before making final placings. They will move the animals from this "select" group into line according to placings.

A judge will usually take a final look by walking around the class, starting from the first place animal, walking down the front of the animals, up behind the animals and either make final place changes or indicate to the clerk that the placing is final.

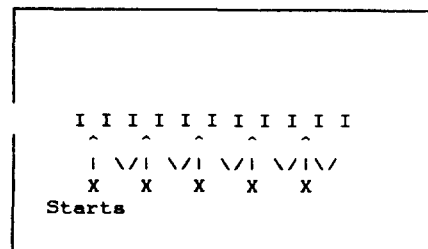
Most judges will handle udders in the milking classes to detect any obvious scar tissue in the udder.



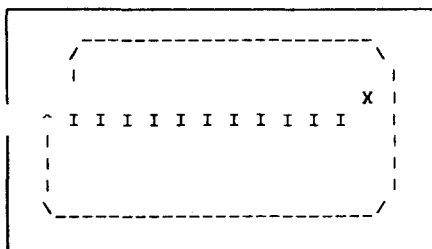
1 Class enters ring



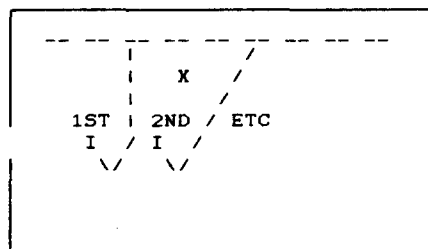
2 Judge views rear and front



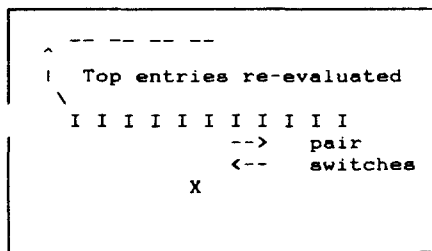
3 Judge handles class



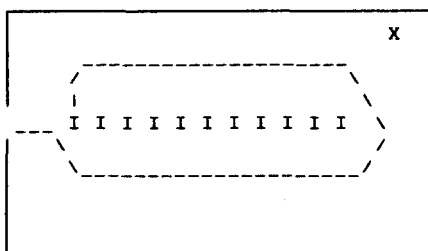
4 Animals circle once or twice



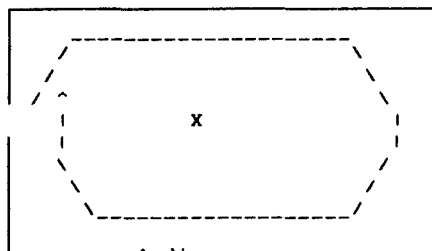
5 From side view, ranking is made



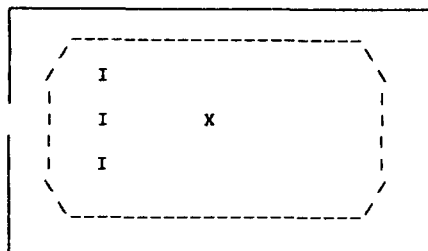
6 Final rank is made



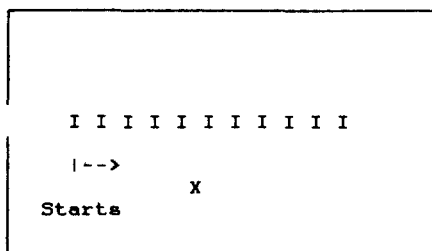
7 Class exit as comments are made



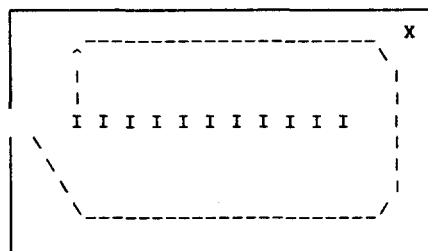
8 Class enters ring



9 Evaluation of top animals



10 Final placing



11 Animals parade out of ring

The clerk and ring steward should visit with the judge concerning any special classes and/or awards that are unique to that particular show. The judge should be advised of the method used to select best udder in each cow class. These considerations will help prevent confusion and/or hesitation on the part of breeders, clerk and ring steward.

Sheep

Show ring procedures for sheep begin by having the animals line up side by side in the center of the ring. The judge should make an initial evaluation of the class by walking behind the animals. Each sheep should be handled starting at one end of the class (preferably the left). Handling should include checking the mouth on all sheep plus the testicles on rams. In the case of yearling ewes, it is also a good idea to check udders for lumps.

Wool breeds will require more time because of fleece examination. Examination of wool is usually done at three locations: (1) the shoulder, midway down the body; (2) the belly, midway between the fore and rear flanks and (3) the stifle area.

Following the handling, the judge should walk around and view the fronts of all animals (some judges prefer to check mouths at this time). Next the sheep should be moved along the outside of the ring in a circle so that a side view of each sheep is possible. From this view, the judge should make his or her initial placings by bringing them into the center of the ring and lining them up side by side. From the lineup, switches can be made or the top few can be pulled out and re-evaluated before the final placings are made.

Swine

Show ring procedures for swine are somewhat different from other classes of livestock because hogs are not under the same type of control. The

lack of complete control of the animals by the exhibitors can be confusing to the judge, plus hogs will not stay in the same place very long. The judge has to identify the animal by a unique feature or associate the exhibitor with the animal in a like manner.

When a class enters the ring, the judge should try to view each hog separately. If the show has a holding area, each animal should be move from it across the ring individually. This allows the judge a clear view of each hog. Individual holding pens adjacent to the show ring provide the best situation for the judge as hogs can be penned as they are placed, then reworked before the final awards are given.

The practice of sorting and excusing the bottom of the class in large classes is common in many shows. Shows that utilize blue, red and white award groups allow the opportunity to categorize animals into a ribbon group and then excuse the white and red ribbon exhibits without ranking them. The top of the class is generally the blue ribbon group, and most times the judge will be asked to rank them first to last. Open class shows normally limit the number of premiums. Keeping back three to five more hogs than the number of premiums and excusing the remainder is good procedure. The judge may prefer to make a short statement for exhibitors that have been excused after completion of the initial judging. The judge should make constructive comments that will benefit future participation.

Comment

Livestock shows are competitive events. Exhibitors and spectators have a very real interest in who wins or looses. Professionalism on the part of the judge, the show management, and all the exhibitors makes winning more meaningful and not only softens the disappointment of not winning but offers a positive atmosphere for learning.