

FIVE EASY STEPS TO

PREPARING EFFECTIVE REASONS

FOR DAIRY CATTLE JUDGING CONTESTS

I. FOR JUNIOR MEMBERS DEVELOPING STRONG WRITTEN REASONS

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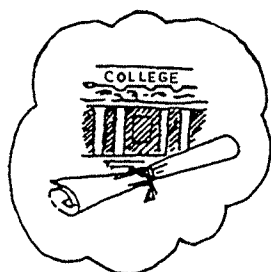
FIVE EASY STEPS TO PREPARING EFFECTIVE REASONS FOR DAIRY CATTLE JUDGING CONTESTS

Introduction

Dairy cattle judging is one of the best learning opportunities we can give youth. It helps them put what they learn at school to work. They use science to learn the parts of the cow. They use thinking skills to compare four cows. Plus, they must decide which one is the best. They also practice English skills by writing short reports. These reports tell why they picked one cow over another.

The student may use these skills in many ways:

- > in contests, where good scores build self-esteem,
- > in 4H or FFA, where better animal selection helps improvement,
- > in the future, where communication skills increase success.



What will this booklet teach you?

Putting together a set of written reasons is not easy. You must first know what to look for when placing a class. Second, you must learn the basics of preparing a set of written reasons. Most important, you must practice, practice, practice. Practice will help you become good and gain self-confidence. Remember: Practice makes perfect.

This booklet will tell how to put together a set of written reasons. To receive high scores on reasons you must first learn the parts of the cow. Using the correct terms for parts of the cow will improve your scores. Next, you must learn how to use the time you are given wisely. Good note-taking skills and grammar skills are a must. Last but most important, you have to be able to stay focused during a contest. These keys to success are important for top-scoring reasons.

Why did we write this booklet?

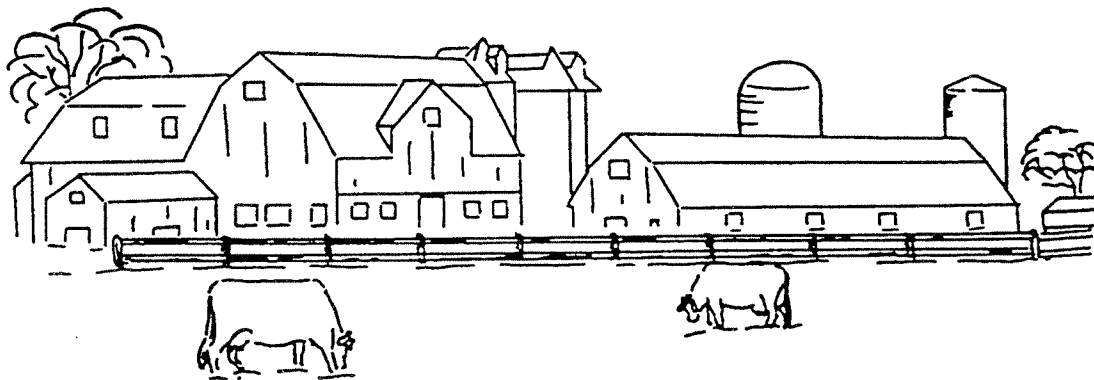
The dairy judging program has grown in Florida recently. It has happened since we started using the style taught in this booklet. Florida judging teams are now placing at the top of most contests in reason scores. Within Florida, a wide range in reasons' scores has been seen. Contestants who receive this training are scoring higher than those who have not. The goal of this booklet is to improve reason scores by reaching more students.

Who contributed to this booklet?

Several people have helped write and edit sections of this booklet. Jewel and Jay Giesy, Debra Summerall, Debbie Clements, Matt Walter, and the entire 1993 national winning 4H team of Christy Betts, Christa Carlson, Chris Holcomb and Renee Mathe, all deserve credit and our thanks.

Other Recommended References

The most commonly used texts on the subject of dairy cattle judging are "Dairy Cattle Judging Made Easy" by Dr. Dennis Hartman; and "Dairy Cattle Judging Techniques" by Dr. George W. Trimberger, which is now in its fourth edition.



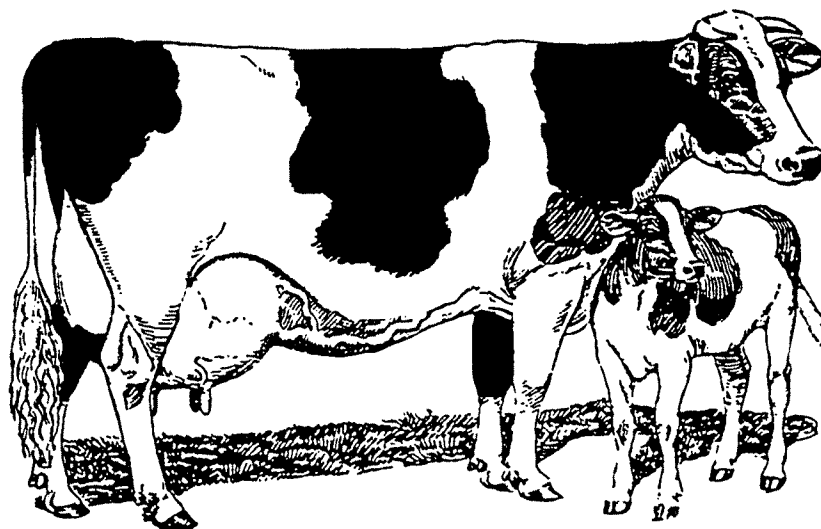
STEP #1. UNDERSTAND THE BASICS

The scorecards

Many students learn to judge dairy in practice sessions. Some learn in workshops and clinics. Some even start in contests. Most learn without knowing the scorecards. We have found that many judges are not familiar with both scorecards. Yes, there is a heifer scorecard. Many have read the scorecards, but do not understand them. This causes them to have problems correctly placing classes. All students should know the scorecards early in their learning. On the next two pages are copies of the PDCA Dairy Cow Unified Score Card and the Dairy Heifer Score Card.

Terminology

First, you must learn a phrase for each of the five major areas on the scorecard. Memorize them at first. Each time you use a phrase, it will become more familiar. Look at page 12 for examples of basic phrases. The use of correct terms is very important.



DAIRY HEIFER SCORE CARD

FRAME

40

Backline - *straight and strong; loin broad, strong and level with chine an rump; rump long, wide with pin bones slightly lower than hip bones; tail head refined, blending smoothly with the rump; thurls.. set high and wide.*

Stature - *tall and upstanding in consideration of age. Height at withers and hips should be similar.*

Front End - *indicating strong constitution with dairy refinement. Shoulder blades set smoothly and tightly with the neck and body. Chest deep, wide and strong.*

Breed Characteristics - *see Unified Dairy Cow Scorecard.*

DAIRY CHARACTER

20

Emphasizing angularity, sharpness, openness, and cleanness with strength and freedom of coarseness.

Withers - *sharp, with vertebrae and chine defined.*

Ribs - *wide apart, flat and long.*

Thighs - *flat and free of excess flesh, well apart providing ample space for udder development.*

Neck - *long and lean with throat and dewlap free of excess flesh.*

FEET AND LEGS

30

Emphasizing ease of mobility through correctness in leg structure with strength of pasterns and soundness of feet.

Feet - *steep angle and deep heel with short, well-rounded, closed toes.*

Rear Legs; Rear View - *straight, wide apart with feet squarely placed.* **Side View** - *a moderate set (angle) to the hock.* **Hocks** - *cleanly molded, free from coarseness and puffiness with adequate flexibility.*

Pasterns - *short and strong with some flexibility. Slightly more emphasis placed on Feet than when evaluating this breakdown.*

BODY CAPACITY

10

Corresponding size to scale of animal, providing adequate capacity for large intakes of forage. Consideration given to period of gestation.

Body - *long, deep and wide with depth and spring of rib increasing toward the rear. Flanks, deep.*

Chest - *strong with wide floor and well sprung fore ribs. Crops full.*

MAMMARY DEVELOPMENT

0

The heifer should have four teats that hang plumb (extra teats removed). It should also have adequate folds of skin to show promise of udder development with due consideration given to stage of gestation if bred.

A slight to serious discrimination should be made when a teat or teats is too long, strut widely, or are poorly spaced. An enlarged quarter or udder that is fat and over developed is also objectionable and should be discriminated against.

DAIRY COW UNIFIED SCORE CARD

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Breed characteristics should be considered in the application of this score card

MAJOR TRAIT DESCRIPTIONS

There are five major classification traits on which a classifier bases a cow's score. Each trait is broken down into body parts to be looked at and ranked.

1) Frame - 15%

The skeletal parts of the cow, with the exception of feet and legs, are evaluated. Listed in priority order, the descriptions of the traits to be considered are as follows:

Rump - long and wide throughout with pin bones slightly lower than hip bones. Thurls need to be wide apart and centrally placed between hip bones and pin bones. The tailhead is set slightly above and neatly between pin bones, and the tail is free from coarseness. The vulva is nearly vertical. **Stature** - height, including length in the leg bones. A long bone pattern throughout the body structure is desirable. Height at the withers and hips should be relatively proportionate. **Front End** - adequate constitution with front legs straight, wide apart and squarely placed. Shoulder blades and elbows need to be firmly set against the chest wall. The crops should have adequate fullness. **Back** - straight and strong; the loin - broad, strong, and nearly level. **Breed Characteristics** - overall style and balance. Head should be feminine, clean-cut, slightly dished and broad muzzle, large open nostrils and a strong jaw is desirable.

Rump Stature, and Front End receive primary consideration when evaluating Frame.

2) Dairy Character - 20%

The physical evidence of milking ability is evaluated. Major consideration is given to general openness and angularity while maintaining strength, flatness of bone and freedom from coarseness. Consideration is given to stage of lactation. Listed in priority order, the descriptions of the traits to be considered are as follows:

Ribs - wide apart. Rib bones are wide, flat, deep, and slanted toward the rear. **Thighs** - lean, incurving to flat, and wide apart from the rear. **Withers** - sharp with the chine prominent. **Neck** - long, lean, and blending smoothly into shoulders. A clean-cut throat, dewlap, and brisket are desirable. **Skin** - thin, loose, and pliable.

3) Body Capacity - 10%

The volumetric measurement of the capacity of the cow (length x depth x width) is evaluated with age taken into consideration. Listed in priority order the descriptions of the traits to be considered are as follows:

Barrel - long, deep, and wide. Depth and spring of rib increase toward the rear with a deep flank. **Chest** - deep and wide floor with wellsprung fore ribs blending into the shoulders.

The Barrel receives primary consideration when evaluating Body Capacity.

4) Feet and Legs - 15%

Feet and rear legs are evaluated. Evidence of mobility is given major consideration. Listed in priority order, the descriptions of the traits to be considered are as follows:

Feet - steep angle and deep heel with sort, well-rounded closed toes. **Rear Legs: Rear View** - straight, wide apart with feet squarely placed. **Side View** - a moderate set (angle) to the hock. **Hocks** - cleanly molded, free from coarseness and puffiness with adequate flexibility. **Pasterns** - short and strong with some flexibility.

Slightly more emphasis placed on Feet than on Rear Legs when evaluating this breakdown.

5) Udder - 40%

The udder traits are the most heavily weighted. Major consideration is given to the traits that contribute to high milk yield and a long productive life. Listed in priority order, the descriptions of the traits to be considered are as follows:

Udder Depth - moderate depth relative to the hock with adequate capacity and clearance. Consideration is given to lactation number and age.

Teat Placement - squarely place under each quarter, plumb and properly spaced from side and rear views.

Rear Udder - wide and high, firmly attached with uniform width from top to bottom and slightly rounded to udder floor.

Udder Cleft - evidence of a strong suspensory ligament indicated by adequately defined halving.

Fore Udder - firmly attached with moderate length and ample capacity.

Teats - cylindrical shape and uniform size with medium length and diameter.

Udder Balance and Texture - should exhibit an udder floor that is level as viewed from the side. Quarters should be evenly balanced; soft pliable and well collapsed after milking.

BREED CHARACTERISTICS

Except for differences in color, size, and head character, all breeds are judged on the same standards as outlined in the Unified Score Card. If any animal is registered by one of the dairy breed associations, no discrimination against color or color pattern is to be made.

AYRSHIRE

Strong and robust, showing constitution and vigor, symmetry, style and balance throughout, and characterized by strongly attached, evenly balanced, well-shaped udder.

HEAD-clean cut, proportionate to body; broad muzzle with large, open nostrils, strong jaw; large bright eyes; forehead, broad and moderately dishd; bridge of nose straight; ears medium size and alertly carried.

COLOR-light to deep cherry red, mahogany, brown, or a combination of any of these colors with white, or white alone, distinctive red and white markings preferred.

SIZE-a mature cow in milk should weigh at least 1200 lbs.

HOLSTEIN

Rugged, feminine qualities in an alert cow possessing Holstein size and vigor.

HEAD-clean cut, proportionate to body; broad muzzle with large, open nostrils, strong jaw; large bright eyes; forehead, broad and moderately dishd; bridge of nose straight; ears medium size and alertly carried.

COLOR-black and white or red and white markings clearly defined.

SIZE-a mature cow in milk should weigh a minimum of 1500 lbs.

MILKING SHORTHORN

Strong and vigorous, but not coarse.

HEAD-clean cut, proportionate to body; broad muzzle with large, open nostrils, strong jaw; large bright eyes; forehead, broad and moderately dishd; bridge of nose straight; ears medium size and alertly carried.

COLOR-red or white or any combination (No black markings allowed)

SIZE-a mature cow should weigh 1400 lbs.

BROWN SWISS

Strong and vigorous, but not coarse. Size and ruggedness with quality desired. Extreme refinement undesirable.

HEAD-clean cut, proportionate to body; broad muzzle with large, open nostrils, strong jaw; large bright eyes; forehead, broad and slightly dishd; bridge of nose straight; ears medium size and alertly carried.

COLOR-solid brown varying from very light to dark. Muzzle is black encircled by a mealy colored ring, and the tongue, switch and hooves are black.

SIZE-a mature cow in milk should weigh 1500 lbs.

GUERNSEY

Size and strength, with quality and character desired.

HEAD-clean cut, proportionate to body; broad muzzle with large, open nostrils, strong jaw; large bright eyes; forehead, broad and slightly dishd; bridge of nose straight; ears medium size and alertly carried.

COLOR-a shade of fawn with white markings throughout clearly defined. When other points are equal, clear (buff) muzzle will be favored over a smoky or black muzzle.

SIZE-a mature cow in milk should weigh at least 1150 lbs.

JERSEY

Sharpness with strength indicating productive efficiency.

HEAD-proportionate to stature showing refinement and well chiseled bone structure. Face slightly dishd with dark eyes that are well set.

COLOR-some shade of fawn with or without white markings.

Muzzle is black encircled by a light colored ring, and the tongue and switch may be either white or black.

SIZE-a mature cow in milk should weigh about 900 lbs.

FACTORS TO BE EVALUATED

The degree of discrimination assigned to each defect is related to its function and heredity. The evaluation of the defect shall be determined by the breeder, the classifier or the judge, based on the guide for discrimination and disqualifications given below.

HORNS

No discrimination for horns.

EYES

1. Blindness in one eye: *Slight discrimination*
2. Cross or bulging eyes: *Slight discrimination*
3. Evidence of blindness: *Slight to serious discrimination.*
4. Total blindness: *Disqualification.*

WRY FACE

Slight to serious discrimination.

CROPPED EARS

Slight discrimination.

PARROT JAW

Slight to serious discrimination.

SHOULDERS

Winged: *Slight to serious discrimination.*

TAIL SETTING

Wry tail or other abnormal tail settings: *Slight to serious discrimination.*

CAPPED HIP

No discrimination unless effects mobility.

LEGS AND FEET

1. Lameness-apparently permanent and interfering with normal function: *Disqualification.*
Lameness-apparently temporary and not affecting normal function: *Slight discrimination*
2. Evidence of crampy hind legs: *Serious discrimination.*
3. Evidence of fluid in hocks: *Slight discrimination.*
4. Weak pasterns: *Slight to serious discrimination.*
5. Toe out: *Slight discrimination.*

UDDER

1. Lack of defined having: *Slight to serious discrimination.*
2. Udder definitely broken away in attachment: *Serious discrimination.*
3. A weak udder attachment: *Slight to serious discrimination.*
4. Blind quarter: *Disqualification.*
5. One or more light quarters, hard spots in udder, obstruction in teat (spider): *Slight to serious discrimination.*

6. Side leak: *Slight discrimination.*

7. Abnormal milk (bloody, clotted, watery): *Possible discrimination.*

LACK OF SIZE

Slight to serious discrimination.

EVIDENCE OF SHARP PRACTICE (Refer to PDCA Code of Ethics)

1. Animals showing signs of having been tampered with to conceal faults in conformation ant to misrepresent the animal's soundness: *Disqualification.*
2. Uncalved heifers showing evidence of having been milked: *Slight to serious discrimination.*

TEMPORARY OF MINOR INJURIES

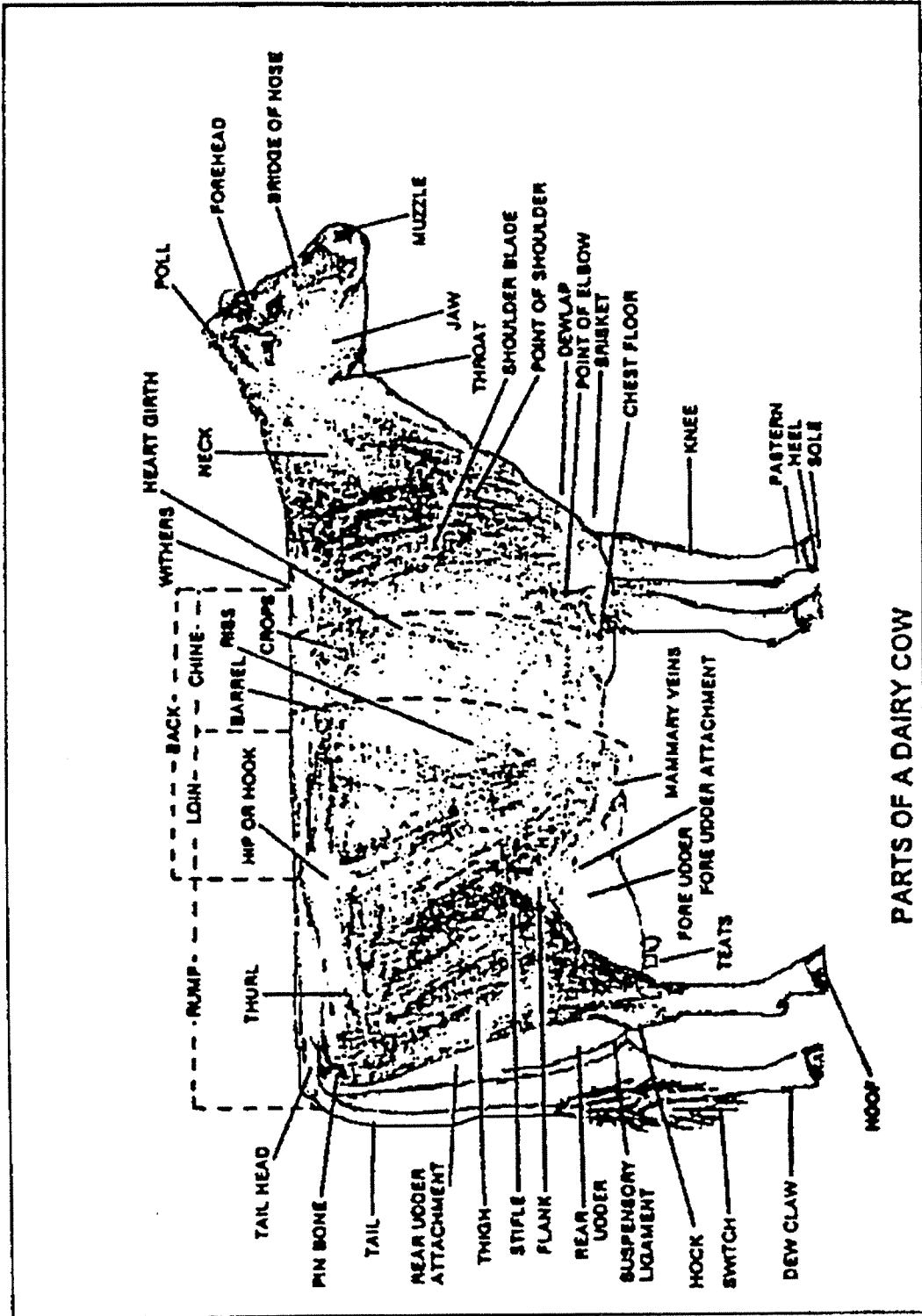
Blemishes or injuries of a temporary character not affecting animal's usefulness: *Slight to serious discrimination.*

OVERCONDITIONED

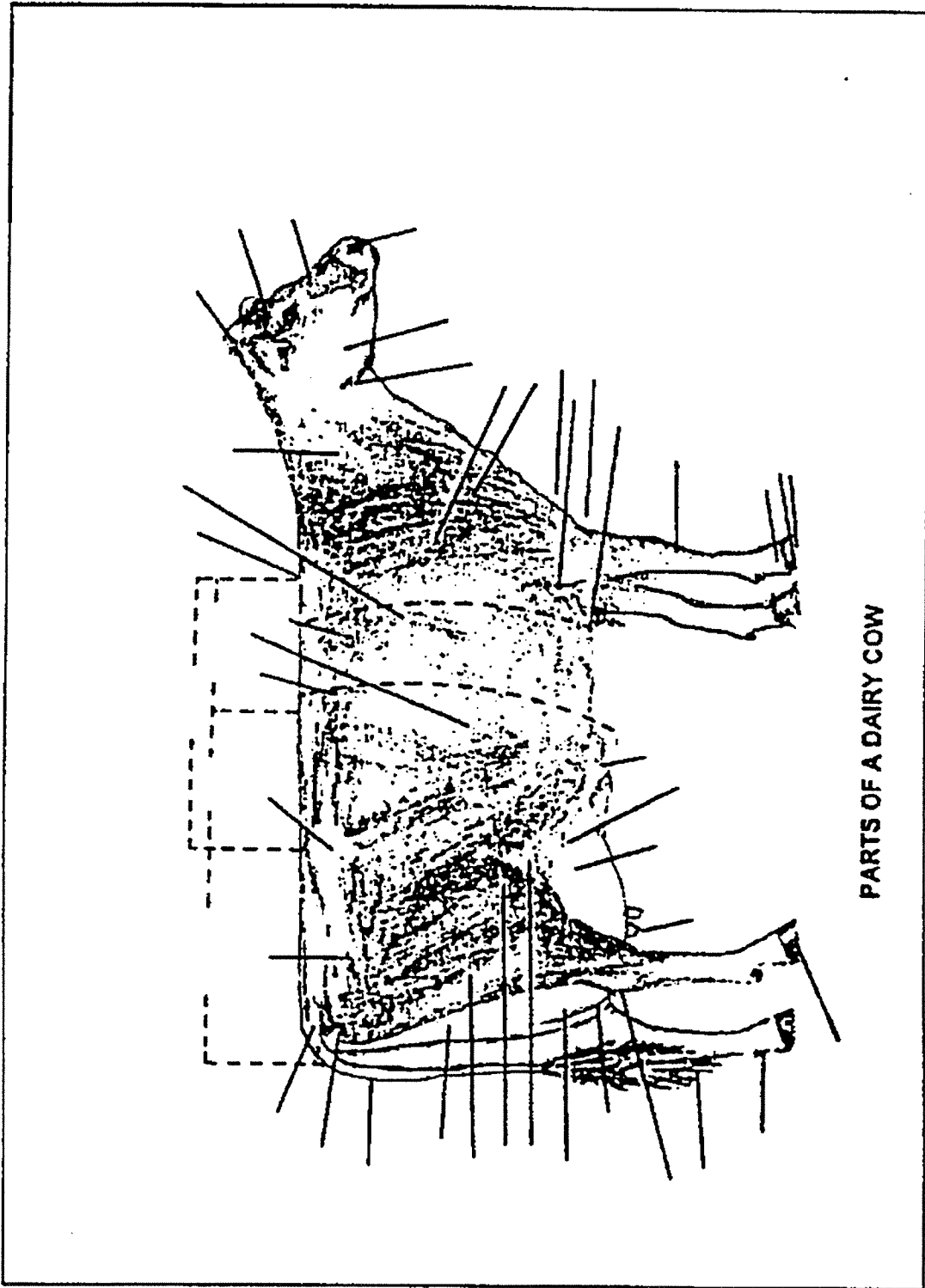
Slight to serious discrimination.

FREEMARTIN HEIFERS

Disqualification.



PARTS OF A DAIRY COW



PARTS OF A DAIRY COW

STEP 2. DEVELOP CONSISTENT PROCEDURES

Use time effectively



Develop a timetable. Most reasons classes give 20 minutes to get everything done. You must place the class, take notes and prepare the reasons. Using your time wisely is important. It is best if you think about only one task at a time. You should allow yourself 5 minutes to place the animals. When you are comfortable with 5 minutes, try placing in under 3 minutes. If you can place the class in 3 minutes, you will have a lot of time to write your reasons.

Next, prepare your notes for the class during the next 5 minutes. To save time, you should have a set of symbols or a shorthand method for recording your notes. Below are examples of abbreviations. Only use half of your time to place the cows and prepare notes.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

TL: TOPLINE

S+S: SIZE AND SCALE

FU: FORE UDDER

RU: REAR UDDER

DF: DAIRY FORM

BC: BODY CAPACITY

F+L: FEET & LEGS

MS: MAMMARY SYSTEM

S+B: STYLE &
BALANCE

H-P: MORE LEVEL FROM HIPS TO PINS

MS: MAMMARY SYSTEM

MSL: MEDIAL SUSPENSORY LIGAMENT

Use the last 10-12 minutes to prepare your reasons. Use your notes to write a good set of reasons. Written reasons should be very neat. A judge should be able to read your handwriting easily. Make sure you spell and punctuate correctly. You may want to underline a few key words for emphasis. It is best if you proofread what you write before handing it in.

STEP #3. DEVELOP PURPOSEFUL NOTES

Many contestants waste time taking notes that *describe* each cow. Your reasons must *compare* the cows, not describe them. The best notes are comparative in nature. Below is a sample set of notes for a class of aged Holstein cows.

Set of notes for placing a class of Aged Holsteins 1-2-3-4

A-H 1-2-3-4

- 1- Large white cow, best udder
- 2- Black cow, DC
- 3- Black/White cow
- 4- Small, white cow

1/2 S+B, S+S, LEGS**
easy MS, FU, RU, MSL*
BC

Grant DF

2/3 DF**
close MS,FU

Grant RUMP, LEGS

3/4 MS**
easy S+B, S+S, TL,
BC, ALL

Grant DF, F+L

4 bot LACKS S+S, MS, BC



Use these basic sentences

Beginning students should use these sentences, or phrases, as a basis for developing reasons.

She has more style and balance and is a taller, more upstanding individual, showing more size and scale.

She has an advantage in mammary, being smoother in the fore udder attachment and is higher and wider in the rear udder.

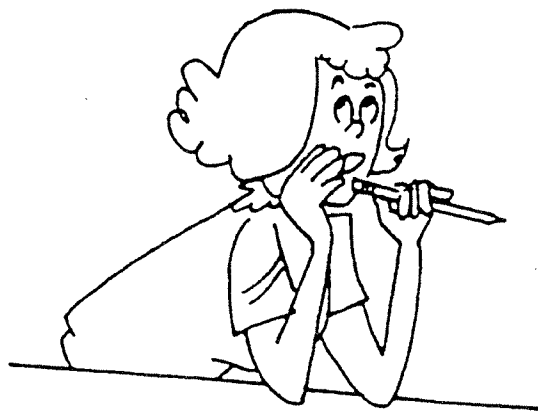
She stands on a more correct set of rear legs when viewed from both the side and rear, having less set to the hock and more width between the hocks.

She has greater body capacity, being longer-bodied, wider and deeper in both the fore and rear ribs.

She has an advantage in dairy form, having more open ribbing.

She shows more dairy character being sharper over the withers, hips and pins.

As you practice more, you will learn to use only the parts of these sentences that apply to the class you are judging. You will also learn new words to "dress up" your reasons.



STEP #4. PREPARING REASONS (what you say)

Reasons Generated from these Notes

Now we have a great set of notes. A set of reasons can be written easily. Read the sample reasons below. Look back to the notes to see how we used our abbreviations and basic sentences to prepare the reasons.

I place this class of aged Holstein cows 1-2-3-4. I found an easy top in the good-uddered 1, a very close middle pair in 2 and 3, and an easy bottom in the smaller and weaker-uddered 4.

I place the white 1 easily over 2, because she has much more style and balance and is a much taller, more upstanding individual, showing more size and scale. She also has easily the best udder in the class, and is stronger and smoother in the fore udder attachment, higher and wider in the rear udder than 2. Her udder is held closer to the body and has a stronger median suspensory ligament. One is also stronger in her topline and stands on a more correct set of legs. One is deeper in both the fore and rear rib than 2, although I grant 2 shows more desirable dairy form.

In the closest placing of the class, I place 2 over 3 due to her great advantage in dairy form. She is much more open in her ribbing, is sharper over the withers, hips and pins. Two is longer and leaner in the neck and flatter in her thighs. Two has a slight edge in mammary, being stronger in the fore udder. In making this a very close placing, I do grant to 3 an advantage in frame, being more nearly level in the rump and standing on a much more correct set of legs when viewed from the rear.

I easily place 3 over 4 because she greatly excels in mammary system. She is smoother in the fore udder and much higher and wider in the rear. She carries her udder higher above the hock and is stronger in her medial suspensory ligament. She also shows a more balanced udder and has more quality of udder. Three is a taller cow with more style and balance throughout. I give 3 the advantage in body capacity, as she was a larger cow with more spring and depth of fore and rear rib. I will grant that 4 has more dairy character and stands on a more correct set of legs, faulting 3 for being cow-hocked.

I easily placed 4 last because she lacks the size, strength of mammary system and depth of body to place higher. However, I do admire her dairy form.

For these reasons, I have placed this class of Aged Holstein cows 1-2-3-4.

Scoring Reasons

In scoring written reasons, there are five areas we look at. They are format, comparative tense, terminology, accuracy and logic. This is nicknamed "what you say". It deals with how you prepared for your set of reasons. Preparation is given 25 points on a reasons scorecard. Five points is the most for each of these five areas.

Format. The good set of reasons has an introductory paragraph. It also has three paragraphs of pair placings. A summary paragraph ends your reasons.

The introduction includes the class and your placing. It also may include some additional information. This tells how you saw the class was made up. Examples might include; **two pairs, or easy top, close middle pair, easy bottom**. Please know that a risk is taken by telling how you feel the class was made up. It may not agree with the judge's view.

Each paragraph includes 3 points to support your placing. You also need 1 point as a grant. This is a 3:1 ratio. If you find a very close pair, it is o.k. to have a ratio of 2:2. It is rare not to have some point to grant.

The summary paragraph, once again, tells the class and your placing.

Comparative tense. Reasons *compare*, not describe a class. You must phrase your reasons using comparative terms. Such terms are **taller, stronger and sharper**. In scoring, we subtract a point (up to 5) each time a descriptive term or phrase is used. Describing is allowed only in the introductory and summary paragraphs.

Terminology. The use of appropriate terms is important. In scoring reasons, we deduct a point (up to 5) for any use of the term "better". We also deduct if you use the wrong words for body parts. Examples of wrong terms are **bag, tits, etc**.

Accuracy. This means whether the reasons you raise are correct. For each incorrect reason, we deduct a point from a top score of five. However, if a judge finds something that he/she thinks everyone will see and you miss it, more than 1 point may be taken off. Also, reasons that are close to the judge's viewpoint will cost you less.

Logic. The reasons you write for a pair should be in a logical order. The most important difference between cows is placed first in a set. We deduct a point each time ideas are raised in a different order from how we, as judges, saw the class.

STEP #5. PRESENTING REASONS (how you say it)

We look for strong presentation skills when we score reasons. Presentation is given 25 points on a reasons scorecard. Five points is the most you can receive in each of five areas. In written reasons, the five areas are: neatness, spelling, grammar, sentence structure and persuasiveness.

1. neatness,

Your handwriting has to be easily read. If it is hard for a judge to read your reasons, your score will be low. You may want to practice your handwriting if it is poor.

2. spelling,

3. grammar,

4. sentence structure



This is the part where you need to use good English skills. Good reasons have all the words spelled correctly. You cannot use a dictionary during a contest, so practice spelling at home. The use of correct grammar is important. This makes the reasons clearer. Make sure all of your sentences make sense. Check for incomplete sentences. If your reasons are not correct in each of these areas, a point will be taken off.

5. persuasiveness

All of the above areas tie into this category. Your ideas on how the class should be placed will be persuasive and convincing if prepared and presented well.

To add strength in all categories, you may want to try "dressing up" your reasons with more technical words. Using the term "medial suspensory ligament" in your reasons will show the judge you know the parts of the cow. Using words that add emphasis, such as "tremendous" and "exceptionally," may give you more points. Lastly, underlining words for emphasis will greatly add to your set of reasons.

Concentration

There is one more key to becoming a good dairy judge: concentration. Keep your mind on what is going on in the ring. Many judging contests happen simultaneously with other events. Keeping your mind focused only on what you are there to do can be hard. Concentration can mean the difference between first and second place in a contest.

Summary

Many excellent judges have lost major contests because they were beaten in reasons. Preparing a set of reasons for a dairy judging contest is a learned skill. You must first learn the basic information and correct technique. Then you will be prepared to move on.

Top-scoring sets of reasons require using correct terms, good use of limited time and skilled note-taking skills. They also require good writing skills and an ability to keep your concentration in a contest.

After reading this booklet, you need only to practice, practice, practice to develop your ability and confidence. What is your reward for this hard work? Top scores in dairy judging contests and skills that you will use forever will be your rewards.



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2. Giesy, Russ and Umphrey, James. Edited by Debra Summerall. Animal Science Department , IFAS, University of Florida.



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