AMDCA - Judging Clinic – November 16, 2019
By Drew Conroy, Ph.D.

These materials come in part from an Open Education Resource I developed and teaching materials from my dairy judging course at the University of New Hampshire over the last 30 years.

https://www.oercommons.org/authoring/29160-judging-and-evaluating-dairy-cattle/view

or just do an Internet search for "**OER Dairy Cattle Evaluation"**

Why Judge Livestock?

Visually evaluating cattle based on physical traits observed in the animal is a qualitative skill that takes practice and requires an understanding of cattle body parts. Using visual evaluation can help identify the traits that are desired in the animals for their health, longevity, and high production levels as well as provide a tool in selecting animals to be kept for breeding and those that will be sold or culled from the herd.

Disadvantages of Visual Evaluation – it is not a perfect science, there are biases, and I have mine, and judging can tend to focus on traits certain people want in their animals, which could be a detriment to the diversity of genetics in the population. Phil Sponenberg has written and talked about this with regard to rare breeds.

With some training in qualitative evaluation of dairy cattle, all of these can be seen in less than a minute by Simply looking at an animal providing insight on the animal's:

- Age
- Size
- Weight
- Health
- Sex
- Breed
- Possible Family/Lineage
- Production Level
- Production Capacity
- Body Condition
- Stage of Lactation
- Body Capacity
- Reproductive Capacity
- Soundness (Feet and Legs)
- History
- Environment it has lived in

Other reasons to show cattle:

To have fun & meet others who share your passion for the breed
To Compete and better train your animals for ease of handling
To be able to compare your animals to others
To find animals to buy, to market your own animals, or to improve your stock

Body Parts – can you identify them?

Know which body parts are going to affect the health, productivity and longevity of the animal

Udder, Feet and Legs, Body Shape including topline and rump, Head, etc.

The Scorecard – the basis for judging the animals

Standard of Excellence
and
Scale of Points of Devon Cow

From the American Devon Record Book, 1926

HEAD moderately long, with a broad indented Forehead, tapering considerably towards the Nostrils; the Nose of creamy-white, the Nostrils high and open, the Jaws clean, the Eye bright, lively and prominent; Throat clean, Ears thin, the Expression being gentle and intelligent; Horns matching, long, spreading, and gradually turned up, of waxy color, tipped with a darker shade.	10
NECK of medium length, growing from the Head to the shoulders, and spreading out to meet them.	4
WITHERS fine, Shoulders flat, sloping and well covered.	6
RIBS well sprung from the Backbone, nicely arched, deep and fully developed.	8
BACK straight and level from the Withers, to the setting on of the Tail, Loins broad and full, Hips of medium width and on a level with the Back.	12
RUMPS moderately long and level.	8
HIND-QUARTERS deep, thick and square.	10
UDDER not fleshy, coming well forward in line with the Belly, and well up behind; Teats large, and squarely placed.	20
TAIL thick at the root and tapering, with a brush of strong hair, reaching to the Hocks, and hanging at right angles with the back.	5
THE UNDER LINE as nearly as possible parallel with the top.	6
LEGS straightly and squarely placed when viewed from behind, not to cross or sweep when walking.	5
SKIN moderately thick and mellow, covered with an abundant coat of rich mossy hair of a red color; white about the Udder is admissible, but it should not extend beyond the Navel forward, on the outside of the Flanks or any other part of the Limbs or Body.	6
Perfection	100

The above scorecard developed in 1926…I know that feet and legs are more important to me as a breeder and ox enthusiast who likes Milking Devon Oxen, than the scorecard above states. I was also a bit surprised that skin, ribs and withers ranks higher than feet and legs

When judging you must have an image of the ideal animal in mind….there is no animal that will get a perfect score, but you still need to keep in mind what makes an animal an excellent example of the breed

Learning to quickly evaluate an animal's strengths and weaknesses can be done by viewing an animal in a photo or live for just 10-30 seconds and writing down or sharing what was seen. This helps train people to look at what is most important and learn to focus their attention on the most important parts of the dairy animal

What can learning to judge do for the farmer who is not necessarily going to show or compete with their animals?

Better determine which animals to breed or buy for the things you want the animals to do, which ones to cull, which ones are going to have problems, which ones you should sell for breeding stock, and which ones to mate.
Howard Mansfield story –

Let's Review the Scorecard, which is the standard by which Milking Devons are to be judged. Please realize the scorecard can and does change in other breeds and types of livestock over time to change with the times and demand for certain products or animals.

Handout and Live Animal practice:

For beginning judges, it is often easier to see the major faults of animals, especially when one has limited experience in viewing animals on farms or in shows. Evaluating major defects or faults in the animals can help a judge at any level quickly make a decision as to whether the animal has enough merit or quality to place in the show or for a farmer deciding which animals are to be kept in the herd or culled. Some faults are extreme, and will affect an animal's ability to move, reproduce, and produce milk without problems. Examples would be heifers that are extremely weak in the legs, especially the rear legs. A cow could remain productive for more than a decade, but in order to do so they have to be able to support an udder that could weigh over 50-100 lbs, meaning the rear feet and legs have to be strong enough to do so. Animals with extremely weak pasterns or those that are sickle hocked as heifers, will not have the conformation that would allow them to last in a modern dairy herd.

Realize a common challenge is that beginning judges tend to focus on the negative characteristics of animals. In judging and presenting either written or oral reasons, we try to always emphasize the positive attributes animals have over the animals below them in a show, not faulting every animal in our reasons

What about actual judging:

Drew's thoughts – after judging for the last 39 years
1) A judge needs to be consistent, follow a similar pattern of viewing every animal. If you have a bias, which we all do, still <mark>be consistent</mark>
2) A judge needs to provide reasons for why they judged a group of animals, preferably using the correct body terminology and scorecard
3) A Judge needs to thoroughly look over every animal, in the same manner…front view, side view and rear view, watch them on the move…
4) A Judge needs to be positive, not simply pointing out every animal's fault(s)
5) A Judge needs to be confident. If you are influenced by whose animal you are judging or who is in the audience…it will cause problems. I would rather be known as a judge who is consistent, gives clear reasons, and understands the importance of the body parts and how they affect the animal
6) Place a class of cattle, stating why you place every animal over the next one in line, instead of saying why you placed one below another. For example:
   I placed cow number 1 over 2 because she has a more attractive udder, held up higher on her body, with a smoother stronger foreudder, she also walks on a more correct set of hind legs, with a stronger pastern and hoof angle, and finally she is more correct in the head and neck, being both long and feminine in both.

Problems – I have faced as a judge:

Thinking it is easy – its not…you have to place the class with someone on top and someone at the bottom.

Sharp Practice – people trying to deceive the judge and superintendent of the show

Exhibitors or Parents who argue with the judge while he/she is in the ring

Struggling to find a placing I am happy with…You have to think about the scorecard and think about the animal you would buy if you had the money to purchase only one of the two you are struggling with in making a decision

Not being Encouraging: Always compliment something about every animal…meaning provide a positive statement for those placing lower than others with a compliment on their animal or showmanship skills.

Not following the standard good judges use in being comparative, using the correct terminology and methodical in my reasons and placings.

Which of the following statements would be most appropriate when giving reasons on a cow class placing in the show ring:

A) Cow 1 places over 2 because she is skinny, has a shiny hair coat, has big teats, and an udder that is really big.

B) Cow 1 places over 2 for her greater depth of body, more correct fore udder attachment, stronger pasterns, and overall strength of topline.

C) Cow 2 simply looks like a bulldog with long legs, her carcass isn't fit to be ground up and placed between two sesame seed buns.

D) Cow 2 is fatter, less angular, weak in the loin, and has a bag that hangs between her legs like wet grain sack, Cow 1 is simply a better choice.

In giving reasons it is important to do which of the following:
   a) Be accurate, descriptive, creative, use proper terminology, and talk clearly.
   b) Be accurate, complete, able to visualize the cows, descriptive, and use proper emphasis.
   c) Be accurate, complete, comparative, able to visualize the cows, and use proper emphasis.
   d) Be complete, descriptive, memorize the reasons, and don't worry about little details.
   e) Be creative, random, use little trivial details and try to baffle the audience with your creativity.