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The most valuable experience you will encounter in livestock judging is the presentation of oral reasons. No matter what career you choose effective communication is a must to be successful. Reasons will assist you in organizing your thoughts and presenting them in a confident, precise, and logical manner.

The main objective of oral reasons is to let you tell why you placed a class as you did. Anyone can guess at a class placing. Good livestock judges must be able to explain in a logical manner their reasons for placing a class as they did. Your reasons should be accurate, interesting, sincere, and presented in a pleasing and confident manner. Giving oral reasons is excellent training in several ways. It will help you think more clearly on your feet, state your thoughts more clearly, improve your memory, and improve your speaking poise and voice.

Important Points in Giving Reasons

Accuracy. This is by far the most important point in giving reasons. You need to see the obvious and important points in the class, and discuss them accurately and completely. With an accurate set of reasons, you may often gain points lost as a result of a poor placing. Guard against telling obvious lies, and make your reasons fit the class.

Delivery. A poor delivery may result in a low score regardless of the accuracy of your reasons. Reasons must be presented in a manner that is pleasant to hear and clear to follow. Speak slowly and clearly, in a conversational tone, yet loudly enough to be understood, and to give some “conviction” to your reasons. Look the judge squarely in the eye and act confident, yet try not to give the impression of over-confidence. Be sincere in your reasons. Be sure to use correct grammar, and avoid any distracting mannerisms that will detract from the thought and effectiveness of your reasons.

Completeness. Bring out all the major differences in your reasons, omitting small points that may leave room for doubt.

Terms. Use correct terms acceptable to stockmen. Know the meaning of the terms you use.

Organization. Your reasons should be organized much like a newspaper story. Bring out the important and general points first, followed by the more specific and detailed points later. Certain points logically fit best at the end of a pair.

The organization of a set of reasons determines how easy the reasons are to comprehend by the person listen-

Giving Oral Livestock Judging Reasons

ing. There are many different systems for organizing reasons. Below is listed the basic organization outline for an entire set of reasons, followed by examples and comments of specific steps. The system presented here is logical and clear, and will enable anyone to use the same procedure.

Outline for a Set of Reasons

- I. Opening Statement
 - a. Name of class
 - b. Placing
 - c. Superlative statement about the top animal
 - d. Descriptive criticism of the top animal
- II. Top Pair
 - a. Talk 1st over 2nd using comparative terminology
 - b. Grant 2nd over 1st using comparative terminology
 - c. Criticize 2nd with descriptive terminology
- III. Middle Pair
 - a. Talk 2nd over 3rd using comparative terminology
 - b. Grant 3rd over 2nd using comparative terminology
 - c. Criticize 3rd with descriptive terminology
- IV. Bottom Pair
 - a. Talk 3rd over 4th using comparative terminology
 - b. Grant 4th over 3rd using comparative terminology
 - c. Criticize 4th with superlative and descriptive terminology

Memorizing this format will be particularly useful to the beginner. Once students are comfortable with the proper sequence of events in giving reasons, the experience becomes much easier. You will notice that the format is largely repetitive in the top, middle, and bottom pairs.

Following are a few examples of what is referred to in the outline above with regard to superlative, comparative, and descriptive types of terminology. Superlatives are simply words ending in “est.” Use of this type of terminology would allow you to compare an animal to the entire class. For example, in the opening statement you wish to substantiate why you selected an animal to win. “I started with 1 as he is the heaviest muscled, niciest balanced, most correctly finished steer in the class.” The words heaviest, niciest, and most make these superlative terms. This is the most effective type of terminology to use in opening statements. Notice that if you speak the same sentence changing the words to heavy, nice, and more, the sentence is no longer as convincing about the steer you have chosen to win the class. And you would no longer be using proper grammar to compare one steer to the entire class.

Within the pairs: top, middle, and bottom, when comparing two steers to each other, it is appropriate to use terms ending in “er.” For example “...in my top pair I placed 1 over 2 as he is heavier muscled, nicer balanced steer. I grant that 2 is a longer bodied steer than 1...” Again in this case, by interchanging heaviest, nicest, and longest, you can tell that it would weaken that statement, and not be grammatically correct.

Criticisms are always most effective when they describe an animal based on its own individual weakness, therefore they should be descriptive. To continue with our same steer example “... nevertheless, I criticize 2 and place him second, as he is flat in his hind quarter and is bare finished over his rib...” This criticism will stand on its own in describing 2s problems, and is much more effective than comparatively criticizing. An example of comparative criticism would be... “nevertheless, I criticize 2 and place him second as he is lighter muscled and barer finished than 1...” While this may be a true statement, it tells the reasons taker no more about number 2 than what we have already stated when giving 1s advantages over 2 in the top pair.

The objective of each set of reasons should be to paint an accurate picture of four animals, explaining their advantage as compared to the entire class and relative to one another, and to criticize each animal based on their merit. This can be accomplished by effective use of superlative, comparative, and descriptive terminology in the appropriate parts of the presentation.

Suggestions for Presenting Oral Reasons

Accuracy is the single most important element in giving oral reasons. However, unless reasons are presented in a manner which is pleasant to hear and clear and easy to follow, the value of accuracy is largely lost because much of what is said does not “get through” to the listener. Therefore, the following suggestions are offered on the organization and composition of oral reasons.

1. A powerful, precise opening statement is a must.
2. Be prompt, confident, and courteous when it is your turn to give reasons.
3. Never carry any notes into the reason room.
4. Do not be arrogant.
5. If offered your placing card, accept it and look it over quickly to make sure your placing is what you think it is and then hold it behind your back.
6. Always be prepared to give your reasons without a placing card.
7. Place your feet approximately the same width as your shoulders and stand with your feet parallel and body erect.
8. Depending on room size, conditions, and your voice, stand about eight to ten feet away from the reason taker.
9. Look the official squarely in the eye.
10. Talk in a firm voice but do not shout.
11. Emphasis is very important in reasons. Fluctuating both speed and volume should be used to accomplish this.

12. A very slight head movement is acceptable. Any other body movement is distracting to the listener.
13. When giving reasons you should “paint” an accurate picture of the animals that the listener can mentally see.
14. Use color characteristics or other identifying characteristics of animals to avoid being redundant with numbers and to better describe the class.
15. Reasons should last between 1 minute and 20 seconds to 1 minute and 45 seconds. Never exceed 2 minutes!!
16. Do not finish your reasons with “For these reasons I placed this class...”
17. When organizing terms, give the most important advantages first, then follow with details to complete the description.
18. Always use correct grammar.

Taking Notes for Oral Reasons

Taking notes is a necessity when you judge several classes and are asked to give reasons at a later time.

Probably the best devices for taking notes are a 6 x 8 inch stenographer’s spiral notebook and a mechanical pencil.

When taking notes, it is recommended that you list the numbers 1 through 4 at the top of the page and leave approximately two lines. This space should be used for identification points as well as descriptive criticism of each animal. (This can be done before the judge has determined his or her placing.) After you have done this and determined a placing, you should then take notes by pairs giving room for both advantages and grants. Sometimes abbreviations are helpful. Also an opening statement is sometimes desirable. Below is an example of the proper way to take notes.

Sample Set of Notes—Crossbred Steers

Name of Class—Crossbred Steers Placing 2-3-4-1

- 1-Black Baldy-narrow topped, patchy finished, weak topped, poorly balanced
- 2-Red-heaviest muscled, most correctly finished droops from hooks to pins
- 3-Black slick haired-heavy muscled, bare finished, coarse shouldered
- 4-Black Baldy-highest volume, over finished, wasty lower $\frac{1}{3}$, low-set

Opening statement for 2-Thickest, most powerfully muscled steer

- $\frac{2}{3}$ Heavier muscled, more correctly finished, nicer balanced, more apt to grade choice
- $\frac{3}{2}$ Squarer, leveler rumped
- $\frac{3}{4}$ Thicker, heavier muscled, trimmer, higher cutability, nicer balanced, longer
- $\frac{4}{3}$ Smoother shouldered, higher volume
- $\frac{4}{1}$ More uniformly finished, more apt to grade choice, nicer balanced, heavier muscled
- $\frac{1}{4}$ Longer bodied, longer fronted

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Samuel E. Curl, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Dean of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of \$.20 per copy. 0404.