Cattle Evaluation
You be the Judge

A judging competition consists of classes of livestock with four individual animals, marked one through four, and contestants who decide how to rank them. To place them, follow a set of criteria that is specific to the breed and sex of the animal.

Basic steps involved in livestock evaluation follows:

1. Acquire the knowledge necessary to understand an animal's intended function and the correct form and shape needed to efficiently perform the function. Establish a mental picture of the ideal animal that combines all traits efficiently.

2. Evaluate and compare individual animals to the established ideal. Then compare animals in a class to one another and thereby measure their relative strengths and weaknesses.

3. Make a decision, then rank animals in a logical place, with facts gathered through evaluation of individuals and comparison of one another.

4. Defend your placing with oral reasons.

A judge will need to know factors to help evaluate traits in the animal. A competition might have a market steer, breeding cattle and performance cattle class.

Market Steers
A good market steer has a powerful look with a large volume of muscle. Look for muscle expression and thickness at and through his top, rump and hind quarter. Another important criteria is a correct degree of finish to indicate quality and cutability in the carcass he will yield.

He will have a wide chest with depth and spring of rib with a long body and a moderate frame size, this will allow his weight to range between 1,100 to 1,300 pounds.

Breeding Cattle
A breeding heifer will have a moderate frame score, long or deep body with more shape and spring to the rib and wider chest. Other traits include, feminine appearance with less muscle through her top, rump and hind quarter; strong top line and level rump, set wide through pins; and uniformity in her depth from fore-rib to flank.

Older heifers will display better udder quality with refined teats and a stronger udder attachment.

A quality heifer will have a 45-degree slope of shoulder, which creates structural soundness with flex to pasterns, knees and hocks. This will allow her to move strong and easy, taking a long, wide stride while the rear hooves step in the track of the front hooves, at a normal pace.

A modern, masculine bull, regardless of breed is similar to the heifer. He will have a powerful appearance with excellent composition and a large volume of muscle dimension through his top, rump and quarter, and a correct degree of condition or fleshiness.

When evaluating breeding cattle keep in mind these priorities:

1. Structural Correctness: Shoulder, rump, knee, hock, pastern and hoof structure as it relates to movement and cattle's ability to function as ruminants.

2. Volume: Body capacity as it relates to the animal's heartiness and doing ability.

3. Composition: Muscle includes thickness of top, rump and quarter. Condition is the degree of fatness.

4. Balance or Quality: Straightness of lines, distribution of body parts and weight.

5. Growth: The ability to gain weight rapidly within a range of moderate frame scores.

6. Sexual Characteristics: Feminine appearance in heifers; and a rugged, masculine appearance in bulls.

Performance Cattle
A performance class will include a scenario with the intended use of the animal, including EPDs. The class is more objective, and often mirrors real-life choices livestock producers face. When judging the class, keep in mind: class description; priorities according to the class description; visual traits; performance records; and a logical final placing.
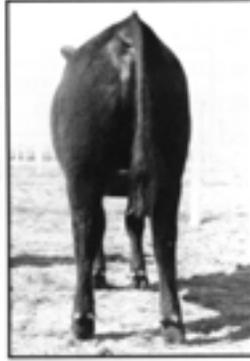
A significant part of a judging contest is to justify a placing with a set of oral reasons. A successful set derives from the ability to take notes, usually on a Steno notebook, and confidence in the decision. An example of a class with notes and reasons follows:
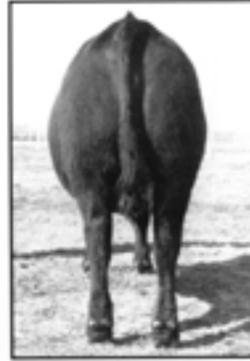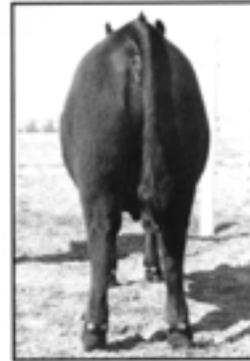
Class of Angus Heifers

An example of how a junior member might rank the class on page 15.

Angus Heifers   **3421**

1. Plain, Bone Flex

2. Body? Flashy, Striking, Level, Neck

3. Easy, Massive, Stout, Maternal, Sound

4. Plain, Super long, Extended, Deep

3/4	4/3	4
Massive, Big Bodied	Fresher	Plain
Stout, Big Boned		Flat
Sound, Maternal		Shoulder?
4/2	**2/4**	**2**
Body, Flank	Neat	Shallow
Fleshing Ab.	Attractive	Too straight
Performance	Neat Neck	& tight
2/1	**1/2**	**1**
Attractive	Sounder	Plain, short hip
Profile	More Flex	Flat
Shape	Foot	Narrow, Shallow

— *Garrett Knebel*

SCORE

Each class has a maximum of 50 points. The class can be split into three pairs: top, middle and bottom, with cuts assigned to each class to determine scores.

If an official placing is 1-2-3-4, with cuts of 3-6-4, and you place the class 2-1-3-4, for switching the top pair you would lose 3 points, resulting in a score of 47.

If your placing was 1-4-2-3, it is considered a bust, with a drop of 14 points totaling a score of 36.

Official Placing: 1-2-3-4   Your Placing: 1-4-2-3
Cuts: 3-6-4

Points Dropped:
1/2 = 0, 1/3 = 0, 1/4 = 0
2/3 = 0, 2/4 = 6+4 =10
3/4 = 4
Total Points Dropped = 14   Score = 36

— *Livestock evaluation information provided by Oklahoma State University.*

REASONS

3421 is my placing of the Angus heifers. As I stepped to the class, my eyes are immediately drawn to the massive, broody appearing, white flanked heifer as she's easily the best balanced, heaviest muscled, soundest footed female that should prove to be the easiest keeping when turned out to pasture. In direct comparison to 4, she's the better balanced, heavier boned heifer that's unrivaled with regards to body shape and mass. Now I can appreciate that 4 is the more compositionally genuine female that is cleaner through the floor of her chest. However, she remains a distant second, as she's a plain appearing, flat-sided heifer that's a touch straight in the angle of her shoulder.

Nonetheless, it's her obvious advantage in maternal look and fleshing ability that keeps her over 2 in my middle pair. She is a longer-bodied, higher performing heifer that's bigger-bodied, being especially deeper through her rear rib and flank. Plus, she's still more acceptable in the angle of her shoulder, while being more correct in her neck/shoulder attachment. Now there's no question, 2 is neater-necked and more attractive in her hip and hind leg set. However, she's a shallow-bodied, tight-ribbed heifer that's just too tight off of both ends.

But still, in my bottom pair of females that share some of the same concerns, I still opted to use 2 over 1, as she is the more attractive, better-profiling female that reads with more genuine shape down her top and out of her hip. Now yes, 1 is the better structured female that steps down on a heavier circumference of bone and foot, and has more flex through her hock and pastern. However, the plain-appearing, poorly presented female is not only a heavy fronted, short-hipped heifer that's too deep in her chest, but she is the narrowest, lightest-muscled, shallowest-bodied heifer that's potentially the hardest-keeping.
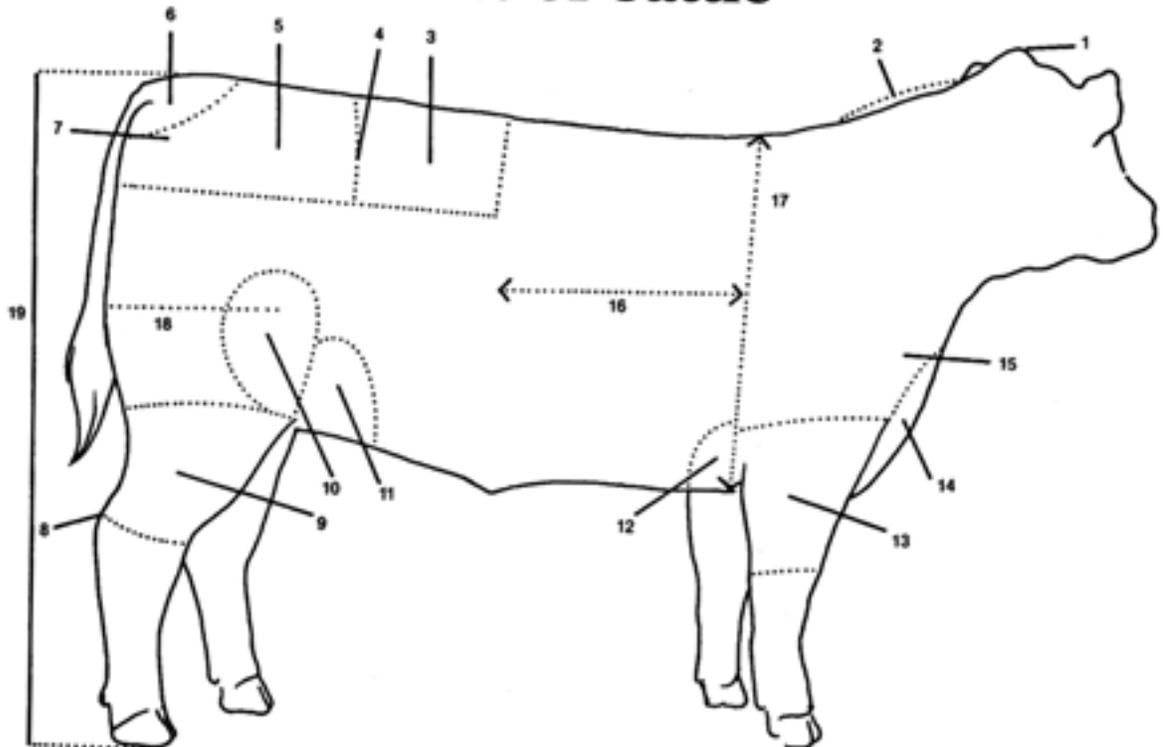
— *Garrett Knebel*

Benefits of Livestock Judging

- Improve oral communication skills.
- Improve observation skills.
- Improve self-confidence.
- Improve leadership skills.
- Improve knowledge about livestock to help prepare for careers in: commercial production, seedstock production, feeding, buying, packing and food industries and many non-agriculture careers.
- Provide opportunities to gain friends, travel and market yourself through contacts and exposure for jobs and scholarships.
- Improve critical thinking; experience to help to refine your decision making process through making logical, rational decisions based on the information gathered.

Parts of Cattle

1 Poll	8 Hock	15 Point of Shoulder
2 Crest	9 Hind Shank	16 Ribs
3 Loin	10 Stifle	17 Heart Girth or Depth of Chest
4 Hook or Hip Bone	11 Rear Flank	18 Length of Rump
5 Rump	12 Fore Flank	19 Height at Hip
6 Tail Head	13 Fore Shank	
7 Pin Bone	14 Brisket	