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JUDGING LIVESTOCK

Raising livestock is one of the chief enterprises engaged in by farmers. The most successful farmer is the one who can raise the best quality of livestock at the least possible cost. One of the important factors involved in producing livestock on a profitable basis is the ability to select animals capable of producing a high quality product at the minimum cost. The activity of selecting the most desirable animals is called judging livestock. The purpose of this article is not to teach anyone how to judge livestock but to suggest a method of procedure which might be helpful to the teacher in directing the judging experiences and activities of the boys to the end that they may become more proficient in the science and art of selecting animals best suited to their particular need.

Objective for Teaching Livestock Judging

Livestock judging is one of the most interesting and most fascinating activities

engaged in by the boys who enroll for instruction in agriculture in the high school. Therein lies a danger that the activity be emphasized to the point where the activity becomes an end in itself rather than a means to an end. The purpose of teaching livestock judging is to give the boys experience designed to improve their ability to recognize the characteristics that go with the animals best suited to the purpose for which they are to be used.

One of the first steps in teaching judging is to set up appropriate objectives. The objectives should be clearly understood and appreciated by the students. The teacher must develop a favorable attitude on the part of the boys toward judging. To do this, the boys should fully appreciate the value of the ability to be good judges of livestock. Much valuable time and effort are frequently lost because the teacher has failed to prepare the student for the judging work by developing a proper mental set.



Fig. 1. The class in agriculture at Long Prairie, Minnesota, engaged in judging Jersey cattle on the home farm of one of the boys. Mr. Willard Maland, father of one of the boys, is holding one of the cows. J. W. Kauffman is the teacher of agriculture and a successful teacher of livestock judging. His dairy team placed first in the state judging contest last year.

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The judging work should be planned as a definite part of the program of instruction. It should be an outgrowth of the regular study program planned for each boy and should receive emphasis according to the needs of the individual boys. For example, if the major enterprises on the home farm are dairy cattle and swine, the boy should aim to become highly proficient in his ability to select good dairy cattle and swine rather than to become reasonably proficient in judging all kinds of livestock. The short time the boys are in school makes it unwise for any teacher to attempt to have the boys become expert judges in all classes of animals.

Judging Contests

Judging contests are effective for the purpose of motivating the judging activities of the boys. The contest idea may become undesirable if it is allowed to degenerate to the point where it becomes an end in itself. Membership on the livestock judging team is incidental to the main purpose of teaching judging. It is urged that each teacher makes an effort to keep the livestock judging contest free from the usual undesirable features which so often develop in connection with competitive school activities. To come through *clean*, the educational features of the judging work must remain as the chief objective. The ideal is to provide for each boy a training appropriate to his needs and then at the close of the year select through competitive effort the boys who are to represent the school or class in the judging contest. It is not the use of the contest idea that is undesirable, but the abuse of it.

Procedure in Teaching Livestock Judging

When the objectives for judging are clearly understood by the teacher and by the students, the actual judging work may

begin. The following sequence of procedure is suggested as a guide for the teacher. An approach might be made to the judging work by establishing some principles as guides in judging. For example, the relation of conformation, or external appearance, to production may be established for the first class of livestock to be judged. In order to establish these principles, the students must become familiar with the points or parts of the animal with a view to building an ideal in their minds. Teaching the points of the animal and building the ideal might well go together. For this purpose the usual point score card and a good individual animal should be used. If no near ideal animal is available, good photographs or slides may be used. Teachers frequently underestimate the value of good pictures of good animals as a means of establishing ideals in the minds of the students. The mental ideal animal is important because it is always present as a basis for making appropriate evaluations when placing a ring of animals. A ring of four animals for this reason really consists of five animals when the ideal is included.

The Use of Score Cards

There seems to be a tendency at the present time to do less pure score card judging. The reason for this is perhaps that in practice the farmer does not stop to "score" each animal that he plans to purchase. However, the score card has an important role to play in the judging work. The score card is valuable to use in teaching the location of the points of the animal and the relative importance of the points. The score card is also useful in building and fixing the ideal animal in the minds of the students. The students should be guided to the point where they are able to see the points of the animals both as individual parts and as parts of the whole. The various points of the animals must arrange themselves in an orderly manner in the minds of the boys. To this end the score cards are useful. When the ideal has been set up, the students are ready to evaluate an animal in terms of the ideal. The purpose of comparing an animal with the ideal is to review the points previously learned by applying them to an animal and to gain their initial experience in judging. The score card may be in the hands of the students as a guide in studying the animal and to record "cuts" that are made to show how much the animal deviates from the ideal in mind. When the stu-

dents have completed their comparisons, the teacher should go over the animals carefully with the students so that they may see where errors were made.

The next step is to introduce two animals for comparison with the ideal. In making comparisons, the score card may be in the hands of the students, but less reliance is placed on it in the comparison of the *three* animals (i.e., the ideal and the two real animals). Again the teacher should discuss carefully the evaluations or decisions made by the students. The activities to this point have been purely learning processes on the part of the student and teaching on the part of the instructor. Further activities will include learning, teaching, and the applications of what has been learned. The students should next be introduced to a ring of three or four animals. By this time the students have acquired the plan of combining the details of the score card into larger units, and a comparative placing guide may be used on which is listed the most important groups of related points. The teacher has gradually shifted the responsibility for giving reasons over to the students.

Giving Reasons

The students should be encouraged to have some good reason for making the decisions they make in comparative judg-

ing. The chief value of this is that it encourages closer and more accurate observations. The boys should be taught to be specific in their statements when giving reasons. For example, in making comparisons of the udders of a ring of dairy cattle, a general statement that "Cow A has a better udder than Cow C" should not be permitted. To say that "For udder I place Cow A over Cow C because the udder of Cow A has better shape, is less meaty, larger, more evenly quartered, extends further forward, and is attached better in the rear. The udder of A has better shaped and placed teats than Cow C" is representative of judgment based on close observations.

As a general rule, the boys should give reasons for their placings. These reasons may be either oral or written. Although giving reasons plays an important part in the judging work, it should not be so routinized as to make it a bore in judging work. In order to encourage more careful observation, the reasons should frequently be given without having the animals present while giving the reasons.

The comparative placing guides used in judging contests are so constructed as to take care of the usual oral reasons formerly required as a part of contest work. This, however, in no way lessens the desirability of giving reasons while learning to judge. The judging contest should

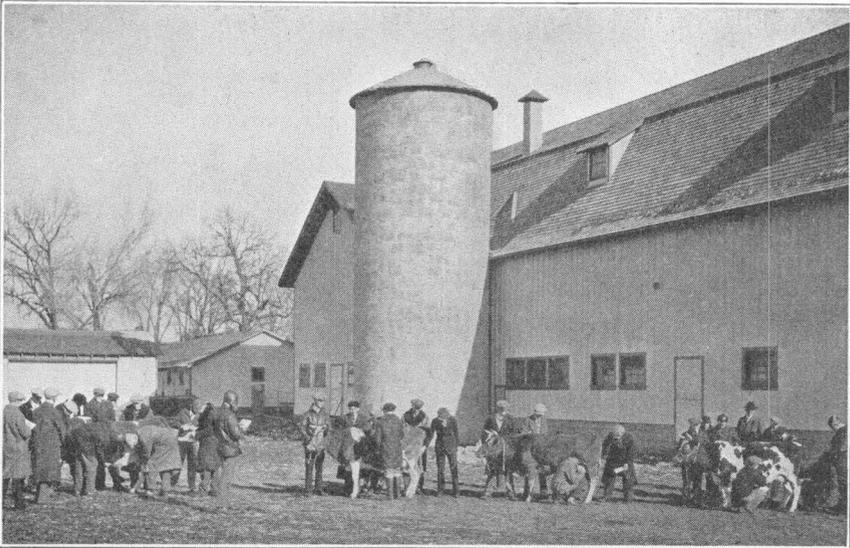


Fig. 2. The boys in the agriculture class at Austin, Minnesota, making a brief, close inspection on a ring of Guernsey cows at the Strevling Farms. Mr. W. G. Wiegand, the teacher of agriculture, is a firm believer in the outside classroom. The Austin Dairy Judging team won first place in the 1926 State Judging Contest.

show how well the boys can judge animals and not how well they can "speak a piece" to the judge.

How to Proceed in Judging

Most of the judging work is based on external appearance. For this reason the eye becomes the important medium through which observations are made. The animals should first be viewed at a distance of from twenty-five to thirty feet as is shown in Fig. 1. The animals should be displayed in a manner that will give the boys ample opportunity to view them thoroughly from all angles. It is desirable to let the boys view the animals in action as well as at show ring "attention." The teacher must make certain that the student knows what to observe and how to evaluate the observations by the comparative method. Merely looking at an animal is not judging.

The next step might be to have the students make close inspection of the animals. This step is shown in Fig. 2. This should not consist of a thorough massage of the animal as is often the case, but of a careful handling to gain impressions not obtainable through the eye, and to confirm the decisions made through the previous observations. The tendency of the boys to rush at the animals and promiscuously "paw them over" should be discouraged in all judging work.

After the brief, close inspection, the students should again step away from the animals for the final observations and evaluations. The final step is to place the ring. The final placing should be followed by a complete discussion by students and the teacher. The placing should always be discussed in terms of the ideal animal set up in the beginning. Disagreement on placings may be due to differences in the ideals used as standards, or it may be caused by the inability of the students to observe and evaluate accurately in terms of the ideal. This emphasizes again the value and importance of building the ideal in the minds of the boys as a foundation for effective judging.

Making Practical Applications of Judging Abilities

As a practical application of the judging work, the students should be encouraged to make evaluations of the animals of several herds in the community. The owner of the herd will, as a rule, be interested in the activity and can give the

boys many valuable suggestions based on his experiences with the animals. Each boy might assume that he is to buy an animal from the herd and then proceed to select the one he should buy. Many interesting situations should arise from such a procedure. Judging has not been well taught if the boys do not think of what they have learned in terms of the improvement of their home herd. The skills in judging should find expression in some form in the home practice work of the boys.

A. M. F.

ANNUAL LIVESTOCK JUDGING CONTEST

The annual judging contest for the judging teams of the agriculture students in the agriculture departments of the Minnesota public schools will be held at University Department of Agriculture, University Farm, St. Paul, May (10), 11, and 12, 1928. General livestock (horses, beef cattle, hogs, and sheep) will be judged one half day, dairy cattle another half day, and probably poultry. Definite rules and regulations are prepared by a committee of which Mr. Paul Calrow, State Supervisor, is chairman. The other members of the committee are members of the College of Agriculture faculty most closely concerned.

The students and faculty members of the Division of Agricultural Education will represent the University in acting as hosts to the high school students and agriculture instructors during their sojourn at University Farm. Committees on housing and on conducting the various judging contests have been organized by the Agricultural Education club.

A section in the dormitory has been reserved. A committee will be in the Agricultural Education general office to receive all instructors and their students and assign them to rooms in the dormitory. Meals will be available at the University Farm Cafeteria. Forms for entering students in the different contests will be furnished to the schools by Mr. Calrow. During the hours free from the judging work students will be given an opportunity to see those things of greatest interest to them at University Farm and at other points in the Twin Cities. Every effort will be made by the University Department of Agriculture to make the visit of our friends pleasant and profitable.

A. V. S.