

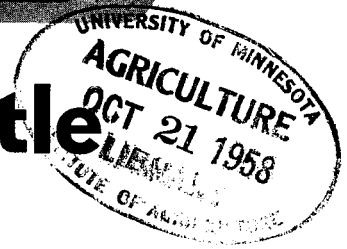
farm and home

FACT SHEET

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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Judging Beef Cattle

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Practice and training in judging beef cattle are essential for 4-H Club and FFA members who compete in judging contests. Knowledge thus gained also aids the farmer in selecting animals for his breeding herd, the feedlot, or for exhibition at livestock shows.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

Type is an ideal or standard of perfection which combines all of the features that contribute to the animal's usefulness for a specific purpose.

Conformation is the form or build of an animal as determined by the shape and size of its various parts.

Finish is the degree and distribution of fat cover, often referred to as "condition."

Substance refers to size of bone, size of frame, and amount of muscling.

Quality is refinement of hair, hide and bone, and general smoothness. Quality of flesh refers to the firm mellow flesh of a fat animal.

Feet and legs on breeding animals should be sound and correct. Sickie or bowed hocks, crooked front legs, and weak pasterns are serious faults. Feet and legs are not given much consideration in judging market classes.

Sex character and temperament. In a breeding class the male should be dominantly masculine and the female definitely feminine. Nervous, vicious animals should be avoided. Steers with definitely masculine heads and heavily crested necks should be discriminated against.

Breed type is a combination of characteristics of each breed with respect to color, conformation, and other distinguishing features.

Dressing percentage is the yield of carcass in percent of live weight. The degree and distribution of finish is the chief factor contributing to a high dressing percentage. Trim middles, light hides, and correct conformation favorably affect carcass yield.

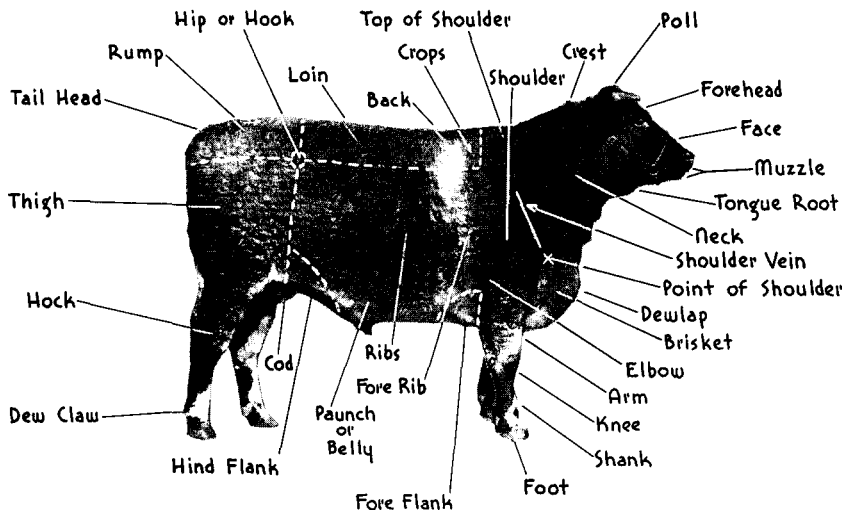
JUDGING MARKET CLASSES

Market classes in judging contests usually are steers but may be heifers. The slaughter grades for steers and heifers, from highest to lowest classification, are: prime, choice, good, standard, utility, cutter, and canner. Judges usually handle market class cattle to determine the degree and distribution of finish and quality of the hide.

The most important judging factors are, in this order, finish, conformation and type, dressing percentage, quality. Unless there is considerable difference in conformation, the animal carrying the most finish usually is placed at the top of the class. However, the obese and overfat animal is to be avoided. Waste fat has

very little value.

The finish should be uniform, smooth and mellow to the touch. Finish over the back, loin, and

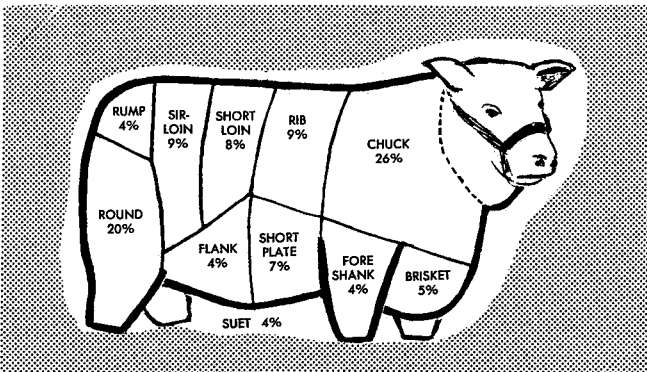


Soundness indicates freedom from irregular or abnormal body parts caused by disease, accident, or heredity.

rump is more important than finish over the side of the shoulder and on the lower rib. But uniformity of finish is highly desirable.

Type of an excellent market steer or heifer should be compact and intermediate in size. They can be too large or too small; dwarfy or undersized animals should be discriminated against. Size and weight for age are important. An animal of intermediate size that will grow efficiently and mature at a desirable market weight is to be preferred.

Conformation of the ideal finished steer should include a short neck, neat at the throat; a full deep shoulder, neatly blended with the neck and fore rib; a wide, thickly fleshed back; a wide thick loin, and a long wide level rump; and a wide plump round, having good depth and fullness in the twist. The hook bones should be neatly laid in and well covered with flesh. The topline should be straight and level. The underline should be straight, with a full fore flank and good let-down to the rear flank. The head should be medium-short and broad, and the muzzle should be wide.



Wholesale carcass cuts and percentages (ideal steer).

JUDGING BREEDING CATTLE

Type for breeding beef cattle should include the same meaty, compact conformation described for market steers. Breed type and size should be considered. Cows and heifers should be feminine-headed; bulls, masculine-headed. Breeding cattle should have adequate substance of bone and be straight and strong on their feet and legs.

CATTLE JUDGING TERMS

Commendable terms are: More finish; more uniform cover of finish; smoother finish; more finish over the shoulder, etc. More natural muscling on the back and loin; a more level rump; a deeper fuller round, more depth in the twist; deeper in his flanks; more neatly laid in at the hooks; a higher dressing percentage. More spring of rib; wider chest floor; more depth of rib. More muscling, or more feminine. More substance of bone; straighter, stronger set of feet and legs; more compact; more style and breed type; a straighter topline.

Terms of criticism are: Lacks finish; patchy at the tailhead; shallow twist; light in the rounds; shallow-bodied; pinched in the heart girth; plain-headed (bulls and cows); crooked in front legs; sickle-hocked; weak pasterns; weak back.

SAMPLE SET OF JUDGING REASONS

MARKET STEERS -- "I placed this class of (name of breed) steers 2, 3, 1, 4. I placed 2 over 3 because he has more finish. He has more finish over his back loin and rump, down over the point of his shoulder, and on his ribs. He has a thinner hide and a trimmer middle, therefore he would have a higher dressing percentage. However, I grant that 3 is a lower set, heavier muscled, more compact steer.

"I placed 3 over 1 because he is a more compact, heavier muscled steer. In my opinion, 3 and 1 are very nearly equal in degree of finish, but 3 has a larger, deeper round and he is deeper in his twist. He has a thicker loin. He has more muscling and more width in his rump, and he has more width and fullness of shoulder. He is also shorter in his neck and he is deeper in his rear flank.

"I place 1 over 4 because he is carrying more finish and he has an advantage in conformation. He has a thicker, more mellow fat cover from front to rear than does 4; he is also a thicker, more compact steer. He is lower set and he has more depth of body, is deeper and fuller in his shoulder and heart girth, and has a deeper, more heavily muscled round. No. 4 is a rather upstanding steer; he lacks muscling in his quarters, and is cut up in his flanks. He lacks quality, has a heavy hide, and is coarse-boned."

BREEDING HEIFERS -- "I placed this class of (name of breed) junior yearling heifers 3, 4, 1, 2. I placed 3 over 4 because she has more size and scale for her age. Not only is she larger, but she is standing on more substance of bone. She is also deeper bodied and has more spring of rib than 4. She is more heavily muscled on her back, loin and rump, and she has more depth and fullness of round. She has a straighter set of legs and she is stronger in her pasterns. She has a straighter topline and a more nearly level rump. However, 4 is more compact and lower set than 3, and 4 has more breed type and femininity about her head and neck.

"I placed 4 over 1 because she is more compact than 1. She is a heavier quartered heifer than 1, and she has more fullness and depth of shoulder. She is deeper bodied, having more spring and depth of both fore and rear rib. She has more fullness of loin and a deeper, fuller round than 1. She also has an advantage in breed type. She has a shorter head, with more width through her muzzle and forehead. She has a more prominent eye and appears to have a more gentle disposition. She has a more feminine head and neck. She is cleaner at her throat and her neck blends more smoothly with her shoulder.

"I placed 1 over 2 because she is a larger, deeper bodied, more compact heifer. She has considerably more depth of body and is heavier muscled. She also shows more breed type than 1. I placed 1 last in this class, because she lacks breed type and substance. She has a long narrow head, a long neck, and is too upstanding. She is shallow bodied, light-boned, and has a narrow rump and high tailhead."

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