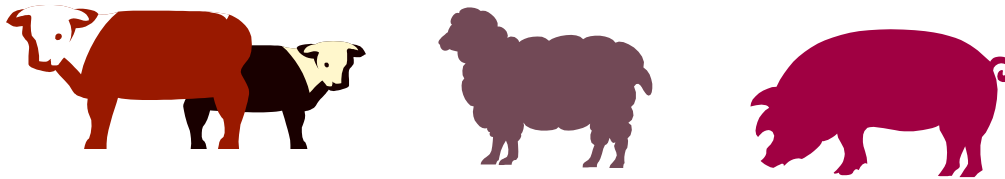


JUDGING 4-H LIVESTOCK PROJECTS



How does “judging” a project affect a 4-H member?

Judging is a significant part of many 4-H experiences. It is intended to be a positive part of the learning for the 4-H member and others. It reinforces learning when applied positively. But if it becomes a search for demerits, judging can be destructive of self-esteem, causing a loss of interest in the program and in 4-H. The attitude we have toward judging is critical to the value of judging as a positive part of the 4-H program. When evaluating the process of judging, the most important criteria for its use are the growth and development of the 4-H member and the new skills, understanding and abilities that they have gained.

Judging a 4-H project brings attention to only part of the total 4-H learning process and opportunity. It is important to focus on the total 4-H program by helping the participants recognize the many facets of the program. Youth and adults gain through the many accomplishments that occur throughout the total 4-H program and year.

Participation in a “project” allows youth to have necessary developmental experiences. Children ages 5-19 also need to develop a sense of identity. They are not faced only with the task of discovering who they are but also with discovering who they can become; and the creating, sharing, exhibiting and judging of these projects is therefore one of the most meaningful parts of 4-H. Projects can provide many of the necessary experiences needed by children and adolescents to develop in positive and healthy ways.

When a judge is successful, the evaluation of a project is for the 4-H member a most positive and exciting part of the total 4-H experience. However, when judging is technically correct for subject but inappropriate in terms of youth development, it can be harmful to the 4-H member.

The project is not an end in itself, nor does it illustrate all the learning that takes place; it displays a portion of what the child is capable of doing, and it shows what the 4-H member has attempted and accomplished. While this is important as part of a youth's development, the total development of the 4-H member is more important than the completion of the project.

Ethics are also an important element of our youth's character development. Ethical decisions in regards to their project animals are important. As judges, we need to support ethical treatment and decisions. Dr. Jeff Goodwin from Idaho has posed four questions for youth to consider when making decisions regarding their animals. These questions are: 1) Will it break FDA rules? 2) Is it fraud? 3) Is it a practice of real world agriculture? and 4) Will the public have trouble accepting the action or practice? If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” then the practice needs to be reconsidered.

Suggestions for the Judge

Judges can contribute significantly to the growth and development of 4-H youth through the showing and judging process. The judge serves as a representative of the educational youth program and the outside world. The judge is the link between the 4-H project, 4-H member and a standard of performance.

The information above and the points that follow will help judges appropriately complete their role in the 4-H program and uphold the purpose and value of 4-H and livestock projects.

1. Remember - Youth Development is the purpose of the project. Livestock is our common interest, youth are our common concern.

2. Interact with the project member whenever possible. Smile and be friendly. Your relaxed appearance and manner will help the youth to feel more at ease.
3. Note achievement and success of the child's investment no matter how small.
4. If possible, be familiar with the total project goals, purposes, objectives and materials. Read the premium book and ask questions of the superintendents before the show begins so you understand all possible aspects of the particular event.
5. Develop and use standards regarding the animal and compare each animal to those standards. Be aware of and avoid personal preferences. Evaluate each animal with the same intensity and procedures.
6. Be consistent with your patterns and directions. Work out your signals and directions with the ring people ahead of time to cut down on confusion for the youth.
7. Recognize developmental levels of different ages of exhibitors. This is especially important as you ask questions of the youth project member.
8. Give your reasons in a loud clear voice. Use understandable terms for not only the project members but the general public as well. Try to talk as much of the class as possible – at least make a comment or two about all the ribbon groups. If you feel you can't make oral comments to the audience about all the entries, make at least a comment or two to each individual exhibitor.
9. Your Judging Philosophy - You need to recognize and be positive about the educational opportunity which is happening for the youth in the showing. You need to be confident in your decisions and consistent in your selections. Your reasons will help the exhibitors think about which changes they need to make for their next project year. Tell them about the "ideal" and explain how to identify the traits and select the outstanding individuals. Being consistent with your selections and reasons will also educate the general public and reinforce the selections you make throughout the show.

And last but not least, you are a role model to the young people in the showing. Most current judges can name someone who influenced them to pursue the judging role. Keep that in mind when you choose your words, your mannerisms, actions and reactions. Be a positive role model for future judges.

Have four important words in your judging philosophy:

- *FIRM**
- *FAIR**
- *FRIENDLY**
- *CONSISTENT**



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