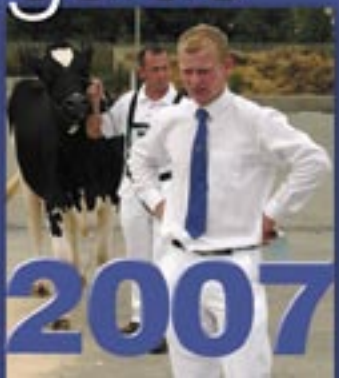
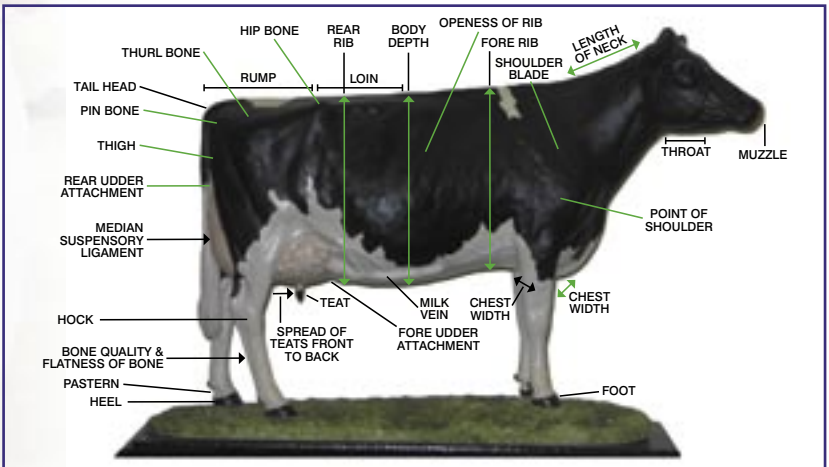
hyb Stockjudging guide



2007

Stockjudging Guide

Love it or hate it, stockjudging is a major part of the Holstein Young Breeders calendar with competition at club and national level, as well as allied competitions in organisations such as Young Farmers.
Learning to judge can have far reaching benefits as it encourages decision making, problem solving, develops communication skills and together with all HYB activities gives the opportunity to forge life long friendships. So, if you've not done it already, now's the time to get started.
This guide aims to build up the basics of judging and will help beginners as well as those with some judging experience.



THE UK HOLSTEIN TRUE TYPE MODEL COW

Parts of the cow

The starting point for judging has to be knowledge of the parts of a dairy cow and the use of correct terminology. This is especially important to young farmers who may be more used to judging pigs or sheep. Sounding confident and giving a feeling of assurance or certainty is paramount when giving reasons and one easy way of doing this is using the right phase at the right time to describe the part of the cow in a comparative way. For example, 'bags' are for shopping, they are not part of a cow and instead the udder is the part of the cow which produces milk!

Deciding how much emphasis to give different parts of the cow when judging

Having spent time learning the parts of a dairy cow, it then becomes a question of how important things are. For example it is interesting to know that a dew claw is at the bottom of a foot, but I have never heard it mentioned in a set of reasons, nor should it be. It is perhaps more relevant that it is clean when an animal goes in the show ring! However it **is** important that the suspensory ligament is obvious and clearly defined as it ensures the whole udder is attached to the body.

One explanation as to why we give reasons on a class is to explain our own preferences. Human nature means that to some people feet and legs will be more crucial than to others, and by giving reasons you can justify the criteria which are important to **you** in a cow. As a general rule of thumb, however, it is important to remember the relative emphasis placed on the parts of the cow by classifiers, which are as follows;

Mammary	40%
Feet and Legs	25%
Dairy Strength	25%
Rump	10%

Bear this in mind when analysing the relative strengths and weaknesses of a cow or dairy animal and also when comparing a number of animals in a class. Try to establish a pattern when judging a number of classes as it will show you to be consistent and reliable. There are also a number of recognised defects, which if seen in an animal should be mentioned in the reasons and placings may need to be altered accordingly.

Structural defects and discriminations

All of the following should be seriously discriminated against

Advanced anus
Abdominal rupture
Undershot or overshot jaw
Webbed teat
Wry face
Wry tail

Comparing the parts of the cow

When a class of cows or heifers enters the ring, it is best to start by getting an overview of the whole class, so if possible stand in the centre of the ring and let the animals move around the outside, considering the make up of the animal from a distance. This will give you an opportunity to consider the overall balance and scope of the animal, before approaching each animal in turn to study it from every angle and make decisions based on relative good and bad points. First impressions are usually good and can help to avoid changing placings lots of times. You may find an easy first and last place, and then place the rest in the class, while in the next class there might be an obvious top three and bottom three - use your natural instincts.

From the front of a cow you will be able to analyse its chest width, width of muzzle and feminity about the head, while a side profile will provide information on such traits as size, body depth, both of fore and rear rib, fore udder attachments, teat placement and set of rear legs. The angle of the

hook to pin bones is also visible, with a good rump being slightly sloping down towards the rear of the animal. Standing and watching the cow walk away from you will enable you to consider the rear udder in terms of height and width as well as strength of ligament and shallowness of the udder. It will also show the ability of the animal to walk (its locomotion), and as part of the rump, rump width is best viewed from the rear. Also remember to view the other side of the animal, as things are not always as they seem and some animals can show differences from one side to the other, which would need highlighting in your reasons.

Taking some of the major points in turn, you will find below the desirable and undesirable!

Cow A

This cow has ring presence, with style and balance; she exhibits a strong topline and is dairy throughout. A strong fore udder is visible. This is a well balanced cow with good dairy strength.

Cow B

This cow has tremendous depth of body, but in comparison to A she lacks the dairyness. A is more feminine in the head and longer of neck. A is cleaner and more refined in the bone, as well as being more correct in front teat placement.

Cow C

C in comparison to both A & B: C lacks body depth and overall capacity. C does have a high and wide rear udder attachment, and can be seen to have a clearly defined ligament.

Cow D

This cow is longer than C. C is superior in terms of dairyness and udder quality, especially udder texture and veination. D is a wider, stronger cow throughout, with a more desirable slope to her rump.

Cow E

Both this cow and cow F lack the height and width of rear udder that the cows above have. This cow can be seen to have a little more set to the leg than is desirable, but she is dairy and angular throughout, although she lacks udder quality.

Cow F

This cow lacks overall balance and style. As you can see, the rear udder could be higher and more strongly attached. The cow looks to be coarse in the bone, especially in the hock.

Cow G

This cow is again exhibiting balance and dairy strength. There is a correct rump with slope from hooks to pins. The cow is full of milk and shows bloom to the udder with a strong fore udder, high rear udder and correct teat placement.

Cow H

As you can see this is an old cow, which has had 13 calvings when this photo was taken. This cow can be seen as wide chested, with a deep rib both fore and rear, although she is a little heavy boned.

Cow I

This udder shot shows a cow with great udder attachments. Teats are a good size and shape and are well placed. The median suspensory ligament is well defined, and attachments both fore and rear are strong. Compare this to cow L's udder.

Cow J

The rear view of this cow shows excellent rump width, there is a lot of distance between the hook bones, this creates capacity and eases calving.

Cow K

This picture illustrates a sloped correct rump in the nearest animal. By comparison, the whiter cow is high from hooks to pins, and is high over the tail head. This is partly because the thurls

are better placed (at 45°) in the darker cow.

Cow L

It is obvious that this cow is deep bodied; however this cow is very poor in the udder. It lacks fore udder attachment, the udder floor, is not level and has weak rear udder attachments.

Cow M

This photo illustrates a cow that lacks chest width. Also note the front legs turning slightly outwards, a good indication that an animal lacks chest width. The cow is also narrow in the muzzle, indicating a lack of width throughout.

Unfortunately there are a few other factors you will have to bear in mind, such as animals should be representative of the class they are in. This means that if it's a class of milking heifers you are judging, then the heifers should look like heifers, not mature milk cows.

On occasion, the class you are judging may be either dry cows or young heifers that have not calved. In both these instances, more importance must be placed on feet and legs, together with frame and capacity; do not try to second guess udder promise to any great extent.

Putting it all together and convincing the judge

Now you have analysed the animals in the class and decided on your placings, it is time to convince the judge that you are right by giving a clear and concise set of reasons that relate to the animals actually judged. Avoid preparing a standard set of reasons, as only about one class in a hundred judged will conform to your standard and you will not be marked highly. Your reasons instead should describe the placings as accurately as possible and compare the animals in the class. You need to convince the judge that you are happy and confident about your decisions without appearing clever or arrogant.

When writing your reasons, try to start with a descriptive statement rather than launching into your comparison. Be polite and courteous, an opening statement for example may be:

"Good afternoon master judge, it was a pleasure to judge this very strong class of mature Holsteins in milk which I placed in the order ABCXYZ. However I had no hesitation leading with the tall, deep bodied, well balanced black cow in first place."

Then move on to comparing the placings in a positive way, remember all animals belong to somebody and they could be their pride and joy, so try not to be over-critical or rude. Aim to start with the main obvious difference, and then only add another couple of differences. Do not give too many points, you will loose impact with your reasons, but do give a lower placed animal an advantage if it's important and obvious. Highlight

obvious observations as it will help the judge to remember the class and make your reasons memorable.

Right "I placed B over C because she moved on a straighter set of feet and legs, and was also more correct in the rump, and wider throughout. However I grant C, the red cow, as being higher in the rear udder attachment."

Wrong "B was a good legged cow, with a good rump and lots of body, I did not like C as she had a bad rump but a good bag."

It goes without saying that you should be clean and presentable when you go in to see the judge to give your reasons. Let your brain work faster than your mouth, so although you may be nervous, try to speak slowly and clearly. Making notes rather than writing your reasons in full may help you to focus and avoid you losing your place. Stand about two metres from the judge, do not wear a hat, do not chew gum or smoke, and stand up straight with your spare hand behind your back. At a more advanced level, if you can avoid reading from your notes this will count in your favour; try to look the judge in the eye. Try to use your voice to emphasis your reasons and the importance of parts of them. Avoid using slang in your comparison and be brief, if you exceed two minutes you will end up with time faults. Never apologise for a placing, your job is to convince the judge that your placings are right and validated. If a decision has been close then say so. Finally bring your reasons to a suitable conclusion, rather than walking out after comparing your last pair of animals, for example: "Those were my reasons for placing this strong class of in milk heifers in the order ABCXYZ. Thank you."

Example of the notes on your card;

Placings	ABXY
A/B	Taller, stronger FUA, loco
B/X	Scope, rump, RUW
	Grant X F& L
X/Y	X spotty
	Fore rib, dairyness
Y	Udder

This could translate into the following set of reasons;

"Good morning master judge. I placed this fantastic class of Holstein heifers in milk in the order ABXY

I started the class with a big, black heifer with an excellent udder. In placing it in first over B, I gave her the advantage of being taller, with a far stronger fore udder attachment, and she tracked and moved on a far more correct set of feet and legs.

Placing second over third, my cow in second had more size and capacity throughout. My cow in second showed a more desirable slope from hooks to pins, and had more width through the rear udder, I did however grant the spotty cow, X, with having a superior set of feet and legs.

I placed X in third over Y in fourth as she is deeper in the body, especially the fore rib, and exhibited more refinement and dairyness throughout.

I did however admire Y for her correctness in the udder in terms of teat placement and attachments. Those are my reasons for placing this class of heifers in the order ABXY, thank you."

Job well done, and good luck! Remember the more practice you get the easier it will become and there is no definite right answer! If you come across well and clearly, you will do yourself credit and remember, have fun.

Scotsbridge House
Scots Hill
Rickmansworth
Hertfordshire
WD3 3BB
01923 695200
info@holstein-uk.org
www.holstein-uk.org