

Livestock Judging

A Guide for Oral Reasons



Oral reasons play a big role in livestock judging contests. Contestants may be required to present two to eight sets of oral reasons. Although placing classes logically is the first priority, contestants can separate themselves from the competition with a good set of reasons.

The first step when preparing for success in the reasons room is understanding the format in which reasons are given. The format used helps paint a clear picture and allows the reasons official to listen and understand what is being said more easily. The format must include the following:

Opening statement

This statement includes the class name, your placing and your impression of the top animal or top pair.

Example: "I placed the class of market lambs 1-2-3-4. I easily sorted to a pair of heavily-muscled, product-driven wethers that are more correct in their handling quality."

Reasons for placing 1 over 2

This section immediately follows the opening statement and states the reasons and advantages for placing 1 over 2. If the two animals on top are close in ranking, the description must be specific (for example, 1's neck ties in higher at the top of his shoulder, he is leveler out of his hip and stands squarer from hock to ground). If the class winner is obvious, more general terms typically are used (for example, 1 is the nicest balanced and heaviest muscled, etc.).

Remember, these are general rules. Make sure what you are saying is specific to a particular class.

Grant advantages of 2 back over 1

After presenting the advantages of 1 over 2, you need to give credit to the second-place animal and list specific advantages that animal has over the class winner.

Criticize the second-place animal

A criticism is needed to reinforce why the animal gets placed second. The criticism should be specific to that animal only. Don't use comparative terms such as "narrower, lighter muscled or poorer balanced." Instead, specifically criticize the animal: "I placed him second because he flattens to the base of his leg and is frail structured." You should have the same criticisms of a particular animal whether it is by itself or in a pen of 50 because they are specific to that animal alone.

Middle pair opening

Now make a statement transitioning into your middle pair. Example: "In a contrasting middle pair of wethers, I like the balance advantage of 2 over 3."

Use the same format throughout the middle and bottom pairs.

- Reasons for placing 2 over 3
- Grant advantages of 3 back over 2
- Criticize the third-place animal

Opening statement in the bottom pair.

- Reasons for placing 3 over 4
- Grant advantages of 4 back over 3
- Criticize the fourth-place animal

After criticizing the fourth-place animal, DO NOT end with the statement: "For these reasons, I placed the class" This is unnecessary and repetitive.

One way to keep your thoughts organized in your judging book is to set up your notes similarly to how you would describe the animals in a set of reasons.

At the top of the page, write the class name and number 1 through 4. Use this space to write individual animal IDs and your first impression of each animal. Keep your first impressions in mind because you will want to say those first in your set of reasons.

Class name: Market Lambs I

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

| | | |
|--------------------|-------|----------------------------|
| Class placing: | | |
| Opening statement: | | |
| 1/2 | 2/1 | 2 |
| Advantages | Grant | Criticize 2nd place animal |
| Opening | | |
| 2/3 | 3/2 | 3 |
| Advantages | Grant | Criticize 3rd place animal |
| Opening | | |
| 3/4 | 4/3 | 4 |
| Advantages | Grant | Criticize 4th place animal |

If you notice, this format does not provide an opportunity to criticize the first-place animal. The grant in the top pair is the appropriate place to give credit and advantages to the second-place animal, which may highlight the faults of the class winner.

Additional factors involved in giving a successful set of reasons

- ✓ Accuracy is the single most important factor in a set of reasons given in the correct format. Describe the animals correctly, regardless of your placing.
- ✓ Use correct terminology. To describe animals accurately, you must use proper terminology. Generally, the same terminology is not used between species. Avoid using nondescriptive terms such as good, nice and average when comparing one animal with another.
- ✓ Presentation. Your delivery in the reasons room should allow the reasons official to listen and follow your placing easily. Good presentation qualities include:
 - Not using your notes
 - Being confident: Look directly at the official during your reasons; looking down shows a lack of confidence.
 - Speaking clearly: Annunciate your words so they are easy to understand.
 - Speaking with volume to your voice: This show confidence. Don't be shy.
 - Being conversational: Don't shout at the official.
 - Flow: A good set of reasons is not choppy; it flows together and is easy to listen to and understand.
- ✓ Lastly, be creative with your phrases and have fun.

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For more information on this and other topics, see www.ndsu.edu/4h

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