
4-H LEADER MANUAL

JUDGING RABBITS

WHY JUDGE?

Judging is an art practiced every time you say, “I like this one better than that one.” Judging helps you organize your thoughts and make a decision. Classes of oral or written reasons are examples where you are asked to express yourself in a brief, concise, and forceful way. Once you have learned the principles of judging you can apply them to all kinds of situations.

HOW TO JUDGE

Judging usually refers to a class of four items or animals of the same age and sex to be judged at a time. The class is numbered or lettered 1, 2, 3, 4 or A, B, C, D. As you proceed to judge you refer to the group by name, e.g., the class of *New Zealand White Jr. Does*, and to individuals by number or letter. The judging procedure is composed of five parts: the Situation, the Standards, Observing, Comparing, Deciding.

The Situation. Knowing the situation is important in influencing our decision. The decision on “Which book shall I read?” is influenced greatly by whether you want to learn history, mathematics, or just want to be entertained. Likewise in judging livestock. Is the class of rabbits before you to be used for show, fur, or meat?

The Standard. To judge products you must

know what qualities you are looking for. To make wise decisions you must have a standard in mind. The *Standard of Perfection* for show rabbits was developed and perfected over a long period of time by experienced breeders and judges. The *Standard* has different values for each characteristic you are to observe. They are arranged systematically by type, fur, color, markings, and condition.

Observe. The key to being a good judge is to be able to observe carefully the relative values of all parts under consideration. As you observe the class, concentrate. Keeping the *Standard* in mind, visually separate and pair the animals before handling and confirming your decision.

Compare. Handle each animal carefully and systematically. As we observe with eyes and hands, we are constantly making comparisons in our mind. These comparisons are with the *Standard* and are made between different pairs in the class being judged.

Decide. This is the final step. Think of the four individuals as a class and each individual in the class as a number or letter. You have observed and compared the individuals in the class with each other using the *Standard* as a reference. Your decision is, starting from the left, the third animal is first, the fourth animal is second, the second animal is third, and the first animal is last. Expressing a class placing of this kind using numbers would be 3, 4, 2, 1; using letters—C, D, B, A.

GRADING A JUDGING CLASS PLACING

The official judge should determine the official placing and establish by number the margin of difference between each of the three pairs. These numbers, called "cuts," represent the basis for arriving at a score. If there is a close pair, there is little difference and the cut is small. If the differences are large, then the cut should be large because you should be able to separate those animals quickly.

The participant, in judging a class, makes six decisions when ranking the four individuals. Each animal is compared with each other animal. In the Illinois system the cuts or distance between pairs are in multiples of 10 and must add up to 100.

In the following example the class of Red Satin Senior Bucks is arranged 2, 4, 3, 1 as they are placed. The judge determined that there is little

difference between 2 and 4 and assigns a cut of 10. There is a great deal of difference between 4 and 3, so the judge assigns a cut of 60. The difference between the last pair is 30. The official placing is 2, 4, 3, 1.

Even though not all parts of the rabbit are included in the list of points, they are all important because the entire animal must be as near as possible to the breed ideal. The Red Satin breed was chosen because both body type and fur quality are equally important.

The judge in making the penalty 10-60-30 is saying the top pair is close. A penalty of 60 is given to indicate that a switch between the top pair and the bottom pair is serious, or pay attention to the type and fur. A penalty of 30 between the bottom pair is a serious cut because you should know the difference between a disqualification (missing toenail) and a cut.

EXAMPLE OF A CLASS OF RED SATIN SENIOR BUCKS

Characteristics	Points	Rabbit 2	Rabbit 4	Rabbit 3	Rabbit 1
Sex		Male	Male	Male	Male
Weight—Lbs.		9 1/2	9	10 1/2	8 (Underwt)
Body Type	45				
Fleshing		Firm	Firm	Loose—flabby	Firm
Body		Tapered	Tapered	Tapered	Narrow—racy
Hips		Full	Rough	Very rough	Bony
Shoulders		Meaty	Meaty	Meaty	Narrow
Fur	20				
Texture		Resilient	Resilient	Poor rollback	Silky
Density		Dense	Thick	Thin	Soft
Balance		Even	Even	Long guard Hairs	Uneven
Condition		Prime	Prime	Molting	Stained
Color	15				
Surface		Orange-red	Orange-red	Red	Stained
Undercolor		Orange	Orange	Smut	Smut
Sheen	10	Lustrous	Lustrous	Indistinct	Dull
Feet & Legs (toenails)	0	Straight—short Dark	Straight—short Dark	Long—heavy Dark	Straight Missing
Condition	10	Firm—vigorous	Firm—vigorous	Flabby—sluggish	Thin—vigorous
Total	100				

REASONS FOR YOUR PLACING

As you observed and compared, you should strive to have a picture of the class clearly in mind. This is what concentration is all about. Practice looking away from the class and describe each individual in detail. Study the animals. Use notes only to summarize.

Second, know what you are talking about. Know the terms associated with the animals you are judging. In rabbit judging, nomenclature is a must as well as knowledge of descriptive terms such as balance, depth, and width.

Third, be your best. Stand squarely on your feet. In a clear, poised voice state your placing and the reasons for it. If the reasons are written, write clear, short, concise sentences of your observations and comparisons.

The main objective of the reasons class is to teach decision making and self-expression. You must tell why you placed a class as you did. Good judges remember the individual animals and explain in a logical manner their reasons for placing the class. Your reasons should be accurate, sincere, and presented in a pleasing and confident manner.

Important Points in Giving Reasons

- *Accuracy.* Accuracy is a must. You need to see the obvious and the important points in the class and to discuss them correctly and completely. With an accurate set of reasons, you may often gain points lost as a result of poor placing. Be concise and make your reasons fit the class.
- *Delivery.* A poor delivery may result in a low score regardless of accuracy. Reasons must be presented in a manner that is pleasant to hear, clear, and easy to follow. Speak slowly, distinctly, loud enough to be understood, and with "conviction." Look the judge squarely in the eye and act confident, but not brazen. Be sincere. Use correct grammar. Don't twist your fingers. Slow down and emphasize important points and words. Stand six to eight feet from the judge. Stand erect with your hands behind your back and your cap or hat in hand.

- *Organization.* Bring out the important and general points first, followed by the more specific and detailed points later. For example, usually the last points mentioned in each pair on a market class or fryer rabbits would be the fur quality and condition.
- *Completeness.* Bring out all the major differences between the placings. Omit small points which may cause doubt or those of which you are unsure.
- *Length.* A well-organized, properly delivered set of reasons should not exceed two minutes.
- *Terms.* Know the meaning of the terms you use. Use them correctly. Read EM0697, *Glossary of Rabbit Terms*.

OUTLINE FOR A SET OF REASONS

A class of four animals is divided into three pairs: a top pair, a middle pair, and a bottom pair. A basic outline for a set of reasons (for a placing of 1, 2, 3, 4) would be as follows:

Introduction

1. Give the name of the class and how you placed it. This tells the judge you saw the class and have them correctly identified as to breed, variety, sex, age, etc.
2. Give criticisms and outstanding good points, or both, about the top animal. In some cases a general statement about the entire class may fit better.

Top Pair

3. Reasons for placing 1 over 2, using comparative terms.
4. Grants for 2 over 1, using comparative terms to point out advantages of 2 over 1. (In close placings several grants may be desirable as long as they are true.)
5. Criticisms of 2, using descriptive terms. Always criticize an animal on its own merits rather than comparing it with the animal placed above.

Middle Pair

- 6. Reasons for placing 2 over 3.
- 7. Grants for 3 over 2.
- 8. Criticisms of 3.

Bottom Pair

- 9. Reasons for placing 3 over 4.
- 10. Grants for 4 over 3, if any.
- 11. Criticisms of 4.

Summary

- 12. Repeat the name of the class and how you placed it. End with the statement, "For these reasons I placed this class of _____ 1, 2, 3, 4."

A Set of Reasons

The numbers at the left refer to the "Outline for a Set of Reasons" given above and the reasons are on the class of Red Satin Senior Bucks given in this exercise.

- 1. I placed this class of Red Satin Senior Bucks 2, 4, 3, 1.
- 2. 2 was smooth, meaty, and well-muscled. He carries a stronger arch over the back starting immediately behind the ears, carrying the arch fully over the loin and nicely over the hips. However, he should have been thicker and meatier over the hips and rump. Fur quality and color were excellent.

PRACTICE JUDGING SHEET—NEW ZEALAND WHITE SENIOR DOES

Characteristics	Points	Class of Senior Does			
		Rabbit 1	Rabbit 2	Rabbit 3	Rabbit 4
Sex		Doe	Doe	Doe	Doe
Weight—Lbs.		11	11	10	13
Body Type	60				
Hindquarters (20)		Rounded	Well-rounded	Undercut	Full
Midsection (18)		Firm—meaty	Firm—meaty	Full	Potty
Shoulders (17)		Firm—tapered	Good depth	Narrow	Flabby
Head and Ears (5)		Balanced	Well-filled	Masculine	Long—narrow
		Thick	Well-shaped	Well-shaped	Long—thin
Feet and Legs (0)		White	White	White	No tattoo
(Toenails)		(1 broken)			White
Eyes(0)		Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink
Tail (0)		Straight	Straight	Straight	Straight
Fur	15				
Texture (6)		Good body	Fine	Good Fly-back	Poor Fly-back
Density (4.5)		Dense	Soft	Dense	Thin
Condition (4.5)		Bright	Stained	Good Balance	Molt
Color	15				
Surface		White	White	White	White
Undercolor		White	White	White	White
Condition	10	Firm—Vigorous	Firm—Vigorous	Thin—Vigorous	Flabby—Vigorous
Total	100				

3. In my *top pair* I placed 2 over 4 because 2 was a smoother, meatier rabbit that was deeper and thicker in the loin. 2 was also smoother over the hips and rump than 4. Fur quality for 2 was equal to that of 4.
4. 4 did carry more width and fullness over the shoulders.
5. However, 4 lacked depth of body and fullness over the rump.
6. In the *middle pair*, I placed 4 over 3 because 4 was much more typical of the breed, and smoother over the rump and hips. 4 was also deeper bodied and had a meatier loin. Fur quality and color were superior.
7. I'll grant that 3 had a more masculine head than 4.
8. I criticized 3 for being too flat over the back and too rough over the rump. 3 also was over-conditioned with a loose, flabby skin. Fur condition for 3 lacked texture and density with uneven dark undercoat and guard hair. He was also in molt with lack of sheen.

9. In the *bottom pair*, I placed 3 over 1. 1 had a disqualification and several faults which prevented him from being placed any higher in the class.
10. 1 was an inferior rabbit. He had no outstanding qualities.
11. 1 was underweight and of poor type and fur quality.
12. For these reasons I placed this class of Red Satin Senior Bucks 2, 4, 3, 1.

Whether you are asked to give your reasons orally or in written form, there should be little difference in the content. When writing your reasons be sure to write plainly, make complete sentences, use good grammar, and punctuate correctly.

Judge the above class of NZW senior does. Consider points as well as elimination criteria. Study the *Standard* to verify the answer.



4-H Youth Development Program 

The *Standard of Perfection* is published and distributed by the American Rabbit Breeders Association, Inc.

By Daniel K. Andrews, Ph.D., Extension Poultry Scientist (retired), WSU Puyallup, Puyallup, Washington.

Issued by Washington State University Extension and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in furtherance of the Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension programs and policies are consistent with federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, sex, religion, age, color, creed, national or ethnic origin; physical, mental, or sensory disability; marital status or sexual orientation; and status as a Vietnam-era or disabled veteran. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office. Trade names have been used to simplify information; no endorsement is intended. Reprinted March 2002. Subject code 816. A.

EM4502E