

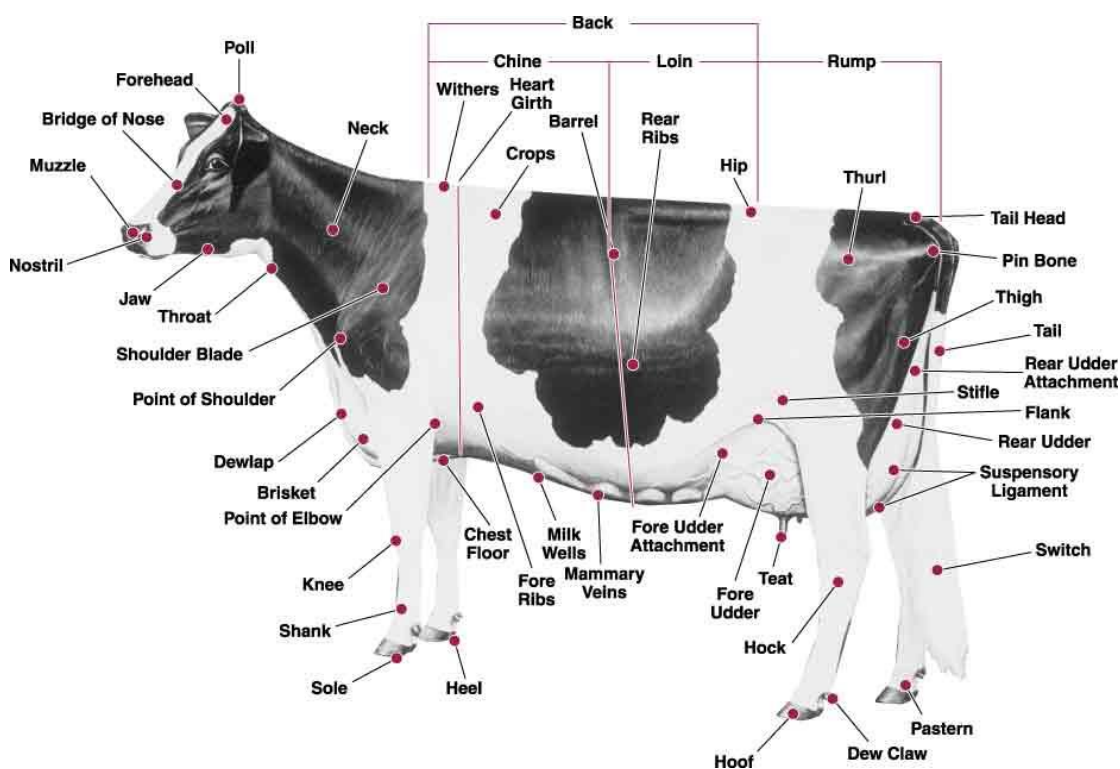
## Stock Judging Guide

Love it or hate it, stock judging is a major part of the HYB calendar, with competitions at Club and national level, as well as allied competitions in organisations such as NFYFC. Learning to judge can have far reaching benefits as it encourages decision making, problem solving and communication skills. Combined with the other HYB activities on offer, stock judging gives the opportunity to forge lifelong friendships. So, if there was ever any doubt, stock judging is definitely for you!

This guide aims to help you learn the basics of judging and will hopefully help both beginners and those with some judging experience.

### Parts of the cow

The starting point of judging has to be knowledge of the parts of a dairy cow and the use of correct terminology. 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 phrase at the right time to describe each part of the cow in a comparative way. For example, 'bags' are for shopping, they are not part of a cow - 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 into 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 & 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, whilst your placings may need to be altered accordingly.

## Structural Defects and Discriminations

Structural Defect	Show Ring Discrimination
abdominal rupture	serious
advanced anus	serious
corkscrew claw	serious
freemartin	very serious
Roman nose	slight
recessed or advanced tailhead	slight
spastic (crampy) syndrome	very serious, particularly in younger cows
teat fistula (side leak)	serious
undershot or overshot jaw	serious
webbed teat	serious
wry face	serious
wry tail	moderate, depending on degree of curvature

### 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. Stand, if possible, in the centre of the ring and let the animals move around the outside, considering the make-up of each animal from a distance. This will give you the opportunity to consider the overall balance and scope of each animal, before approaching them in turn to study them from every angle, making 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 one class, whilst in the next class it might be an obvious top three and bottom three; use your natural instinct.

From the front of a cow you will be able to analyse its chest width, width of muzzle and femininity about the head, whilst a side profile will provide information on such traits as size, body depth both of fore and rear rib, fore udder attachment and 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), whilst rump width is best viewed from the rear. Also remember to view the other side of the animal; 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.

**Looking at some of the major points, you will find examples of the desirable & undesirable below**

A. Dalesend Lutz Jean



This cow is tall, walks up hill with style, exhibits a strong topline and is dairy throughout. A strong fore udder is visible. This is a well-balanced cow with good dairy strength.

B. Dalesend Unique 32



This cow has tremendous depth of body, but in comparison to A she lacks 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.

C. Dalesend Integrity Rosanna



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

D. Dalesend Pansy 103



This cow is again taller and longer than C. C is, however, superior in terms of dairyness and udder quality, especially udder texture and venation. D is a wider and stronger cow throughout, with a

more desirable slope to her rump.

E. Dalesend Queen 4



Both this cow and the cow below 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.

F. Craigcrest AAA Ruby



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.

G. Ingham Integrity Maggie



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.

H. Dalesend Jessie 45



As you can see this is an old cow, having had 13 calvings at the time of this photo. This cow can be seen as wide chested, with a deep rib both fore and rear, although she is a little heavy boned.



I. Dalesend Red Rosina



This udder shot shows a cow with great udder attachment. The teats are of 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 the udder of L.

J. Sale 003



The rear view of this cow shows excellent rump width. There is a lot of distance between the hook bones, creating capacity and ease of calving.

K. Sale 005



This picture illustrates a correctly sloping rump in the near animal. By comparison, the whiter cow is high from hocks to pins and is high over the tail head. This is partly because the thurls are better placed (at 45°) in the darker cow.

L. Sale 006



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



This photo illustrates a cow which lacks chest width. Note the front legs turning slightly outwards, which is 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 an animal should be representative of the class it is in. This means that, if it is a class of in-milk heifers you are judging, the heifers should look like heifers and not mature milking 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 should be placed on the 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 that 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 relates to the animals you judged. Avoid preparing a standard set of reasons, as only about one class in a hundred will conform to your standard and you will not be marked highly. Your reasons should instead describe your 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 arrogant.

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

*“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 could be their pride and joy, so try not to be unpleasant or rude. Aim to start with the main obvious difference, and then only add another couple of other differences. Do not give too many points, as you will lose impact with your reasons, but do grant a lower placed animal with an advantage if it's important and obvious. Do highlight obvious observations, as this 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 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, but 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 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 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 emphasise your reasons and the importance of each part 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 was 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 Grant 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, tall, black heifer with an excellent udder. In placing her 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, 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.”*

**Remember the more practice you get the easier it will become, and there is no definite right answer. If you come across clearly and confidently you will do yourself credit. And, remember, have fun!**