LIVESTOCK JUDGING GUIDE

FOR 4-H CLUB MEMBERS

Cooperative Extension Service
Kansas State University • Manhattan

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Achieving Skill in Judging

Judging is making a careful analysis of animals or carcasses and measuring them against a standard that is commonly accepted as ideal.

Four steps are involved in judging animals or their carcasses:

1. **In**formation—The judge must know the intended use of the individuals that comprise the class.
2. Observation—The judge must carefully observe each individual in the class and note how it meets or fails to meet the requirements of its intended use.
3. Comparison—Each individual must then be compared with all others in the class to establish differences and similarities.
4. Conclusion—After completion of the first three steps, the judge must arrive at a logical placing for the class of animals or carcasses.

The ability to explain the placing of a class orally or in writing is very important to the improvement of livestock. Opinions must be expressed in clear, concise and understandable language if they are to be of benefit to others.

In addition to the improvement of livestock, the ability to justify decisions is extremely important in all aspects of life. Regardless of the profession, the importance of expressing one's ideas in a persuasive manner cannot be overemphasized.

In the training of livestock and meats judges, considerable emphasis is given to the formal procedure for stating reasons for placement. This is to give the trainee experience in organizing a clear, concise and accurate set of reasons. Consider the following points when preparing a set of reasons:

- Keep the reasons short and to the point.
- Avoid words, phrases or comments that do not add to the meaning of the reason.
- Discuss the class in a logical order, starting with the top individual and ending with last place.
- Reasons should be comparative, not descriptive, so as to establish a logical order of placing.
- Tell the truth, discussing only those things which you observed in that class.

Taking notes

Good notes are a must for presenting reasons orally.

A small notebook which opens as a book is best. You can use two pages for a class without having to turn pages.

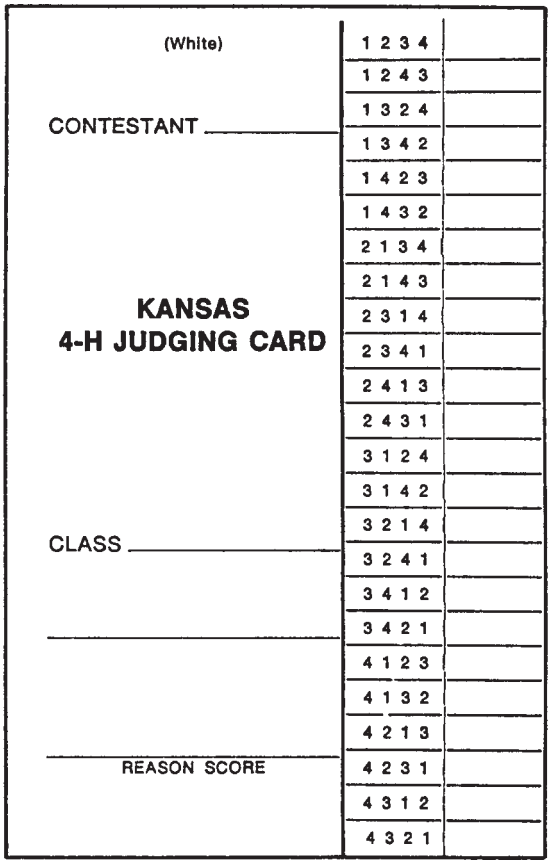
Use the left page of your notebook for general comments about each animal. Place the numbers in order down the extreme left side of the sheet. Jot down the first impression that you have about each animal.

After you have placed the class, use the right page for the comparisons, grants and criticisms of each pair. Then you can refer to the left page to see if you have mentioned the more important things that you noticed first.

To save time, develop some sort of system for abbreviating. For example, write "½" for quarter, "dp" for deeper, "lg" for longer, and "s&s" for size and scale.

Do not attempt to write out all of your reasons before you give them orally. This is unnecessary and takes up valuable time. Be sure you know the correct procedure for giving reasons orally.

Use your notes to list the important items that you want to say about each pair. Prior to the actual presentation of your reasons, you can use your notes to help you remember the class.



Marking the judging card

An example of the Kansas 4-H judging card is shown here. With a class of four animals, there are 24 possible ways to place the class. Always be sure to mark both your contestant number and the name of the class being judged on each card.

After making your final decision, circle the proper placing on the judging card. Be sure to circle only one placing. Before handing your card in to the officials, write down your chosen placing in your notebook for all classes.

Suggestions

Accuracy is the most important consideration when giving reasons. However, unless reasons are presented in a manner which is pleasant to hear, and clear and easy to follow, the value of accuracy is lost because much of what is said doesn't get through to the listener.

Here are suggestions on the organization and composition of oral reasons:

There are many different systems of organizing reasons. The system presented here is logical and clear, and can be used in all judging situations. Here is a basic outline for an entire set of reasons. It is followed by examples and comments on the specific steps involved.

(The placing for this example is 1–2–3–4).

Step 1. Give name of class and how you placed it.

Top Pair
- Step 2. Give reasons for placing 1 over 2, using comparative terms.
- Step 3. Grants for 2 over 1, pointing out advantages of 2 over 1.
- Step 4. Criticism of 2. Critical terms

Middle Pair
- Step 5. Reasons for placing 2 over 3.
- Step 6. Grants for 3 over 2.
- Step 7. Criticisms of 3.

Bottom Pair
- Step 8. Reasons for placing 3 over 4.
- Step 9. Grants for 4 over 3.

Step 10. Criticism of 4.

In giving reasons, a class of 4 is divided into 3 pairs—a top pair, a middle pair and a bottom pair. Use the same procedure for each pair.

For purposes of presenting the following examples, assume that a class of market steers placed 1–2–3–4.

Step 1. Class name and placing. To begin the reasons, state the name of the class and your placing.

Step 2. Reasons for placing 1 over 2. This should be done much the same as in a newspaper story—with the important, general points first, then details to complete the story. In judging market steers, examples of "general" terms are: nicer balanced, smoother, higher quality, thicker and higher yielding.

Mention differences with regard to these general factors in the lead statement, then details in the succeeding sentence or sentences. (Details may also be mentioned in the latter part of the lead statement.)

Example: "I placed 1 over 2 because he was a trimmer steer and was thicker and nicer balanced. He was a larger-framed steer that was wider over his loin, deeper and thicker through his quarter, and had a more uniform finish over his top and down over his ribs than 2."

It is important not to use too many terms in close succession because the terms come so fast the listener cannot possibly hear and evaluate all of them. (Example: "One was trimmer, middled thicker, nicer balanced, more upstanding, deeper ribbed, wider topped, thicker quartered steer than 2.")

Note the first example, which is rather long. The terms are divided by the words, "steer" and "and had." Especially in the case of terms used as adjectives, not more than two or three should be used in succession.

More terms of the kind, "wider over his loin" and "deeper in his quarter," can be used in succession because more words are required to mention each point, and it is easier for the listener to follow.

Try to avoid extremely long sentences when giving reasons. A variety of short and long sentences is easier to listen to and give.

Step 3. Grant for 2 over 1. "I grant (or realize or recognize) that 2 was a smoother, more stylish steer that was trimmer middled and stronger over his top than 1." (Always end a grant statement with "than" plus a number.)

Step 4. Criticism of 2. ". . . but I placed 2 second because he was a narrow topped, poorly balanced steer that was narrow through his quarter." Use descriptive terms while criticizing an animal. For example, say a steer is small framed or lighter muscled than the steer you placed above him.

An exception to this rule is if you are able to make a class comparison, such as: "I placed 3 fourth because he was a poorly balanced steer that was 'the lowest set, shortest sided, most conventional patterned steer in the class.'"

Use the same procedure for the middle and bottom pairs as you did for the top pair. These two pairs may be introduced by: "In the middle pair I placed 2 over 3 because . . ." and "In the bottom pair I placed 3 over 4 because . . ."

State reasons in complete sentences rather than phrases. A fundamental principle to keep in mind is that if it isn't grammatically correct, it isn't correct in a set of reasons.

Words and phrase that should not be used in oral reasons

There are differences of opinion regarding the use of some words and phrases in stating reasons. Each of the examples is considered undesirable by some people and all of them can be replaced with better words and phrases. Eliminating all of them will improve the presentation of your reasons.

- **Animal or individual**. Instead say "barrow," "gilt," "wether," "ewe," "steer," "heifer," etc.
- **It.** Instead say either "he" or "she."
- **I would like to see.** Instead of saying, "I would like to see 2 wider topped," point out the fault directly: "I criticize 2 because he is narrow over the top."
- **Lacks.** Avoid this term. Usually it is more effective to directly point out the fault than to say an individual lacks something. For example, instead of saying, "I criticize 4 because she lacks depth," say, "I criticize 4 because she is shallow."
- **For being or for.** Instead of "I criticize 3 for being shallow," say "I criticize 3 because she is shallow."
- **Carrying.** Example: instead of "carries down into a thicker quarter," say "is thicker through the quarter," or "has a thicker quarter."
- **Kind of (steer, barrow, etc.).** Instead of, "a smoother kind of a barrow," say simply, "a smoother barrow."
- **Is a heifer that is.** For example, "1 is a heifer that is smoother and typier." The phrase, "is a heifer that is," only adds unnecessary words and emphasize that 1 is a heifer. Say, "1 is a smoother, typier heifer."
- **I placed number 1 steer over number 2 steer.** The words, steer and number, be omitted. It is sufficient to say, "1 over 2."
- **I placed this class of Angus steers in the order of 1–2–3–4.** Leave out "in the order of" because the phrase adds nothing to the meaning.
- **Leaving or left.** Instead of, "I left 4 third because . . ." Say, "I placed 4 third because . . ." or "I criticize 3 because . . ."
- **For these reasons I placed this class.** This is unnecessary. Conclude the reasons with criticism of bottom individual.
- **Placing.** It is better to say, "I placed . . ."
- **Criticizing.** It is better to say, "I criticize . . ."

Presenting oral reasons

In presenting oral reasons it is extremely important to make the best impression possible. Always try to look your best when you step up to give your reasons.

It is not essential to be extremely dressed up, but a clean, well-groomed appearance is important. Never give reasons while chewing gum or tobacco. In addition, remove your hat prior to presenting the set. Try as hard as you can to be both pleasing to listen to and look at.

Here are additional things to consider in presenting oral reasons:

1. Be ready to present your reasons when called upon. However, if you have not had at least 10 minutes since presenting your last set of reasons, you can ask the judge for more time.
2. Never use notes when actually presenting oral reasons.
3. Most officials will give you your placing card. Check to make sure it's yours, then place it behind your back and start to give your reasons.
4. Don't stand too close to the official. The preferred distance is about 10 feet away.
5. Stand erect with your feet spread to about the width of your shoulders. Keep your hands behind your back with your card. Check your card when you change pairs, if necessary, to be sure you keep the numbers straight.
6. Impress the official by showing confidence in your placing. Look him/her squarely in the eye when you talk. If you can't look him/her in the eye, look at a spot on his/her forehead. This will give the appearance that you are maintaining eye contact.
7. Do not shout when you are giving your reasons but rather talk in a louder-than-normal, conversational voice.
8. Speak in a convincing tone.
9. Don't talk too fast. You want to be sure the official hears everything you have to say.
10. Vary the tone of your voice to emphasize the points you consider the most important.
11. Body movement or hand gestures may distract an official. Facial expressions are permissible, but be careful of excessive head movement.
12. If there are identifying marks or characteristics in a class, use them in your reasons to help you remember the class. (For example, a red-necked steer or a golden heifer.) These things also help to show that you were very observant.
13. A good set of reasons should not be more than two minutes long. If they are longer, the reasons become boring, the things you say are not the major points and your chances of error are greater.

Selecting breeding animals

The foundation of animal production is the breeding herd or flock.

Select animals that possess:

- indications of high reproductive efficiency.
- efficient conversion of feed.
- a type of pattern that will reproduce desirable carcass composition, fleece characteristics or performance capabilities.
- sound feet and legs and structural correctness. (See examples on page 6.)

The ability of the individual to meet these requirements is determined by two factors: heredity and environment.

Our modern production systems call for the use of records as an aid in determining the genetic potential of an individual and his/her response to environment. However, records cannot tell the complete story. Visual evaluation of the live animal is important in selecting superior breeding stock.

A live animal has many features in his/her make-up that aid in predicting his/her value in a breeding herd or flock. Train your eyes and mind to detect and evaluate these features. By measuring one animal against another, you can select the animal that will best fit into a profitable breeding program.

Selecting slaughter animals

The meat-type animal of today has a high percentage of muscle and a low percentage of fat.

The best indicators of muscling are:

- thickness through the rear quarter.
- natural thickness and turn over the edge of the top.
- muscling in the forearm.
- natural width of leg placement.

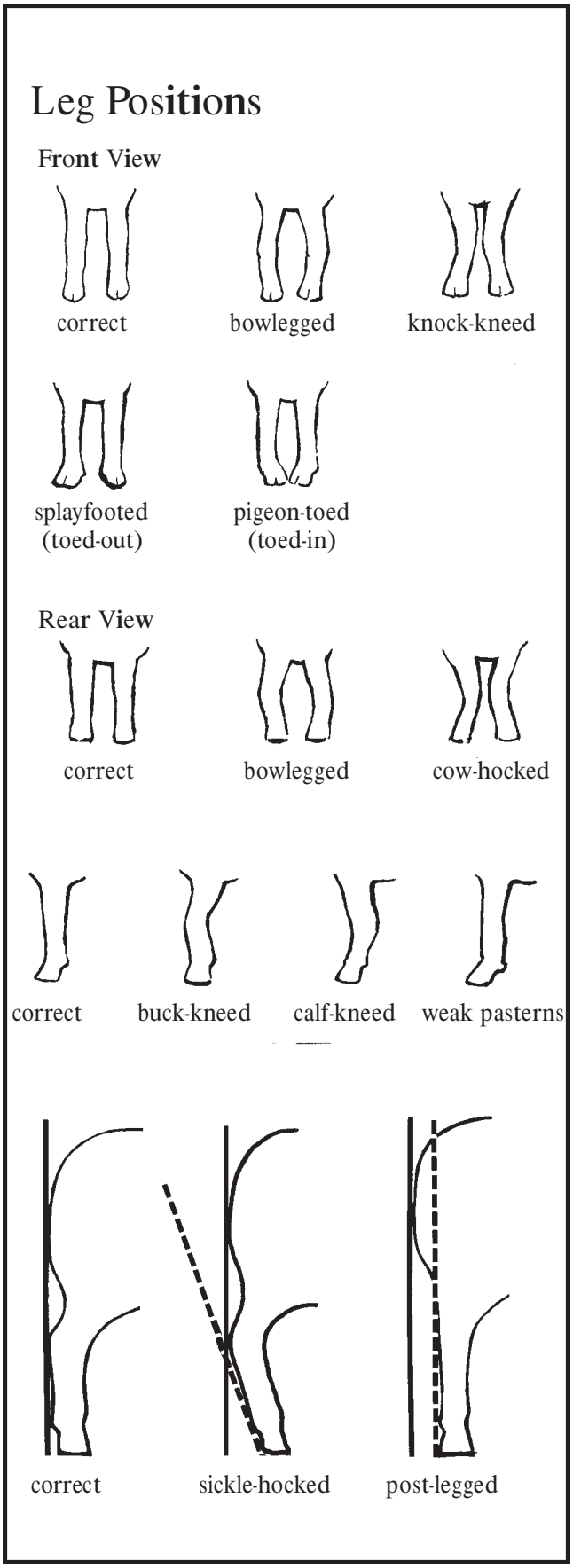
When observing these areas on a calf, be sure the thickness you see is due to natural muscling and not excess condition of fat.

Fat is measured by three criteria: kind, amount and location. To appraise the fat on a market animal observe the finish:

- along the edge of his top from his shoulders back to his tail head.
- along his side from his head to his rear quarter.
- along his underline from his neck to his twist.

Enough fat must be present to indicate quality in the carcass and to ensure acceptable palatability of the meat. Usually, it is considered desirable for a steer to have between .30 and .45 of backfat in order to meet both the carcass quality and cutability requirements. All fat in excess of this requirement is undesirable.

When judging in the show ring, not only is the carcass value of the individual important, but also the general pattern as it relates to efficiency of production. The animal going to slaughter must meet the demands of all segments of the meat animal industry–the producer, the feeder, the processor and the consumer.

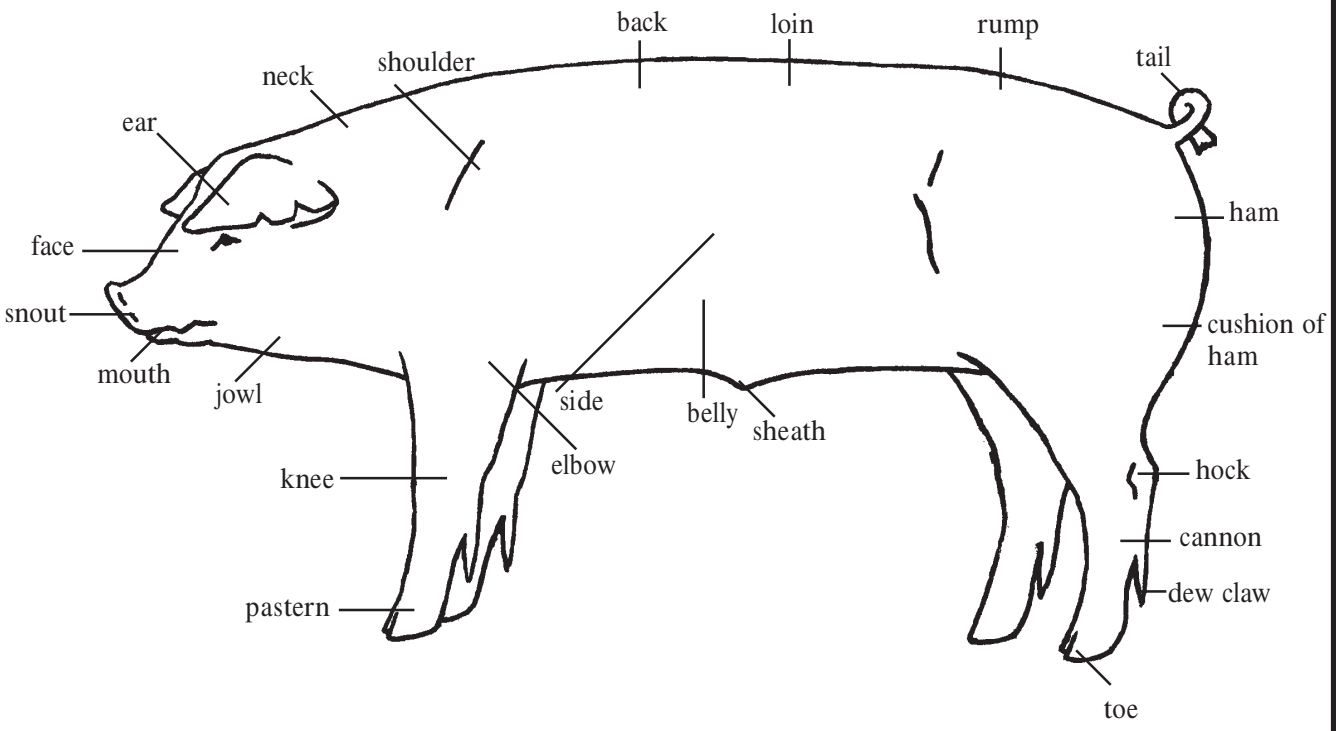


Judging Swine

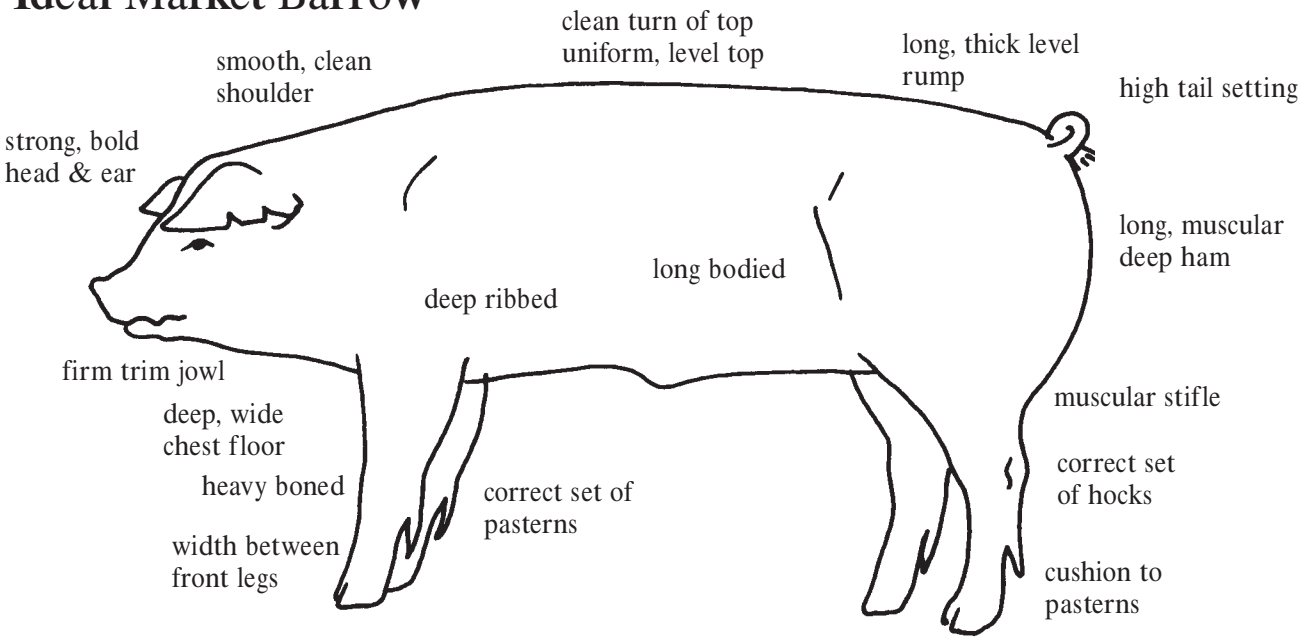
The ideal market barrow weighs approximately 220 to 250 pounds and will meet meat-type hog certification standards. These standards are: (a) a minimum of 29.75 inches long, (b) less than 1.0 inches of last rib fat depth, and (c) greater than 4.75 square inches of loin eye area. To meet these standards a barrow must be clean down his top with an abundance of muscling in the ham and loin region. High-yielding barrows in terms of ham, loin, Boston shoulder and picnic shoulder that are functionally sound are the goal of the swine industry. Reducing backfat and increasing muscle mass has enabled swine producers to make giant strides toward this goal.

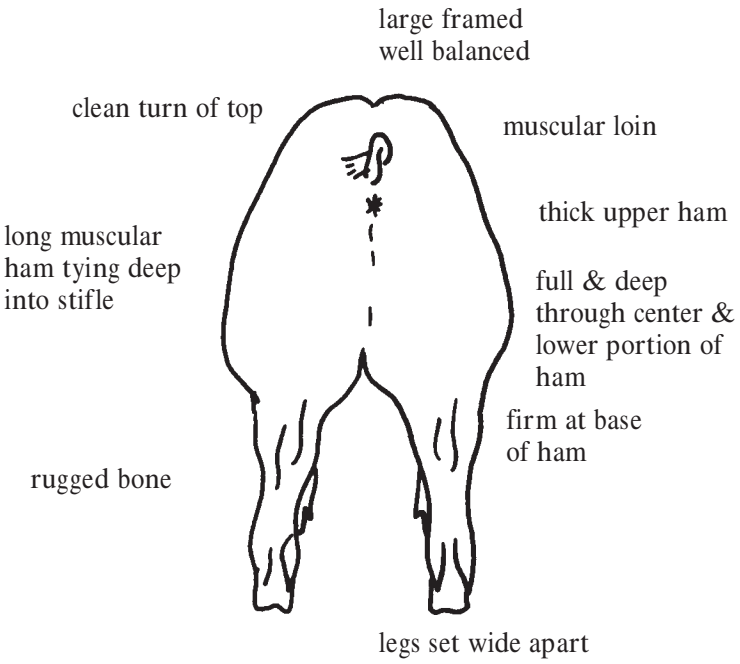
The ideal breeding gilt has the same image as the ideal market barrow, an individual that possesses trimness and moderate development in the high priced region. In addition, size for age, capacity, underpinning and mammary system receive emphasis because of importance in the production of an economical pork product. Frame size, growth rate, muscling, leanness and structural correctness are all major points of emphasis in gilt selection programs.

Parts of a Pig

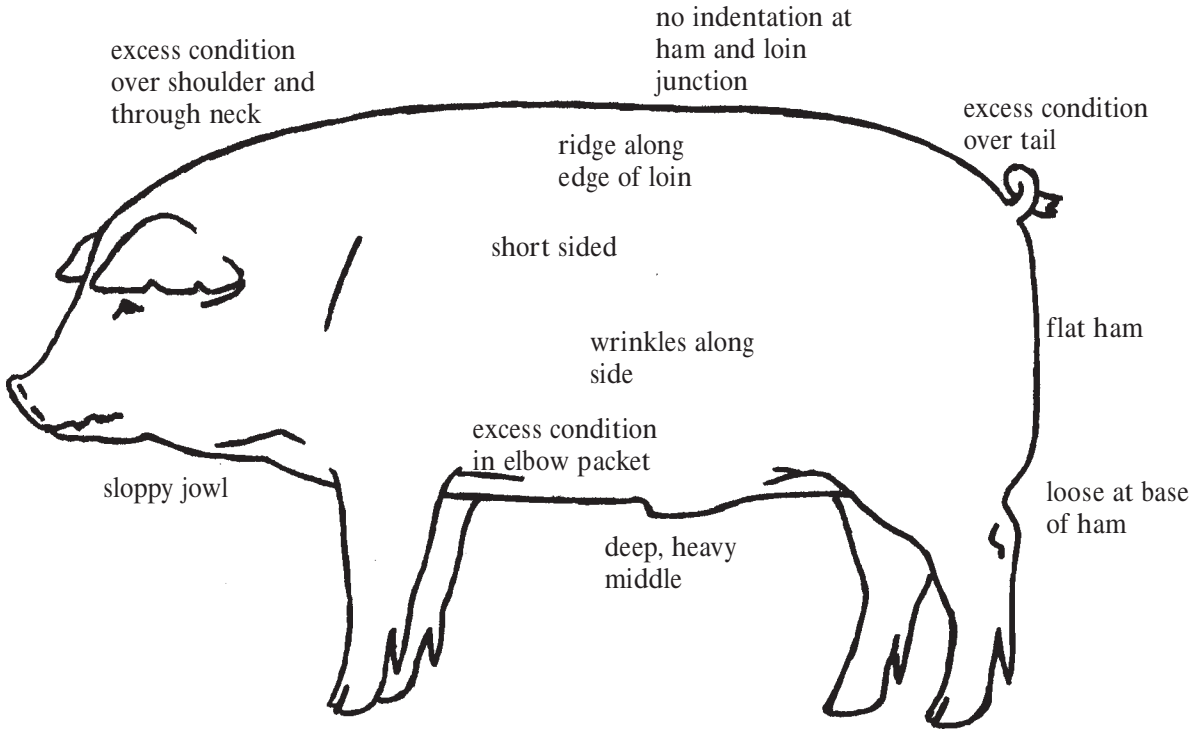


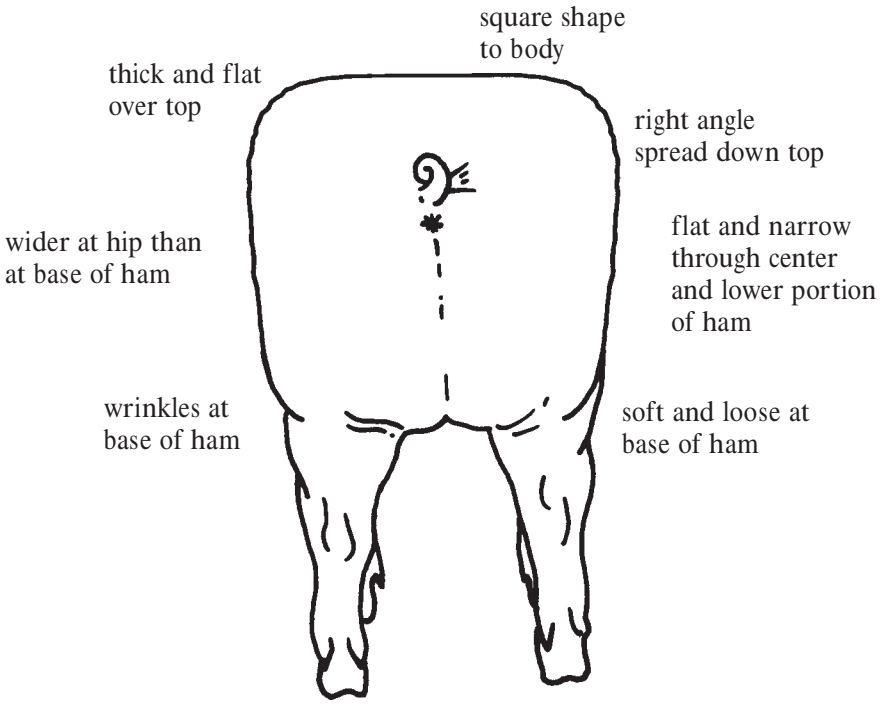
Ideal Market Barrow



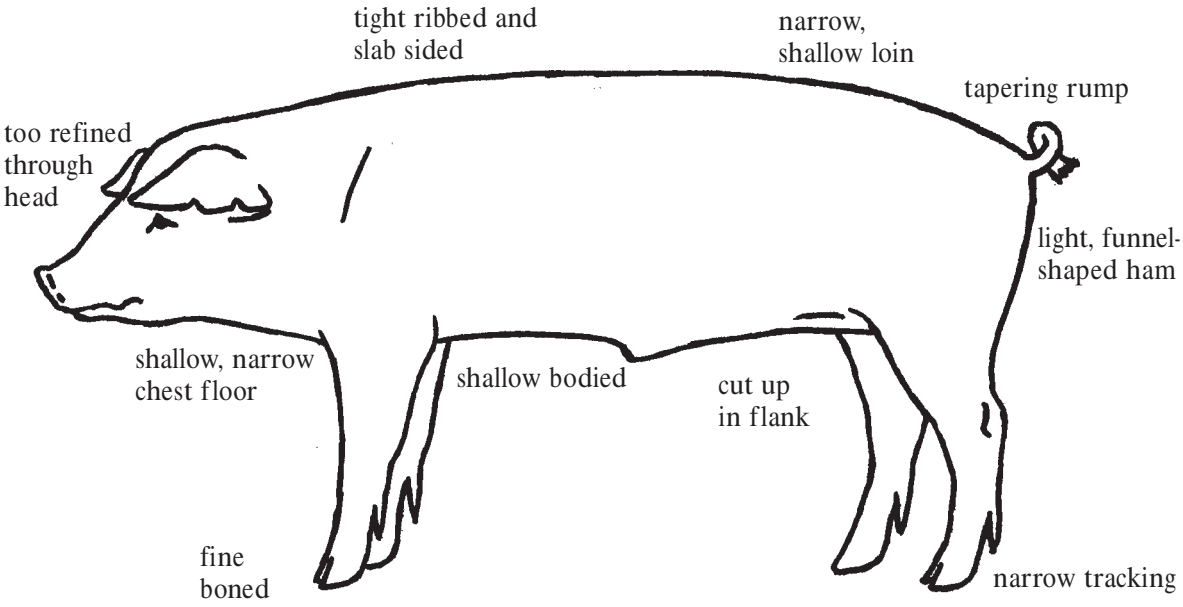


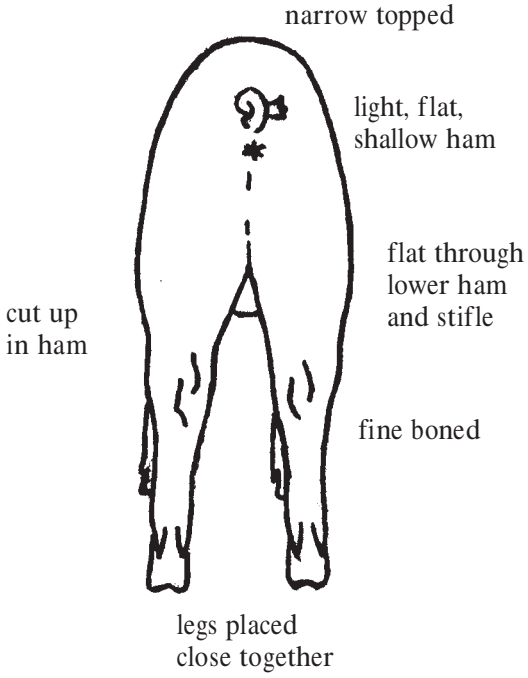
Over-conditioned, Light-muscled Market Barrow



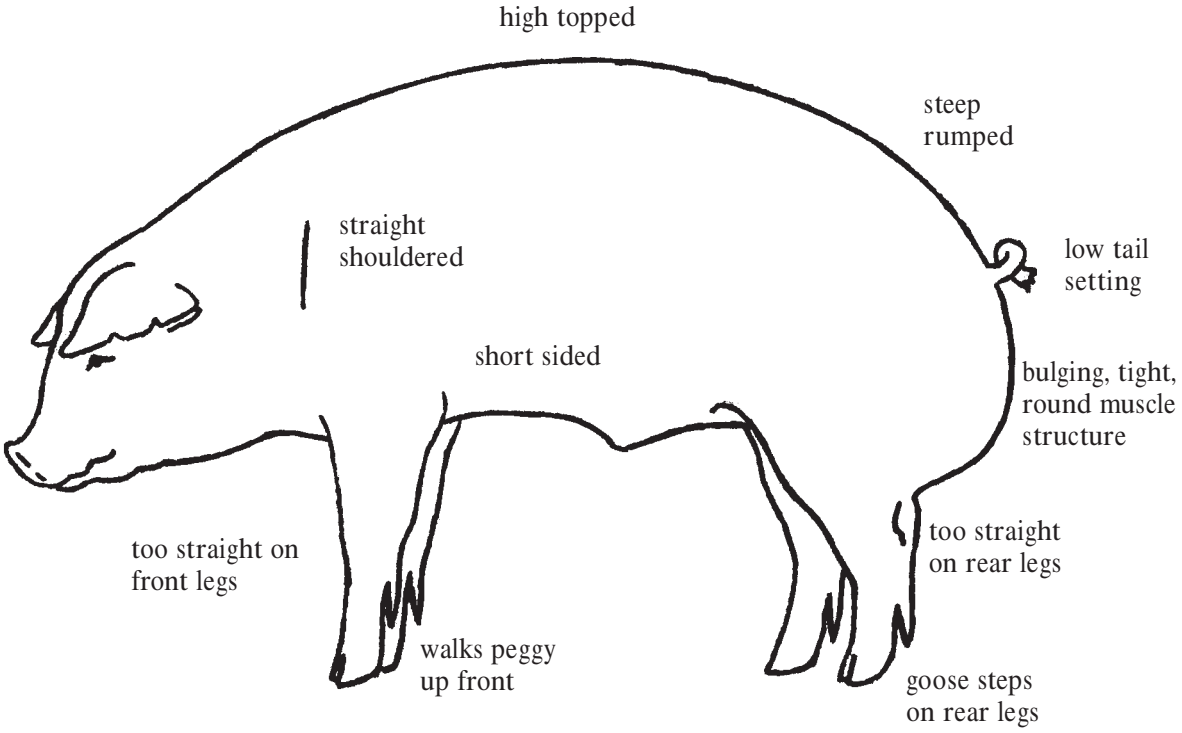


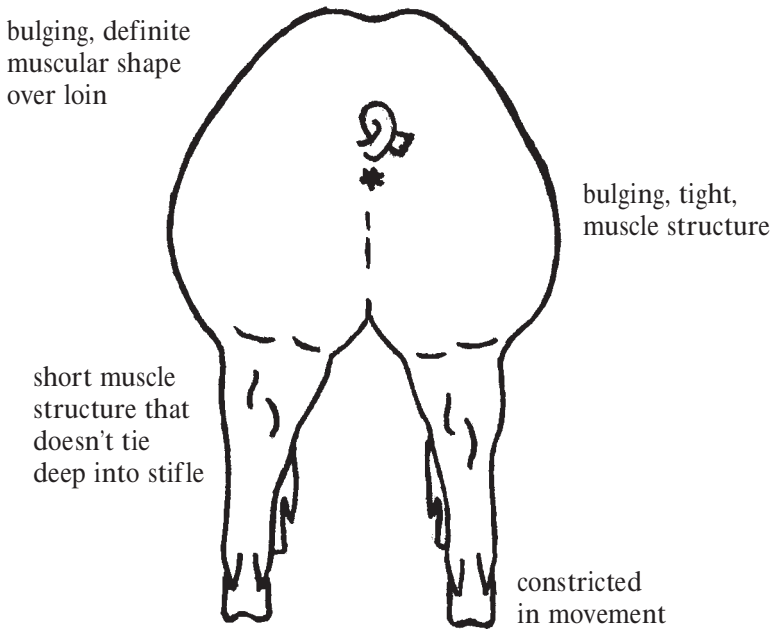
Narrow, Shallow, Light-muscled Market Barrow





High-topped, Round-muscled Market Barrow





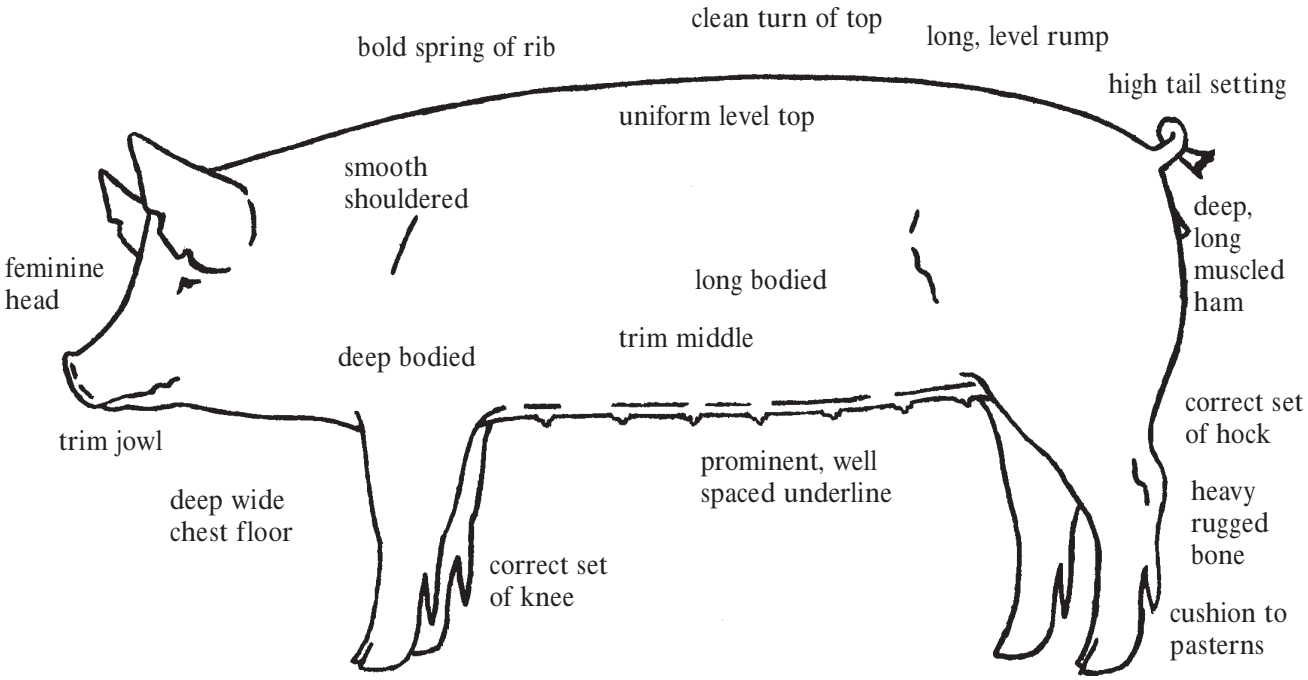
Terms to use when judging market barrows

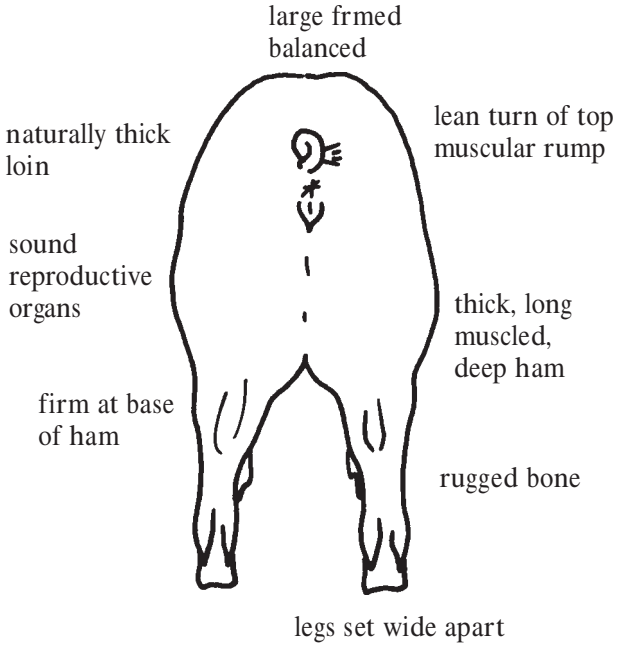
Desirable	Undesirable
General Appearance	
meatier	light-muscled
heavier muscled	short
stretchier, longer	fat
nicer balanced	wasty
more capacious (higher volume)	poorly balanced
more rugged	narrow-made
more functional	poor-moving
stouter designed	frail
more durably designed	small framed
bigger skeletoned	tight made
looser structured	fine boned
heavier structured	
Head, Neck and Jowl (or Shoulder)	
neater jowl	wasty jowl
firmer jowl	narrow-headed
longer neck	short fronted
taller fronted	short cannon
Shoulder and Chest	
bolder sprung	narrow-chested
wider sprung	heavy-shouldered
deeper chested	coarse-shouldered
deeper ribbed	
Body	
more nearly level topped	low behind the shoulders
deeper flanked	high-topped
more spring of rib	too high in his/her arch
more muscular top	flat-ribbed
cleaner top	tapers from front to rear
more natural thickness	short-sided
more expression of muscling down the top	shallow-flanked
more turn of muscle down the loin	high-topped
	narrow top

Desirable	Undesirable
Rump, Ham and Muscle	
more nearly level rump	short-rumped
longer rumped	steep-rumped
higher tail setting	narrow-rumped
deeper ham	light-muscled
more width to his ham	narrow-tracking
more dimension to his ham	round-muscled
a more correct muscle design	bunchy muscled
more turn of muscle in his ham	short, steep ham
more expression of ham	flat ham
bigger stifle	
wider based	
Finish	
trimmest, cleanest made	overfat
cleaner made	overdone
more correctly finished	overfinished
leanest, trimmest barrow	too much right angle spread over the top
more shoulder blade action	
rawer designed	deep probing
freer of fat down the top	shelfy over the loin edge
cleaner in the lower one-third	wasty middle

Carcass
higher percent muscle
should hang up a carcass with less fat trim
heavier muscled carcass
higher lean-to-fat ratio
leaner carcass
longer sided carcass
more total pounds of pork
higher percent high-priced cuts
more total pounds of ham and loin
a more muscular, shaplier carcass
hang a carcass with more value
if sold on lean value, should generate more premiums
Movement and Structure
moves out with more cushion to his pasterns
more slope to his pasterns
longer and looser in his stride
has more freedom of movement
more cushion up front
wider tracking

Ideal Gilt


clean turn of top
bold spring of rib
long, level rump
high tail setting
uniform level top
smooth shouldered
deep, long muscled ham
feminine head
long bodied
trim middle
deep bodied
correct set of hock
trim jowl
prominent, well spaced underline
heavy rugged bone
deep wide chest floor
correct set of knee
cushion to pasterns


large frmed balanced
naturally thick loin
lean turn of top muscular rump
sound reproductive organs
thick, long muscled, deep ham
firm at base of ham
rugged bone
legs set wide apart

Terms to use when judging breeding gilts

Desirable	Undesirable
General Appearance	
longer sided	short-sided
stretchier	small, plain
nicer balanced	poorly balanced
cleaner conditioned	refined
broodier	small-framed
more size and scale	
growthier	
more functional	
more rugged	
Shoulder	
cleaner blades	pinched behind the ears
wider set between her blades	
Body	
wider chest floor	narrow chest
bolder fronted	shallow-bodied
deeper fororib	shallow fororib
cleaner turn of top	weak top
bolder sprung	low behind the shoulders
deeper ribbed	short-sided
cleaner top	shallow-flanked
more desirable turn of top	high-topped
roomier gilt	

Desirable	Undesirable
Rump, Ham and Muscling	
longer rumped	short rumped
more nearly level rumped	steep rumped
more correct in her muscle design	low tail setting
heavier muscled	tight wound
longer muscled	bunchy muscled
longer hammed	round muscled
squarer rumped	
higher tail setting	
Movement and Underpinning	
sounder feet and legs	sets under on hind legs
more substance of bone	fine boned
heavier boned	stands close front or behind
stands out wider behind	posty legged
more cushion to her pasterns	too straight in her shoulder
more correct set to her pasterns	straight in her pasterns
more cushion up front	narrow walking
has more freedom of movement	short-strided
longer and looser in her stride	
Underline	
greater number of functional nipples	blind teats
more prominent underline	fewer functional nipples
more uniformly spaced teats	lacks mammary development
more uniform in teat size and shape	pin nipples
more refined underline	blunt nipples
higher quality underline	
more feminine underline	

Sample reasons for Yorkshire gilts

I placed the Yorkshire breeding gilts 2–4–1–3. In the top pair of litter mates, 2 excels the class because of her advantages in structural correctness, frame size and muscle volume. Ideally, I would like to see 2 leaner about her top. But nonetheless, it's 2 over 4 in the top pair, because she is undoubtedly a longer, wider skeleton gilt that is especially more mobile. Two was a looser designed gilt that exhibited more slope to her shoulder and flex to her pasterns. Finally, 2 has a more muscular top and was wider based than 4. I'll concede that 4 was the leanest gilt of the drive. But, the gilt with a pin nipple on her right side was straight in her shoulder and narrow through her chest, so I placed her second.

In the middle pair of gilts that are contrasting in type, I preferred the frame size and leanness of 4 over 1. Without question 4 was a bigger outlining gilt that was especially longer and more feminine about her front. Moreover, 4 was cleaner through the lower third of her body cavity, revealed more blade action on the move and was particularly cleaner along her loin edge. Four was also heavier boned and bigger footed than 1. I realize that 1 was a wider fronted gilt that had more center dimension to her rib cage. Furthermore, she worked more volume of muscle from blade to hip. However, this does not compensate for the fact that she was the shortest sided, earliest maturing gilt of the four.

However, it was her advantages in width of skeleton, muscle mass and freedom of movement that compelled me to place 1 over 3 in the bottom pair. One was a wider based gilt that demonstrated more spring of rib and width of chest. Additionally, the short tailed gilt exhibited a more muscular turn to her loin and has more center dimension of ham than 3. But most importantly, 1 was a more mobile gilt that demonstrated a more desirable slope to her shoulder and pasterns. Granted, 3 was a longer bodied gilt that had the most prominent and evenly spaced underline in the class. However, I criticize 3 and placed her fourth because she was the narrowest made, straightest fronted, tighter spined, most restricted moving gilt in the class.

Sample reasons for market hogs

I placed the crossbred market barrows 2–1–4–3. With emphasis placed on cutability, 2 wins the class because he was the heaviest muscled, leanest barrow of the four. Two revealed the leanest, most muscular turn to his top and had the most muscular shaped ham in the class. Moreover, 2 was a longer bodied barrow that was particularly trimmer about his jowl and elbow pocket. Consequently, 2 will hang a carcass with the highest percent muscle of the four. I fully realize that 1 was a stouter built, higher volume barrow that stood on a greater diameter of bone. However, he was wasty about his middle, so I left him second.

In the middle pair of belted barrows 1 beats 4, because there was simply more of him. One was a growthier, heavier weight barrow that exhibited a meatier top and more outer turn to his ham. Additionally, 1 was a heavier constructed barrow that has more width of skeleton and traveled wider at his base. One would simply kill with more total pounds of product. Granted, 4 had a leaner shape about his top and was trimmer through the lower one-third of his body. However, this does not compensate for the fact that he was narrow chested and flat through his ham.

In conclusion, it was his mobility and potential advantages in carcass cutability that compelled me to place 4 over 3 in the bottom pair. Four was unquestionably a leaner designed barrow that revealed more blade action on the move, was cleaner topped and trimmer middled. Moreover, the red barrow was a freer moving pig that was more flexible in his spine and exhibits more cushion through his front end. He should hang a carcass that could potentially generate more dollars if sold on lean value. I'll admit that 3 was a heavier boned, bigger fronted pig that was of a heavier weight. However, I placed the blue-rumped barrow fourth, because he was structurally incorrect and the most excessively finished pig of the four. When sent to the rail, he will have the lowest percent muscle of any barrow in the class.