Livestock Judging Guide

By
Neal Smith
Extension Area Specialist – 4-H
Module 4: Swine

Judging Breeding Gilts
Judging Breeding Gilts

Ideal breeding gilt has:

- Trimness
- Moderate development in high-priced areas
- Adequate size for age
- Large body capacity or volume
- Correct underpinning
- Superior mammary system
Ideal Breeding Gilt

- Smooth shouldered
- Bold spring of rib
- Clean turn to top
- Naturally thick loin
- Long, level rump
- High tail setting
- Sound reproductive organs
- Trim jowl
- Correct set of knee
- Deep, wide chest floor
- Cushion to pastern
- Deep, long muscled ham
- Correct set of hocks
- Heavy, rugged bone
- Naturally thick loin
- Sound reproductive organs
Judging Breeding Gilts

Steps to Judging Swine

- First view from the ground and work up
- Next evaluate from rear to front
- Rank class on traits of importance
- Evaluate most important traits first
- Eliminate easy placings
- Place the remainder based on the volume of important traits
Judging Breeding Gilts

Ranking of Traits for Maternal Lines
- Structure and soundness
- Growth
- Underline quality
- Capacity or volume
- Degree of muscling
- Degree of leanness

Maternal lines:
- Female offspring kept for breeding purposes
Judging Breeding Gilts

**Ranking of Traits for Terminal Lines**

- Structure and soundness
- Degree of muscling
- Growth
- Capacity or volume
- Degree of leanness
- Underline quality

**Terminal lines of gilts:**

- Offspring sold to slaughter
Judging Breeding Gilts

Evaluating Structure & Soundness

- Best viewed beginning at the ground and working upward
- Give attention to:
  - Feet & pasterns
  - Hocks
  - Knees
  - Rump
  - Shoulders
Feet & Pasterns

Feet
- Big, with even toes
- Squarely set forward

Pasterns
- Set at 45 degree angle to ground
- Maximum cushion & flexibility

Good feet, squarely set & pasterns with correct angle
Judging Breeding Gilts

**Poor Structure**

Dewclaws touching the ground, too much set to pasterns

**Poor Structure**

Feet turned outward, restricts flexibility, additional joint stress
Judging Breeding Gilts

- Hocks should be constructed of:
  - Flat, clean bone
  - Approximately 20 degrees of set

Correct set and curvature to the hocks
Judging Breeding Gilts

Post-legged

Hocks too straight, round bone design, lacks flexibility

Unsoundness

Swollen or “puffy joints from hocks being too straight
Judging Breeding Gilts

Knees should:
- Be straight or slightly set backward
- Provide cushion & flex to front end

Correct set to the knees. Note the slight backward set or curvature.
Judging Breeding Gilts

**Calf-kneed**

Knees have too much set or curvature

**Buck-kneed**

Inadequate length between the foot and knee
Judging Breeding Gilts

Rump structure should be:
- Average or above average in length
- Level to slightly sloping from front to back

This type rump allows for:
- Maximum power & strength
- Additional flexibility
- Good length of stride
Judging Breeding Gilts

Rump too steep

Rump extremely too steep

Rumps too short & steep restrict movement and cause extra stress on other joints.
Judging Breeding Gilts

- Shoulders should have:
  - Adequate set to allow front leg to extend at a correct angle
  - Shoulder set is directly related to length of stride

Correct slope and set to the shoulder
Judging Breeding Gilts

Shoulder too straight

Gives appearance of shoulder being forced forward into the neck, resulting in short strides off front end

Extremely straight

Severely limits flexibility through front end, puts tremendous pressure on the knee and pastern joints
Judging Breeding Gilts

Evaluating Growth

- Hogs are sold by the pound
- Important that pigs have good growth rate
- Pigs should reach market weight at an early age
- Assume all animals in a class are the same age
- Heaviest pig is the fastest growing
- Lightest pig is the slowest growing
Judging Breeding Gilts

Evaluating Underline Quality

Good underlines are needed to raise large litters

Consider:

- Teat accessibility
- Teat number
- Teat size
- Teat placement
Judging Breeding Gilts

- Teat accessibility
  - Both rows should point directly downward
  - Should not point outward
- Teat number
  - Good underline will have 6 to 7 teats per side
- Teat size
  - About the size of a pencil eraser
  - Will fit into piglet’s mouth
- Teat placement
  - Teats spaced 2.5 to 3.0 inches apart
  - Enough space for piglet’s to nurse
Judging Breeding Gilts

Very Good Underline

Poor Underline

Uneven teat size, uneven spacing, only two functional teats
Judging Breeding Gilts

Evaluating External Genitalia

- Should be well-developed
- Proper size and shape
- Beware of:
  - Too small vulva
  - Tipped or upturned vulva

Gilt has a well-developed vulva with good size and shape
Judging Breeding Gilts

Small vulva could be a problem with natural mating

Small, slightly tipped vulva, problems with natural mating and farrowing

Small, tipped vulva, difficult natural mating
Judging Breeding Gilts

Evaluating Capacity or Volume

- Hogs with good capacity or volume will be able:
  - To consume feed necessary for growth
  - To perform well in terms of reproduction
- Capacity or volume is determined by:
  - Body width
  - Body depth
  - Body length
  - Balance (how well these three factors fit together)
Judging Breeding Gilts

- **Width:**
  - Best evaluated starting at the ground and working up
  - Pigs with good width will:
    - Walk and stand wide both in front and rear
    - Have good width through the chest
  - Top width (top 1/3) and base width (lower 1/3) should be equal
  - Middle 1/3 of the animal should be the widest
Judging Breeding Gilts

Too Narrow

Narrow tracking at the walk

Good Width

Good chest width equates to good capacity or volume

Good Width

Wide based in the standing position
Judging Breeding Gilts

Depth of Body:
- Important for capacity for feeding and reproduction
- Should be uniform from fore flank to rear flank
- Be careful –
  - Excessively deep appearing hog could indicate a fat problem
- Lack of depth, or shallow body, will:
  - Take away from overall balance
  - Hurt pig’s placing due to lack of a production look
Judging Breeding Gilts

Lacks Adequate Depth

Shallow in the rear flank

Unbalanced

Too deep in rear flank

Uniform Body Depth

Beginning to show excessive body depth due to fat
Judging Breeding Gilts

Length of Body

- Increased importance due to heavier market weights
- Measured visually from flank to flank
- Hogs typical growth curve:
  - Grows frame > Deposits muscle > Deposits fat
- Longer bodied & bigger framed hogs mature later
- Later maturity delays fat being deposited
- Higher weights before fat deposited
  - 260 lbs. versus 220 lbs.
Judging Breeding Gilts

Short Body Length

Good Body Length
Judging Breeding Gilts

Evaluating Degree of Muscling

- Lower priority trait with maternal lines
- Higher priority trait with terminal lines
- Indicators of degree of muscling:
  - First - thickness through center of ham
  - Second - width at the ground between feet (standing & walking)
  - Base width and width of pigs top should be equal
  - Red flag – Top width exceeds base width
Judging Breeding Gilts

Narrow Width

Good Width
Judging Breeding Gilts

Evaluating Degree of Muscling

Indicators of degree of muscling:

- Third - shape over the top (or loin)
  - Muscular top should be “butterfly” shape
  - Indicates leanness
  - Loins on both sides of backbone extending higher than center
  - “Flat” top indicates fat

Butterfly top
Judging Breeding Gilts

Evaluating Degree of Leanness

Degree of leanness is influenced by:

- Degree of muscling
- Frame size
- Sex of animal
- Age
- Weight
Judging Breeding Gilts

Evaluating Degree of Leanness
- Evaluate leanness only after degree of muscling is determined
- Heavy muscled hogs will be lean
- Light muscled hogs will be fat
- Gilts mature at a later age (or heavier weight) than barrows
- At same age or weight, gilts will be leaner than barrows
Evaluating Degree of Leanness

- Fat will be deposited from:
  - Front to rear
  - First in cheeks and jowl
  - Then behind and over shoulders
  - Then in the flanks
  - Finally around tailhead

Evaluate leanness by looking:

- For indentions over & behind shoulders
- At ham-loin junction
- For presence of a dimple just in front of tailhead
Judging Breeding Gilts

Too Fat

Notice pig is wider over the top than at the base

Too fat
Judging Breeding Gilts

Extremely Lean

Smooth, tight jowl and underline, indention at ham-loin junction, dimple above tailhead

Lean Gilt

Clean and firm in flanks, well defined ham-loin junction, clean & trim in crotch
Test Your Skills

Place this class of breeding gilts.
Official Placing

Official Placing: 3 – 1 – 4 - 2
Cuts: 5 – 3 - 6