Livestock Judging Guide

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Module 3: Beef Cattle

Judging Market Steers
Judging Market Steers

Ideal Market Steer:

- Weighs 1,100 to 1,250 lbs.
- Adequate size & scale:
  - To carry this weight
  - Minimum finish
- Enough finish to:
  - Produce high quality carcass
  - Choice grade
  - Increase carcass cutability
Judging Market Steers

Ideal Market Steer:

- Heavy muscling is desired in:
  - High-priced cuts
  - Rib
  - Loin
  - Round
- Relatively trim middle
- Clean fronted
Ideal Market Steer

- Ideal Market Steer
- Uniform condition over ribs
- Long bodied
- Deep muscular, bulging quarter
- Smooth shoulder
- Straight topline
- Bold spring of rib
- Long level rump
- Thick meaty loin
- Long muscular stifle
- Trim middle & flanks
- Muscular arm & forearm
- Correct set of rear legs
- Correct set of front legs
Steps to Judging Market Steers
- Always start at the ground & work up
- Then from rear & work forward
- Rank animals based on traits of importance
- Evaluate most important traits first
- Eliminate any easy placings first
- Place remaining class based on the volume of important traits
Judging Market Steers

Ranking of Traits for Market Steers:
- Degree of muscling
- Degree of Finish (fat cover)
- Growth capacity
- Soundness and structural correctness
- Balance
- Frame size

Steers should be:
- Extra thick, Medium framed & Adequately fininished
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Evaluating Degree of Muscling

- Thickness through center of rear quarter
- Base Width (Standing & Walking)
- Muscle expression over the top
  - “Butterfly” shape down the topline
  - Crease down the backbone
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- Thin Muscle
- Average Muscle
- Thick Muscle
- Super Thick

- Narrow Base
- Average Base
- Wide Base
- Super Wide
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Evaluating Degree of Finish

- Goal of Choice grade
  - Requires enough external fat to achieve adequate intramuscular fat or marbling
- Excessive fat:
  - Yield grade of 4 or 5
  - Discounted prices
- Ideal level of exterior fat is 0.4 to 0.6 inches
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Evaluating Degree of Finish

Areas to evaluate degree of finish:

- Top line
- Underline
- Body depth
- Brisket
- Tailhead
- Cod or udder area
- Shoulder
- Over the ribs
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Too Fat

- smooth over top
- fat tailhead
- full brisket
- loose underline
- udder fat
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Not Enough Fat
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Correct Finish

Not Enough Finish

Full brisket indicates correct amount of finish

Empty brisket indicates lack of finish
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Correct Finish

Excess Finish

Cod fill indicates correct amount of finish

Fat around tailhead indicates too much finish
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- Evaluating Growth Capacity
  - Steers are sold by the pound
  - Important to maximize feeding capacity
  - Look for good:
    - Body Width
    - Body Depth
    - Body length
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Evaluating Soundness & Structural Correctness

- Lack of soundness:
  - Limits trips to feed & water
  - Decreases growth

- Sound & structurally correct steers will have:
  - Flexible, clean & flat joints
  - Long powerful strides
  - Strong pasterns
  - Good set to hocks & knees
  - Big feet that sit flatly on the ground
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Correct Structure

Long and straight top line, with a long and level rump

Poor Structure

Weak topped, with a short and steep rump
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Evaluating Balance

- Balance is having correct portions of:
  - Width
  - Depth
  - Length
- Equal proportions that blend together
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Poorly Balanced
Test Your Skills

Place this Class of Market Steers
Official Placing:

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