Livestock Judging Guide

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Module 6: Sheep

Judging Market Lambs
Judging Market Lambs

Ideal market lamb:
  - Weighs approximately 110 to 120 lbs.
  - Fat covering extremely important:
    - Be able to detect lamb’s backbone with light finger-tip pressure
    - Extremely definite and sharp backbone indicates not enough finish
    - Not able to feel backbone = too fat
    - Correctly finished = 0.10 to 0.20 inches of backfat
Judging Market Lambs

- Ideal market lamb:
  - Firm, hard finish is desirable
  - Abundance of muscling in hindsaddle
  - Heavy muscled leg and loin
  - Adequate size and scale
  - Bigger, longer, heavy-boned
Ideal Market Lamb

- Large framed, well-balanced
- Square rump & dock
- Long, level rump
- Deep, full bulging leg
- Heavy boned
- Muscular, thick, long loin
- Deep bodied
- Trim middle
- Correct set of legs
- Trim fronted
- Muscular forearm
- Clean turn of top
- Bold spring of rib
- Long across stifle
- Plump & full through center & lower leg
- Trim, firm finish
- Deep, wide chest floor
- Legs placed wide apart
Steps to Judging Sheep

- Begin from the ground and work up
- Then from rear to front
- Rank based on traits of importance they possess
- Put greatest emphasis on most valuable traits
- Eliminate easy placings
- Rank the remainder on bases of volume of important traits
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Ranking of Traits for Market Lambs
- Degree of muscling
- Degree of finish
- Balance and style
- Frame size
- Soundness and structural correctness
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Evaluating Degree of Muscling

- First - evaluated through center of leg for thickness
- Second – Examine width between rear feet
  - On the move
  - Standing
- Compare base width to top width
  - Heavy muscled lambs – base width = top width
  - Don’t be tricked by additional width due to fat cover
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Evaluating Degree of Muscling

Other areas to evaluate degree of muscling:
- Length of hindsaddle (loin and leg)
- From last rib to dock
- Width & length of loin
- Shape over rack (grooves shape to the rack is desired)
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Center Leg and Base Width

- **Light muscled** (Narrow width)
- **Average muscled** (Average width)
- **Heavy muscled** (Wide based)

Square, wide top shape
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- **Width and Length of Loin**
  - Long, wide loin is desirable

Areas to evaluate in determining width and length of loin
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Long, wide loin

Short, narrow loin
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- Length of Hindsaddle
  - Contains most valuable cuts
  - Should be greater in length & weight than foresaddle
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Shape Over Rack
- Fairly high-priced cut
- Grooved shape over rack indicates high degree of muscling
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- **Evaluating Degree of Finish**
  - Should be lean with 0.15 to 0.20 inches of backfat thickness
  - Degree of finish is influenced by:
    - Amount of muscling
    - Frame size
    - Stage of maturity
  - Fat sheep will be widest over their top
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Ideal Finish

Very trim, with base width at least as wide as top

Ideal Finish

Very clean and trim over & behind the shoulder, extremely trim & neat through underline
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Evaluating Balance and Style

Equal portions of:
- Width
- Depth
- Length (special emphasis)

Should be wide and deep through rear (leg)
- Tight and trim through front end
- Majority of the weight is in back half
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“Christmas Tree” Shape, when viewed from Side & Rear, with majority of weight in the back half
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**Poorly Balance**
- Heavy-fronted, deep and low necked, broken topped, too heavy through middle & steep rumped

**Lacks Balance**
- Straight and stylish, but lacks balance, wrong “Christmas tree” shape, too heavy-fronted
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Evaluating Balance and Style

Style deals with:
- Correctness of structure
- Straightness of design

Sheep should have:
- Straight top line
- Neat shoulder that blends smoothly into neck and ribs
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Examples of Proper Style

Straight top line, high & correct neck-shoulder connection

Neat front, smooth at point of shoulder, clean, flat breast area and very high neck set

Level rump structure that is desired in sheep
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Lacks Style

Too deep necked, too low in neck placement & too opened shouldered

Lacks Style

Weak topped & too steep in its rump
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Evaluating Soundness

Correct set or angle to feet, legs & joints are extremely important to:

- Production (growth)
- Longevity (soundness)

Evaluate soundness by observing:

- Feet and Pasterns
- Hocks
- Knees
- Rump
- Shoulders
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Feet and Pasterns

- Strong with slight angle
- Provides cushion for joints

Correct set to pastern, good depth of heel and big foot setting flat & even
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Incorrect Structure
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Hocks

- Correct structure is critical to:
  - Mobility
  - Longevity
- Should have 20 degree of set or angle
- Should be clean, flat & free of swelling
- Gives flex & power on the move
- Good measure of correctness:
  - Ability to get rear leg beyond the dock when walking

Correct set to hocks
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Sickle-hocked

Too much set to the hocks
Knees should be:
- Square with the body when viewed from the front
- Slightly set back when viewed from the side

**Buck-kneed**
- Knee “bucked over”, lacks cushion & will restrict movement

**Knock-kneed**
- Knee bowed slightly inward
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**Rump**

**Ideal rump is:**
- Average to above average in length
- Very slightly sloping from front to back

Short, steep rump

Long, level rump
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- **Shoulders**
  - Proper shoulder angle is critical for good length of stride
  - Shape & tightness of front end is important for proper balance
  - Point of shoulder should be trim & smooth

Incorrect shoulder structure
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Examples of correct shoulder structure

Desired tight shape at the top of the shoulder
Shoulder blends smoothly into neck & forerib
 Desired smoothness at the point of the shoulder
Test Your Skills

Place this class of market lambs
Official Placing:

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