

## **4-H Livestock Judging**

Have you ever wondered how farmers select which animals to buy and which to pass on? Have you ever thought about why some steaks are priced higher than others? If these questions have ever crossed your mind, you should consider joining a Livestock Judging Team.

So, what is livestock judging and how does it impact judging team members? If you ask any current or former livestock judging team member, they could probably go on and on about the positive learning experiences and their opportunities to meet new people and travel to new places. On a basic level, livestock judging consists of two primary components: 1) placing a group of animals and 2) orally justifying your decision – or as it's commonly known, giving reasons. Each area requires judging team members to go through different steps and processes to arrive at their decisions.

When a judging team member analyzes a class of animals, he or she is not only comparing the animals in the class, but also comparing each animal to the ideal animal in that species. The judge must establish priority areas and develop strategies to arrive at the final placing of that particular class.

Once the judge arrives at his or her final placing, it's time for the second component of livestock judging: giving oral reasons about the class. Judging team members learn to take notes on the classes they analyze, writing pros and cons for each animal. Then, relying on their memory of the class, the judging team members present their reasons to experts in the livestock judging field. This is the judging member's opportunity to convince the expert that his or her placing was the correct placing of the class.

Marion County 4-H offers horse and livestock judging to all students in 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades. Participating on livestock judging teams offer many benefits to 4-H members. Team members are exposed to team work, effective communication skills and analytical thinking. Team members also build self-confidence as they become comfortable with both components of judging. Development of these skills benefits every area of the livestock judge's life. An additional benefit from participating on a livestock judging team is having the opportunity to travel to new places and meet and interact with livestock industry leaders. Many times these relationships will aid 4-H members in the future as they choose career paths in the livestock industry.

If you would like to learn more about Horse and Livestock Judging, please contact Dannie Lowrey Bradford at 423-942-2656 or [elowrey@utk.edu](mailto:elowrey@utk.edu).