Livestock Judging Guide

By

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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

Correct set of legs

Trim middle

Muscular forearm

Clean turn of top

Bold spring of rib

Deep, wide chest floor

Plump & full through center & lower leg

Correct set of legs

Long across stifle

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
Judging Market Lambs

- 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
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

Lacks Balance

Heavy-fronted, deep and low necked, broken topped, too heavy through middle & steep rumped

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

Big feet with even toes, set flat on surface and square with animal’s body

Correct

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

too much set to pastern

poor depth of heel (hoof-skin junction)

extreme set to pastern

very poor depth of heel
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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
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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
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
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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