

Horse Judging II - How to Judge

The main points of horse judging are described in *Horse Judging I - What to look For*. Other things which the 4-H horse judge needs to learn are:

- How to judge a class
- Terms to use
- How to give oral reasons

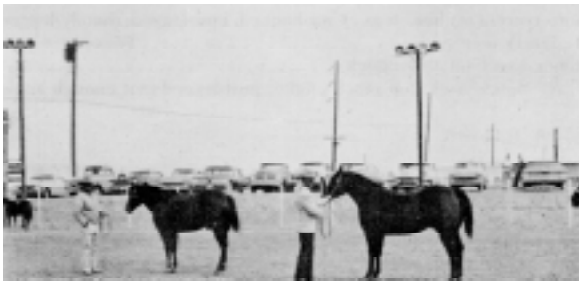
HOW TO JUDGE A CLASS

A good horse judge follows a pattern or system, when placing a class. He considers the most important points, comparing each horse to his ideal. He, then ranks them accordingly.

Usually, horses are judged at the halter. In 4-H contests, there are usually four in a class, and these are numbered from 1 to 4, left to right. Study the class from a distance (10 to 20 paces), looking at a side view, a front view, and a rear view. You should make a tentative placing at this time.

Then watch the horses in action. They should be led toward you and away from you at the walk and the trot. Observe the action of feet and legs and overall coordination.

When the horses are lined up again, you can move among them for a close-up inspection. In judging contests you should make notes on the class as you



judge.

Side view (from a distance), look for -

- Type, style, balance
- Proportional depth of leg and depth of body
- Slope and length of shoulder
- Length and setting of head, neck, and ears
- Length and strength of back
- Shortness of coupling, Length and turn of croup
- Width of forearm, arm, stifle and gaskin muscles
- Set of front legs (correct, calf, or buck-kneed)



- Set of rear legs (correct, sickle-hocked, post-legged),
- Slope of pastern
- Height at withers, Length of underline

Rear view (from a distance), look for -

- General width and proportional width over hips and through thigh or quarter and stifle
- Length and width of inside and outside gaskin



- muscle
- Set of hind legs and hocks (correct, cow-hocked, bow-legged)

Front view (from a distance), look for -

- Shape and expression of head: size and setting of ears



- Width of chest and muscling of arm, forearm, and V-muscle
- Set of front legs (correct, splay-footed, pigeon-toed, knock-kneed, or bow-legged)
- Alignment of knee and cannon

On close inspection, look for -

- Close view of above points
- Height and cleanness of withers
- Shortness and muscling of coupling
- Soundness of feet and legs
- Shape and texture of hoof, depth of heel
- Unsoundness: lameness, blindness, curbs, spavins, splints
- Defects, blemishes, Spring of ribs
- Parrot mouth (ask exhibitor to display the horse's teeth)

Where horse is in action, (Walk horse to judge. Trot horse away from judge), look for -

A long step, true and free, with enough joint flexion for feet to clear ground
 Good head carriage and action in front when coming toward you
 Length of stride and hock action as horse travels away from you.

TERMS TO USE

The following list includes some of the terms commonly used in comparing horses. The desirable qualities are listed on the left in comparative form. The undesirable qualities are listed in critical terms, and each is listed across from a corresponding comparative term.

Comparative Terms

Criticisms

General

Typier (more *breed*) type Off type
 Smoother Rough
 Higher quality Coarse: low quality
 More nicely balanced Poorly balanced
 More stylish Plain
 Heavier muscled Light-muscled
 Longer, cleaner muscling Short, bunched muscling

Head and Neck

Shorter, broader head Long, narrow head
 More alert eye Sleepy eyed
 Neater muzzle Coarse muzzle
 More massive jaw Small jaw
 Shorter ear Long, mule ear
 Cleaner at the throat latch Coarse throated
 Smoother-necked Coarse, thick neck
 Neck blends smoothly at shoulder Rough at shoulder
 More breed character Plain head
 Longer neck Short neck
 More desirable set to neck Low headed, high headed

Shoulder

More prominent withers Low flat withers
 Cleaner withers Muttony (fat) withers
 More angle in the shoulder Steep shoulder
 Deeper shoulder (longer) Shallow shoulder (shorter)
 More sloping shoulder Steep shoulder
 Smoother shoulder Rough shoulder

Chest and Forelegs

Deeper-chest Shallow-chest
 Broader-chest Narrow-chest
 Wider set forelegs Narrow-set forelegs
 Heavier forearm Light forearm
 Longer tapering forearm muscle . Short, bunched forearm muscle
 Smoother knee joint Coarse jointed
 Deeper jointed Shallow jointed
 Shorter cannon Long cannon
 More medium length pastern . . . Long, weak, short, stiff pastern
 More correct set of pastern Weak pastern; steep pastern

Barrel and Top

Deeper in the heart Shallow in the heart

More spring of forerib Flat-ribbed; flat-sided
 Shorter back Long back
 Shorter, stronger coupling Long weak coupling
 Closer-coupled Slack-coupled
 Stronger-back Weak back
 Smoother-hip Rough hips; box hips
 Longer underline Short underline

Quarter and Rear Legs

Heavy-quartered Light-quartered
 Longer croup Short croup
 Nicer-turned croup Steep croup: flat croup
 From the side:
 Wider stifle arrow stifle
 Wider gaskin Light gaskin
 Deeper hock Shallow hock
 From the rear:
 Thicker, fuller quarter Narrow quarter
 Thicker through stifle Light in the stifle
 More gaskin inside and out Thin gaskin
 Smoother hocked Coarse, rough hocks

Bone, Feet and Legs, Stance

Heavier bone: stronger bone Light bone
 Flatter, cleaner cannons Round cannons
 Shorter cannons Long cannons
 More correct pasterns Weak pasterns, steep pasterns
 Cleaner joints Fleishy joints: puffy joints
 Roomier, well-rounded feet Mute-footed
 Deeper, more open heel Shallow heel: narrow heel
 Smoother, harder hooves Thin, cracked hooves
 Straighter legs Crooked legs

Front Legs

Straighter on front legs
 Knock-kneed: bow-legged: buck-kneed: calf-kneed
 Straighter on feet Pigeon-toed: splay-footed

Hind Legs

More correct on hind legs
 Cow-hocked: bow-legged: (bandy-legged)
 Straighter feet Toes-out: toes-in
 More correct set at the hock
 Sickle-hock (too much angle): post-legged (not enough angle)

Action

Truer action Faulty action
 Moves straighter in front
 Paddles (wings out): moves close (rope walks)
 Moves straighter behind Wings out: wings in
 More correct hock action
 Rolls the hocks (lateral movement): jerks the hocks
 Freer Moving
 Stumbles; interferes: forges (hitting front foot with back)
 Snappier stride Sluggish
 Longer stride Short stride
 More forceful stride Halting stride
 More correct flexion (hocks, knees, ankles)
 Stiff (hock, knee, ankle); too much flexion (lifts feet too high)

GIVING ORAL REASONS

In a judging contest, you will have an opportunity to tell exactly why you believe some of the classes should be placed the way you placed them. Two minutes is the usual time limit for discussing a class of four animals. Ordinarily it shouldn't take this long.

The key to success in giving reasons is practice. This is the only way to develop a good, smooth delivery. As you learn to place the classes, you learn to use the proper terms in comparing the animals and to organize a set of reasons. Then, practice, practice, practice. Do it aloud, with someone listening. If you must practice alone, look into a mirror. This is hard at first, but it helps develop your ability to concentrate on the class.

ORGANIZING YOUR REASONS

Accuracy is most important in giving reasons. However, unless you can present your reasons pleasantly and clearly, the value of accuracy is largely lost because much of what is said doesn't "get through" to the listener.

The way you organize your reasons largely determines how easy the reasons are "to follow". There are many different ways to organize reasons. The system used should be logical and clear. When discussing points about any animal in the class, cover these points in the order in which they are located on the animal. For example: "(general observations first) . . . One was a larger, more powerfully muscled, typier mare than 3. (Then start at a particular point on the animal and go from point to point on your mental picture of the animal). Number 1 was wider through the chest, deeper in the barrel, and cleaner about the withers. She was shorter coupled and longer in the croup than 3. One was especially thicker through the stifle and gaskin muscles and stood straighter on her legs. She had more breed character and femininity about the head and moved with a truer stride than 3."

By using this system, you are not likely to forget any points, your reasons are much easier to follow, and you gain confidence by knowing exactly what points you will discuss next. It doesn't matter where you choose to start and stop, but you should develop your own pattern and make this a habit. Many times, you will find no difference worth mentioning in some of the points. In this case you simply skip over these and go to the next point you wish to mention in the order in which you see it on the animal.

It is essential that you form a mental image or picture of each animal as you judge a class. When you give a set of reasons on that class you should visualize the animals. It

is impossible to give a good set of reasons by trying to memorize your notes on a class.

OTHER RULES FOR GIVING REASONS

Do not claim strong points for one animal unless it has them. Claim the points where one is superior and then grant to the other animal its points of advantage. Emphasize the major differences strongly. Giving big differences first on each pair helps.

Be concise and definite. Don't hunt for things to say. If you don't remember, go on to the next pair you are to discuss.

Give your reasons with confidence and without hesitation. Talk with enough vim and vigor to keep the judge

interested, but do not talk too loudly.

End reasons strongly. Give a concise final statement as to why you place the last animal last.

Be sure you have your reasons well organized, so you will not hesitate when you present them to the judge. Stand about six feet away from the judge as you give your reasons. Stand with your feet spread apart, hands behind you, and look him straight in the eyes.

HOW YOUR REASONS ARE GRADED

The judge will determine the value of your reasons by **Accuracy** - You must tell the truth. This means that you need to see the big things in the class correctly. Accuracy is very important. You will lose points for incorrect statements.

Presentation and Delivery - Present your reasons in a logical, well-organized manner that is pleasant to hear, and clear and easy to follow. If reasons are poorly presented, the value of accuracy may be lost because the listener cannot grasp much of what you say. Speak slowly and clearly. Use well organized statements. Be sure to use correct grammar. Speak loud enough to be understood. Avoid talking too loudly and too rapidly. Emphasize the important comparisons.

Completeness - Bring out all of the major differences in your reasons. Omit small things that leave room for doubt.

Terms - Use correct terms. Incorrect terms greatly detract from the value of your reasons.

REASONS ON A CLASS OF QUARTER HORSES

As an example, the following set of reasons is given on a class of Quarter Horse Mares. You should study this set of reasons as to organization and terms used. It is not to be memorized or used for any class you may judge because it will not fit any other class.

I placed this class of Quarter Horse mares 4-2-3-1. In the top pair, I placed 4 over 2 because she has more balance

and Quarter Horse type. She has a more correct slope to the shoulders, more prominent withers and a shorter, stronger coupling than 2. Number 4 has a longer, nicer-turned croup and is thicker through the stifle and gaskin. She also moves with a freer, truer stride than 2. I grant that 2 has more muscling in the forearm and stands straighter on her front legs than 4, but I criticize Number 2 because she is short in the croup and light in the gaskin muscles. She is too low at the withers.

In the middle pair, I placed 2 over 3 because she has more balance and style and is straighter on her legs. Number 2 has a breedier, more feminine head, and her neck blends more smoothly at the shoulder. She has a longer, smoother muscling and moves with more snap and flexion than 3. I fault 3 because she is bunchy in her muscling and plain about the head. She is sluggish in her movement and forges occasionally.

In the bottom pair I placed 3 over 1 because she is heavier muscled and has more Quarter Horse type. She is shorter in the cannons and has a more durable hoof. I grant that 1 is more alert and handles her feet and legs better than 3, but I placed her last because she is off-type and very light-muscled. Number 1 is steep-shouldered, narrow through the chest and barrel and shallow bodied. She is weak in the coupling, very light in the rear quarter, and too long in the cannons. For these reasons I placed this class of Quarter Horse mares 4-2-3-1.



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