

## **When watching a livestock show at the county fair, what is the judge looking for?**

When watching ringside at the county fair, you may wonder why the cow you thought was prettier did not win the class. So what is the judge looking for?

Breeding classes are meant for female or male animals that will be used in the herd or flock to produce future offspring. When the judge is looking at these animals, they are judging for breed standards (which are set by the breeds' national association) and the ability for the animal to pass along better genetic traits than what they have. The judge looks at the feet and legs and makes sure the animal has a solid leg, and hoof that will sustain her throughout her life. They look for the correctness of angles, straightness of the spine, and the mammary system; just to name a few traits.

In the market classes, these animals are raised to become meat animals. The judge is looking for the animal that will produce the most meat, the tastiest meat, and the best quality of meat. This is difficult, as you are judging the meat of the animal while it is alive.

A judge has a trained eye, knowing what to look for in both breeding and market animals. Some judges spend extra time with the exhibitors in the ring explaining their placings of the class. This gives the exhibitors a chance to help their breeding and/or feeding program to place better at future shows.

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