

## Beef are judged on their:

- degree of muscling
- degree of finish (fat cover)
- growth capacity
- structural correctness
- balance
- frame size



### Degree of muscling

To evaluate the degree of muscling you will evaluate the width from flank to flank standing directly behind them. You want the animal to be wide and round, with lots of room between the legs while they walk. You want them to stand with their feet a hip length apart. Additionally you'll want to take a look at their top line. Does their topline stand out, or does it look like a "V" with muscle standing out on either side? You want the topline of your cow smooth, but to have lots of muscle around it.

### Degree of finish

The degree of finish refers to the fat cover over the shoulders, ribs, topline, tail head, flank, and brisket. You want to see the animal smooth all over, not being able to see any ribs or pin bones. But remember, the animal shouldn't be so fat that they have no definition!

### Growth capacity

To evaluate growth capacity you have to ask yourself if the animal has room to fill out. The ideal animal has great width in their chest, width between feet when standing, has a big depth of body, open ribs, and they are long. If they don't have room to pack in muscle and fat, then they don't have much capacity to grow.

### Structural correctness

To analyze structural correctness, you have to take a look at the animal's feet and legs, hock, rump, and shoulders. The animal should stand with straight legs, and all toes pointing forward. Their rump should be long and level from hooks to pins,

and their shoulders should be smooth looking and allow the animal to stand comfortably. If an animal's legs bow out, if their toes aren't straight, they don't walk comfortably, or their legs are sickle, these are all things that take points away from their structural correctness.

## Style and Balance

Judging style and balance includes the top line, the uniformity of volume, the smoothness and angularity in the front, and the blending of the shoulders, ribs and hips. The topline of the animal is the highest point along their backbone, and this should be straight throughout. A bow in the top line could indicate weakness in the loins or pain from walking. The volume of the animal should be uniform and look natural, your animal really should look like a big barrel!

The smoothness and angularity in the front refers to how the head blends into the neck, and how that blends into the shoulders. An ideal animal will naturally hold their head high, have a long neck free from a lot of excess skin, and the top of their neck will blend into the topline, while the bottom of the neck will cleanly drop into the brisket. Similarly, the shoulders of the animal should be smooth and hardly noticeable, and they should blend smoothly into the ribs, and the ribs should blend into the hips. Often young animals who are still growing won't have smooth blending from the shoulders to the hips because they aren't filled out, but this blending often comes with time.

## Frame size

Frame size has a lot to do with the ideal finishing weight of your animal. The ideal animal looks proportional, whereas an animal with poor frame size might appear too tall without enough fat cover, or too short with too much fat cover.

## Volume

Volume is determined by width, depth, and length of body. The body width concerns the shape of the ribs, the ideal animal has a big round rib cage, allowing the animal to consume more. You judge body depth from the side, and you are visually measuring from the top of the back to the bottom of the belly — you want the belly to be half way between the ground and the top of the back. The length of body is the length between the shoulders and the flank, and you want the animal to be long, but proportional.

## Sheep are judged on their:

- confirmation
- balance
- degree of muscling
- degree of finish



## Conformation

Conformation is the general shape and structure of the lamb.

- Full and level over the dock
- Muscle expression in the rear quarter
- Deep, wide and thick leg
- Thick across rump, loin, back
- Trim through the middle
- Rear legs that have good angle at the hocks

From the front

- Muscular forearm
- Deep and wide through chest
- Straight forelegs
- Slim, clean neck
- Smooth shoulders
- Wide over the shoulders

The ideal lamb is wedge shaped as you look from above. Viewed from the rear, the ideal lamb will be widest through the stifle area.

## Balance

Balance is the proportion of the body parts to one another and how well they blend together. The ideal lamb is smooth and well balanced. The greatest proportion of weight is in the area of those high priced cuts.

- Deep and full through leg
- Size and scale
- Trim middle
- Cleanness in fore, rear flanks

- Well placed feet and legs
- Long body

## Muscle

Indications of muscling are:

- thickness and firmness through the leg
- natural thickness over the top
- thickness in the forearm and over the stifle

There are three dimensions to muscle - length, width and depth. You must consider all of these when you determine the amount of muscle on your lamb. The ideal lamb has long, wide and deep or thick muscle. Over 60% of the value of the lamb comes from the leg and loin. The leg and loin are only 25% of the live weight.

## Finish

Finish is the amount of external fat the lamb is carrying. Enough fat cover to be healthy is essential, it also makes your lamb look good. Too much fat is not only discounted in the market price you get for your lamb, it has to be trimmed from consumer cuts. It costs you money to produce and costs the market money to remove it. Handle those areas where there should be no fat - the point of the shoulder and the rear flanks.

Fat cover on the live lamb can be determined by looking at the:

- finish over the back bone
- fat around the dock
- finish over the rib
- fill in the flank
- fill behind the shoulder
- fat in the twist and the brisket.

Therefore, the ideal market lamb is correctly finished and heavily muscled with good conformation, balance and quality.

## Swine are judged on their:

- conformation
- balance
- degree of muscling
- degree of finish



## Conformation

Conformation is the general body shape and features of the pig as determined by his framework or his skeleton and muscle structure. The ideal market hog is three dimensional - he is medium tall, long and wide. Market hogs are either barrows (castrated males) or gilts (young females who have not farrowed).

## Balance

Balance in the market hog, balance is also important. A well balanced hog will be tight middled, with a smooth blending and proportion of body parts. A poorly balanced hog will be long necked, high and narrow shouldered, heavy middled and short rumped. Never criticize a hog for being off balance because of an over abundance of ham. Muscle The ideal muscle pattern in today's hog is long and smooth. When evaluating the hog, make sure that what you are seeing is muscle and not fat. The best way to do this is by feeling the body of the hog.

## Muscle

Muscle will be firm and bulging. Fat will be much softer, often feeling squishy or like jello. A heavily muscled hog will have a plump, firm, deep, thick meaty ham and long rump. When viewed from the rear, the lower part of the ham should be the widest part of the hog. The ham should extend well down onto the hock. The hog should be muscular over the shoulders with a wide chest and the loin wide along the back. The muscles meet the spine at the very top of the animal. If there is a groove along the top of the animal all the way to the tail, it indicates that there is significant muscling of the loin and that the space between the muscle is not covered with an abundance of fat.

## Finish

**Finish** A small amount of fat or finish is desirable in market hogs. A large amount of fat is very undesirable in today's market hog. **Backfat** is the best indicator of total fatness in hogs. Although we do not actually measure the backfat thickness when we judge hogs, there are some traits which we can use to estimate it. The best indication of too much back fat is a soft, square top. Others are a heavy, wasty jowl, a soft, wasty middle, and a looseness in the lower ham and crotch region.

## Goats are judged on their:

- Degree of muscling
- structural correctness
- Volume, Capacity
- Condition, Trimness
- Structure, Soundness
- Style and Balance



## Muscle

Generally, a goat that walks and stands wide is going to be heavier muscled. The goat should have a deep, heavily muscled leg and rump. When viewed from behind, the widest part of the leg should be the stifle area. The goat should have a broad, thick back and loin that is naturally firm and hard handling. A good goat should be wide through its chest floor, with bold shoulders and a prominent forearm muscle.

The degree of muscling in meat goats is best seen through:

- the thickness of the thigh and hind legs
- a wide stance of the rear feet and legs
- the length, width, and thickness of the loin and saddle - the hind saddle should be at least as long as the front saddle

## Structural Correctness

Structural correctness refers to the skeletal system or bone structure of an animal. A goat should hold its head erect and the neck should extend out of the top of the shoulders. A goat should travel and stand wide and straight on both front and rear legs. A goat should have a strong level top, and a long rump with a slight slope from hooks to pins. Your goat should be heavy boned and be strong on its pasterns.

## Volume, Capacity

This refers to the relationship of body length to body depth and body width.

Goats should be long bodied, with adequate depth and spring of rib.

The volume, or capacity, of an animal indicates how well the animal may perform.

## Condition, Trimness

The amount of trimness and condition (fat) an animal has relates to its performance.

- not too fat or too thin
- indications of fat over the front saddle, loin, and ribs and in the flank and breast.

## Structure, Soundness

Strong bone and correct skeletal structure is essential:

- level top line
- strong pasterns
- straight legs

## Style and Balance

Style and balance refer to the way all body parts blend together, how the neck blends into the shoulder, the shoulder into the rib cage, the rib cage into the loin, the loin into the rump, and how “eye-appealing” a goat is. When viewed from the side, a goat should have a smooth shoulder, level top, trim middle and straight legs.

- overall attractiveness
- evenly balanced from the front to the rear
- correct proportions of body width, body depth, and body length