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SCORING LIVESTOCK JUDGING CLASSES

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Youth livestock judging is a popular and educational activity that involves thousands of youth nationwide. For many contestants and leaders, understanding how the score is calculated is difficult — even a little puzzling. Calculating the scores by hand is a logical process and not that difficult to learn. Having a better understanding of how scores are tabulated will benefit everyone involved in livestock judging.

Most livestock judging contests rely on the Hormel[®] system or computer programs to calculate scores. A top score is based on 50 points with deductions coming from errors in placing. An official judge places a class and assigns a numerical score to indicate the differences between the pairs in the class. A class of four animals has three pairs, a top, middle, and bottom. A numerical penalty or cut is assigned to each pair according to the difficulty of placement of the animals. For example, if one animal shows more quality than another the penalty is larger than if they are very similar in traits and quality.

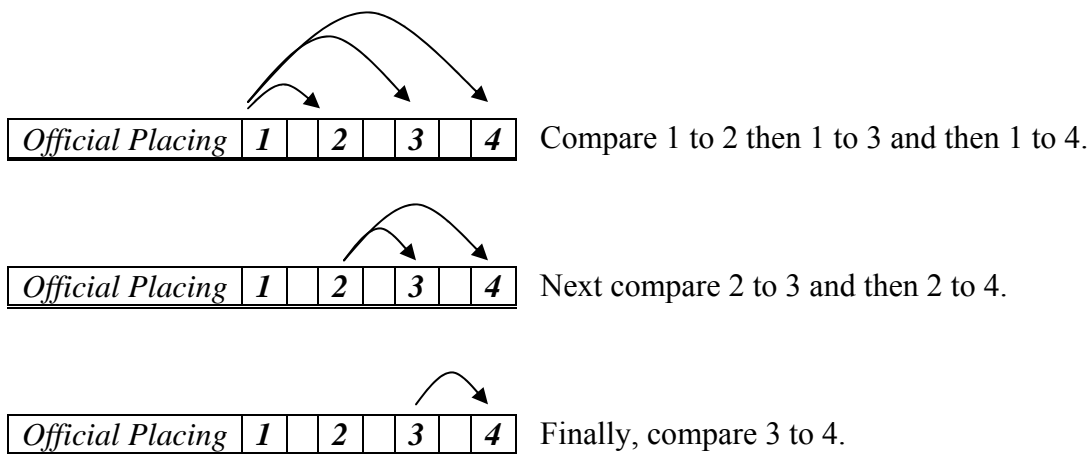
Penalties:

- 1 point: The pair of animals is very similar and could easily be switched in the placing.
- 2 points: The animals are very similar but one has a slight advantage. This switch within the pair could be very logical.
- 3 points: The animals are similar, but there is a clear advantage to one of the pair.
- 4 points: The animals are not of similar quality with one animal showing definite advantage. This is should be an obvious placing.
- 5 points: One is clearly better than the other. The placing is obvious after short deliberation.
- 6 points: The animals are not even comparable.
- 7 points: Reflects a superior animal compared to an inferior one.

The total of the three penalties cannot exceed 15 points. If the penalties total 15 the middle pair cannot be more than a 5 point cut; if the total is 14 the middle cut cannot be more than 8 points. Exceeding any of these limits could result in a final score less than zero.

Scoring one class of four animals involves making six decisions. The tabulation must include comparing the first animal [1] to the second animal [2], then animal [1] to animal [3], animal [1] to animal [4], animal [2] to animal [3] and so on in this manner (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Six decisions involved in scoring a class of four animals.



Example 1:

In order to calculate a class’s final score, each of the six decisions is considered. If the official placing for the class is 3, 4, 2, 1 with penalties of 3 for the first pair (3 ahead of 4); 2 for the second pair (4 ahead of 2) and 5 for the third pair (2 ahead of 1) and the contestant placing is 4, 3, 1, 2, then each decision must be evaluated to determine the amount of error for each placing.

Official Placing – 3, 4, 2, 1
 Penalties (Cuts) – 3, 2, 5
 Contestant Placing – 4, 3, 1, 2

Step	Contestant’s Decision	Official Decision	Answer	Penalty
1	Did contestant place	3 ahead of 4?	No	3
2	“	3 ahead of 2?	Yes	0
3	“	3 ahead of 1?	Yes	0
4	“	4 ahead of 2?	Yes	0
5	“	4 ahead of 1?	Yes	0
6	“	2 ahead of 1?	No	5
Sum of Penalties				8
Contestant’s Score (50 – 8)				42

First Decision: The contestant incorrectly placed [4 ahead of 3] disagreeing with the official placing [3 ahead of 4]. As a result, there is a 3 point penalty. Remember, the penalty for not placing [3 ahead of 4] in this example is 3.

Second Decision: The contestant correctly placed [3 ahead of 2] which matches the official’s placing [3 ahead of 2]. There is no penalty.

Third Decision: The contestant correctly placed [3 ahead of 1] which matches the official's placing [3 ahead of 1]. There is no penalty.

Fourth Decision: The contestant correctly placed [4 ahead of 2] which matches the official's placing [4 ahead of 2]. There is no penalty.

Fifth Decision: The contestant correctly placed [4 ahead of 1] which matches the official's placing [4 ahead of 1]. There is no penalty.

Sixth Decision: The contestant incorrectly placed [1 ahead of 2] disagreeing with the official's placing of [2 ahead of 1]. As a result, there is a 5 point penalty.

Example 2:

Official Placing – 1, 2, 3, 4

Penalties (Cuts) – 5, 2, 3

Contestant Placing – 3, 1, 2, 4

Step	Contestant's Decision	Official Decision	Answer	# of Pairs Affected by Error	Penalty
1	Did contestant place	1 ahead of 2?	Yes	0	0
2	“	1 ahead of 3?	No	2 ¹	7
3	“	1 ahead of 4?	Yes	0	0
4	“	2 ahead of 3?	No	1	2
5	“	2 ahead of 4?	Yes	0	0
6	“	3 ahead of 4?	Yes	0	0
				Sum of Penalties	9
				Contestant's Score (50 – 9)	41

First Decision: The contestant correctly placed [1 ahead of 2] which matches the official's placing [1 ahead of 2]. There is no penalty.

Second Decision: The contestant incorrectly placed animal [3 ahead of 1], disagreeing with the official placing [1 ahead of 3]. Because there is a break in two pair of placings; the loss of points is calculated by adding the total number of penalties for each pair broken (2 ahead of 3= 2 points and 1 ahead of 2= 5 points). A penalty of 7 points (5 + 2) is discounted from the overall score.

Third Decision: The contestant correctly placed [1 ahead of 4] which matches the official placing [1 ahead of 4]. There is no penalty.

Fourth Decision: The contestant incorrectly placed animal [3 ahead of 2], disagreeing with the official's placing of [2 ahead of 3]. A penalty of 2 points is discounted from the overall score.

Fifth Decision: The contestant correctly placed [2 ahead of 4] which matches the official placing [2 ahead of 4]. There is no penalty.

Sixth Decision: The contestant correctly placed [3 ahead of 4] which matches the official placing [3 ahead of 4]. There is no penalty.

¹Note that the official placed animal #1 ahead of animal #3. The contestant incorrectly placed #3 ahead of #1. This error created an error between two pair of the official's placings [1 & 2], costing the contestant 5 points and the error between animals [2 & 3], costing the contestant 2 points for a total penalty of 7 points.

Example 3:

Official Placing – 3, 1, 2, 4

Penalties (Cuts) – 3, 6, 2

Contest Placing – 4, 1, 2, 3

Step	Contestant's Decision	Official Decision	Answer	# of Pairs Affected by Error	Penalty
1	Did contestant place	3 ahead of 1?	No	1	3
2	“	3 ahead of 2?	No	2	9
3	“	3 ahead of 4?	No	3	11
4	“	1 ahead of 2?	Yes	0	0
5	“	1 ahead of 4?	No	2	8
6	“	2 ahead of 4?	No	1	2
Sum of Penalties					33
Contestant's Score (50 – 9)					17

First Decision: The contestant incorrectly placed animal [1 ahead of 3] disagreeing with the official placing [3 ahead of 1]. A penalty of 3 points is discounted from the overall score.

Second Decision: The contestant incorrectly placed [2 ahead of 3] disagreeing with the official placing [3 ahead of 2]. Because there is a break in two pair of placings; the total loss of points is calculated by adding the total number of penalties for each pair broken (3 ahead of 1= 3 points and 1 ahead of 2= 6 points) for a total deduction of 9 points.

Third Decision: The contestant incorrectly placed [4 ahead of 3] disagreeing with the official placing [3 ahead of 4]. This time, there is a break in all three pairs of placings; the total loss of points is calculated by adding the total number of penalties for each pair broken (3 ahead of 1= 3 points, 1 ahead of 2= 6 points and 2 ahead of 4 = 2 points) for a total deduction of 11 points.

Fourth Decision: The contestant correctly placed [1 ahead of 2] which matches the official placing [1 ahead of 2]. There is no penalty.

Fifth Decision: The contestant incorrectly placed [4 ahead of 1] disagreeing with the official placing [1 ahead of 4]. Because there is a break in two pair of placings; the total loss of points is calculated by adding the total number of penalties for each pair broken (1 ahead of 2= 6 points and 2 ahead of 4= 2 points) for a total deduction of 8 points.

Sixth Decision: The contestant incorrectly placed [4 ahead of 2] disagreeing with the official placing [2 ahead of 4]. A penalty of 2 points is discounted from the overall score.

To become proficient with the process of scoring the placings in a judging contest takes time and practice, so don't be discouraged. If you have more questions about scoring livestock judging contests, contact your livestock judging coach, FFA advisor or county extension agent.

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