

NOTES, REASONS, AND QUESTIONS

A. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT NOTES

Whether for reasons or for questions, the importance of notes cannot be overemphasized. The key to reasons being clear, well-organized, and easy to follow is a good set of notes. They are also vital to a high questions score. They should be simple yet accurate and detailed enough to paint a picture of the class.

Before recording a single note, make certain the contestant is on the correct side of the class. Classes are numbered from left to right from the front side of the class. Encourage contestants to begin taking notes on the hardest and closest pair. This way one can justify in their mind the placing of that pair early. If it is then determined that the placing of the pair should be switched, other pair comparisons then can be recorded and the whole class will not have to be re-evaluated and previous notes scratched out. Remember, a change in the placing of one pair in the class will also change what other exhibits are paired together for comparison.

To increase efficiency in note-taking, have contestants develop a pattern and follow it for every class. If one approaches each class in a systematic way, they will develop a routine and be more consistent. Placing the class as quickly as possible allows more time for making detailed notes, as does the use of abbreviations. Contestants should identify the major points in placing each pair, as well as overall observations of the entire class (rank of muscling, trimness, quality; sex of each carcass; how many carcasses or cuts graded Choice; how easy or difficult to place, etc.). It may also be helpful for contestants to underline the most important points when studying their notes so they will be more likely to remember them.

B. NOTES FOR REASONS

- Format the notecard so it follows the format of the reasons presentation. Draw 3 horizontal lines to divide the notecard into 4 sections (one section for 1st/2nd pair, one section for 2nd/3rd pair, one section for 3rd/4th pair, and one section for last placing exhibit).
- Organize notes so they will be easy to convert into a reasons presentation:
 1. Select the topic characteristic -- muscling, trimness, or quality -- that was the main reason for placing one carcass or cut over the other one in a pair. If muscling is the primary reason for placing 1 over 2, it should be recorded first and discussed first in the reasons before mentioning trimness or quality.
 2. Additional traits indicate other reasons why the carcass or cut was placed over the other one. If muscling was the topic, then trimness and quality would now be discussed. Describe all advantages of the higher placing exhibit first before discussing the lower placing of the pair.

3. Then grants point out advantages that the carcass or cut placing second in that pair possessed may be used.
4. A summary statement at the end of the reasons provides the major reason(s) for placing a carcass or cut last in the class. In reasons, this statement should include words such as 'most', 'least', and '-est' words, describing the last place exhibit in comparison to everything else in the class. The summary may also include an acknowledgment for a trait in which the last place exhibit was better than the others in the class.

Example of notecard organization for reasons:

Contestants: 52

Placing: 4-2-1-3

Class: Beef Carcasses
(Reasons) (Grants)

4/2 (Main Topic)	2/4
M T (<i>First</i>) Q	M T (<i>Pair</i>) Q
2/1 (Main Topic)	1/2
M T (<i>Second</i>) Q	M T (<i>Pair</i>) Q
1/3 (Main Topic)	3/1
M T (<i>Third</i>) Q	M T (<i>Pair</i>) Q
Last M T Q	<i>(Last place Summary)</i>

C. REASONS

Reasons must be well-organized and easy to follow. The class should be discussed in the order it was placed. Reasons are organized in pairs, with a description of the first pair (1st versus 2nd), the middle pair (2nd vs. 3rd), and the last pair (3rd vs. 4th). Finally, a brief explanation of why the fourth place carcass or cut was placed last should close the discussion of the reasons.

The first statement about a pair in a class is a general statement (topic sentence) that includes the most important factor(s) for placing the pair. Support of the general factors (muscling, trimness, or quality) with specific, detailed descriptions (where or how) follows. The advantages of each factor, stated in their order of importance to the placing, are mentioned before the other factors. For example, if the primary reason for placing 1 over 2 is trimness, all advantages in trimness, in order of their importance, should be discussed before mentioning advantages in muscling or quality. It can be very confusing for both the contestant and the reasons judge if the contestant discusses a few points on trimness and then moves on to muscling or quality and then back to trimness.

Many times grants should be used. A grant is an acknowledgment that a carcass or cut that is placed below another has some advantages over the higher placing carcass or cut. Grants are used after all of the advantages of the higher placing exhibit have been mentioned. When discussing the last place exhibit, sometimes an acknowledgment of a trait in which the carcass or cut had an advantage over the others in the class, or for which it was quite acceptable in a trait, should be used. An acknowledgment will let the judge know that the contestant realizes, while the exhibit placed last in the class, it did have acceptable characteristics.

The final point to consider in oral reasons is delivery. If reasons are not presented well, they will lose their effectiveness. Contestants should speak clearly and slowly, emphasizing important points through organization and not voice level. Contestants should stand about six feet from the person listening to reasons. A statement of the placing of the class should begin and end the set of reasons, and will help the contestant keep numbers straight throughout the reasons. Past tense should be used, as well as a variety of modifiers, verbs, and connectors to avoid sounding "canned." Nondescriptive words such as 'better', 'best', or 'good' should not be used. Remember, the most important concept in presenting oral reasons is that they must be truthful and accurate.

D. TERMINOLOGY FREQUENTLY USED IN REASONS

Common Verbs

displayed
exhibited
had
possessed
revealed
showed

Joiner Phrases

as demonstrated by
as evidenced by
as indicated by
as revealed by

Sentence Joiners

Additionally
Furthermore
In addition
Moreover

Concessions

I acknowledge
I admit
I concede
I grant
I recognize

Topic Statements for the Higher Placing Carcass or Cut in a Pair

If placed higher due to muscling, trimness, or quality:

“I placed X over Y because X (*verb*) greater (*trimness, muscling, or quality*) as (*joiner phrase*)...(describe locations where it was more muscular or trimmer, or how it was of higher quality).”

If placed higher due to greater cutability (both muscling and trimness)*:

“Due to greater cutability, I placed X over Y because X was a trimmer, more muscular (*specify cut or carcass*), as (*joiner phrase*)...(list specific locations where it was trimmer, and then describe areas where it was more muscular).”

* Mention topics in order or their importance to the class placing. If muscling was more important, mention muscling first and then discuss trimness, or vice versa.

If placed higher due to a combination of quality and either muscling or trimness*:

“I placed X over Y because X combined quality and muscling to a higher degree. X (*verb*) (*describe how it was of higher quality*). (*Sentence joiner*), X (*verb*) (*describe areas where it was more muscular or trimmer*).”

*Mention topics in order of their importance to the class placing. If muscling was more important than quality, mention muscling first and then discuss quality, or vice versa. If quality was more important than trimness, mention quality and then discuss trimness, or vice versa.

Criticisms of the Last Place Carcass or Cut in the Class

For areas where fattest compared to rest of class:

most fat over

most fat opposite the ribeye

most seam fat

most internal fat

For areas where least muscular compared to rest of class:

smallest

smallest area of exposed lean in...

flattest

thinnest

most tapering

For indications of lowest quality compared to the rest of the class:

darkest-colored

palest-colored

least uniformly-colored

softest

coarsest-textured

least amount of marbling

Summary Statements for the Last Place Carcass or Cut in the Class

For the fattest and/or least muscular carcass or cut:

would have lowest lean to fat ratio

would have lowest lean to bone ratio

would have lowest percentage of boneless, closely trimmed retail cuts

would have highest cost per serving (in retail cut classes only)

would have lowest percentage of center-cut slices (in ham classes only)

For the lowest quality carcass or cut:

would have the lowest merchandising value (Choice vs. Select)

would have the lowest consumer appeal

E. NOTES FOR QUESTIONS

Notes for questions classes should be comparative yet more descriptive than notes for reasons. For questions, broad observations regarding the overall class will be more useful than for reasons. Notes taken between pairs can be more general, with emphasis on major differences seen in muscling, trimness, or quality.

When taking notes for questions, keep in mind the type of questions which could be asked. To answer the questions, contestants must take descriptive notes (which had the most, least, -est...). Remember, questions are asked to test each contestant's ability to analyze a class. The committee will only ask questions about characteristics that pertain to the placing of the class or that are significant and noticeable differences.

The following are some suggestions for taking notes for questions:

- Write down the three factors, with the specific areas where differences in these factors can be found for that type of class, on the left side of the notecard.
- On the right side of the note card, rank each carcass or cut for the corresponding area for each trait. Always use the same ranking system, so that there will not be any confusion when studying notes. For example, always rank exhibits least-to-most.
- Put a check next to each trait after it has been examined on each exhibit. If there were no significant differences in a trait between exhibits, rank them as closely as possible. If there are great differences between exhibits in a particular trait, circle both numbers together so this will stand out when studying notes later.

- If an exhibit was exceptional in a certain trait (e.g., if it was exceptionally fat under the butt face, or had a particularly muscular round), circle or underline that number so that this will stand out when studying notes.
- Be consistent with abbreviations and use the same note-taking system for all set of notes so that there will not be any confusion regarding what the symbols mean when studying notes.
- Use the rankings in muscling, trimness, and quality to help place the class and to note if one particular exhibit was obviously the overall fattest, trimmest, most muscular, least muscular, highest quality, or lowest quality exhibit in the class.

Example of notecard for beef wholesale class questions:

Beef Wholesale Ribs	Placing: 3-2-1-4
<u>QUALITY</u>	
Marbling	
Firmness	
Color	
Texture	
<u>MUSCLING</u>	
Ribeye	
Blade Face	
Back	
<u>TRIMNESS</u>	
Over ribeye	
Over blade face	
Over lower blade	
Over back	
Over ribends	
Seam fat in the blade face	

F. QUESTIONS

The following is a list of fifteen possible questions that could be asked in the Texas 4-H Intermediate Division contests. This list is not inclusive.

1. Which had the most fat?
2. Which had the least amount of marbling?
3. Which had the darkest colored lean?
4. Which had the most seam fat?
5. Which had the most bone in the exposed cut surface?
6. Which had the most exposed lean in the cut surface?
7. Which cut would have the lowest cost per serving of lean?
8. Which had the least fat?
9. Which had the greatest amount of marbling?
10. Which had the brightest colored lean?
11. Which had the least seam fat?
12. Which had the least bone in the exposed cut surface?
13. Which had the least exposed lean in the cut surface?
14. Which was the most muscular?
15. Which was the least muscular?