You Be the Judge

The primary reason for raising dairy cows is to produce milk. For dairy cows to be highly profitable, they must have traits that function properly. For example, a firmly attached udder that is held above the hocks, correct feet and legs, and width of chest and rump are all desirable traits (characteristics). When selecting dairy cattle for your project or to increase your herd size, you will need to understand how to select them based on the “ideal” breed characteristics. To do so, you will need to learn how to judge dairy cattle.

Taking On the Challenge

Test your decision making skills...you be the judge! Compare several structural traits of the two cows shown and describe what you see in the space provided. Then write a comparative term in the third column that tells why you would place one over the other. A comparative term is usually a word ending in “er” like deeper, firmer, longer, taller, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structures</th>
<th>Cow #1 Description</th>
<th>Cow #2 Description</th>
<th>Why I Placed #1 over #2 (Comparative Terms)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depth of rib</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fore udder attachment</td>
<td>strong pastern, deep heel</td>
<td>weak, shallow heel</td>
<td>stronger pasterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasterns</td>
<td>strong pastern, deep heel</td>
<td>weak, shallow heel</td>
<td>stronger pasterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rear leg placement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rear udder attachment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rump</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teat length</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teat placement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topline/loin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udder depth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udder floor</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Say Cheese! (Share)
• Which of the cows did you think was the better animal?

Chew Your Cud (Process)
• Why do you think dairy farmers need to consider desirable traits for their replacement heifers?
• What information do you need to select a good animal?

Chore Time (Generalize)
• What traits do you think are the most important when considering the purchase of a 4-H project animal?
• What sources of information do you trust?

Mooving Along (Apply)
• How will knowing the ideal structures of a cow help you make better judging decisions?
• How can you improve your judging skills?

Desirable and Undesirable Traits

Leg Placement
- Correct (straight and squarely placed)
- Cow hocked
- Post legged

Feet
- Deep Heel and Strong pastern
- Weak Pastern and Shallow heel

Udder Floor
- Ideal (level)
- Tilted
- Quartered

Fore Udder Attachment
- Ideal-Tight attachment
- Bulgy attachment
- Broken attachment

Rear Udder Attachment
- Ideal-High, wide attachment
- Low, narrow and pinched
- Too low

Teat Placement
- Ideal
- Strutting
- Too far back