

# Guideline on How to be a Dairy Judge



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# Guideline on How to be a Dairy Judge

*In this guide we try to give ideas of “How to be a Dairy Judge”. Judging is a complex thing with many aspects to be aware of and to be able to perform at the very best and only practice makes you better.*

*The exhibitors will have selected the animals long before the Show; they will have worked with the cows and trained them to be at their best on the day of the Show. Therefore, the Judge must fully respect this and possess skills to evaluate all traits, make the correct decisions in ranking and finally to be able to give clear and honest reasons. The Judge must follow the same line from the very first animal entering the Show ring until his final Grand Champion has been found.*

*The local and national cattle organizations will conduct Judging Schools for interested persons, and the national organization can send their best Judges to the European Holstein and Red Holstein Judges Schools and Workshops to be a candidate for the EHRC Judges Panel.*

*The Judge has a major impact on making the Show a success for the organization as well as for the exhibitors and audience.*

*European Holstein and Red Holstein Confederation*

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## WHAT DOES a SHOW MEAN...

## WHAT DOES a SHOW MEAN...

Showing animals has been known for many years, in some countries more than 200 years, and at that time showing cattle had completely different goals compared to today's showing. There was no other common registration system for type traits and showing was therefore the only way to compare and find the best individuals.

These shows were the place, where males for breeding, bulls or stallions but also other species, were compared, ranked and selected for breeding the next generation. Showing offspring later was the evaluation of important traits for production performance. This was before any milk recording society could measure milk production, any classifier evaluated many important type traits and many other measurements from daily handling cattle could bring important information for efficient breeding.

Through the 200 years the Shows today have developed differently depending on the level for the country:

- Local or regional Shows
- National Shows
- International Shows

These may include Herd and /or Daughter and /or Country Groups and with a wide range of goals:

- Judge and rank cattle according to breeding goal.
- Show the status for development towards breeding goal.
- Offspring from sires show the type development in commercial breeding.
- Earlier the best cows were contracted for a bull calf.
- Create new and more interest in breeding.
- Create international interest for the cattle.
- Create a good connection to and understanding from the community towards good cattle husbandry.



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# THE JUDGE, CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALIFICATIONS

## THE JUDGE, CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALIFICATIONS

The exhibitors and their animals are the key players at a Show, but the importance of well-educated and good Judges is as important for the Show and its performance. A good Judge with clear ranking and well understandable reasons for this ranking will do a great job for all involved at the Show; its audience as well as the exhibitors and their animals.

### ID card of a good Judge

- Has a good practical experience of working with cows
- Clear understanding of the breed ideal
- Has a good way to communicate
- Acts as an ambassador for the dairy industry
- Has a friendly and professional approach
- Clear speaking in giving reasons with enthusiasm
- Treats colleagues with respect and demonstrates impartiality
- Decision making, honest and sincere as well as confidence
- Judges the animals for what he observes in the ring and not on past performance
- Is consistent in their judgment throughout the day

### Appearance...

The Judge should be dressed depending upon the traditions and style of the Show. This means he has to

- Be well rested
- Dress professionally
- Be positive

### Thanks and interviews

After finishing the judging and thanking everyone, the Judge should always include the ring steward and other personnel, taking time for talking to the press about the Show and giving comments and answers. This would be a good place to show respect for the Show.

### European Holstein Judges Workshop.

#### Harmonisation across countries

To be a Judge, you should follow local judging school programs in your country, maybe being invited to national schools. Be accepted as a Judge and be trained as a Judge on smaller and bigger Show and maybe national Show, get trained and get experience.

Be invited by your national organization to join the European Holstein Judges

*Everything that can give reasons for doubt about the neutrality of a good judge, stay away from it.*

## THE JUDGE, CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALIFICATIONS

School. Once suitably experienced, you can attend the European Holstein Judges Workshop and qualify for the Judges Panel.

On [www.euholsteins.com](http://www.euholsteins.com) you find more information on Judging Schools and the list of approved EHRC Judges.

### Code of Ethics, philosophy and animal welfare

In some countries, good results in judging the classes can create a high economic interest and, in the same time, the way of preparing animals for the presentation and judging have developed into a very professional art.

To ensure that animal welfare and equal competitive possibilities will be observed, the European Holstein and Red Holstein Confederation (EHRC) has introduced the Terms of Reference (TOR) for Showing Cattle to be respected at a Show. The TOR for Showing Cattle is a good set of rules that should be used within the member countries.

From the TOR for Showing Cattle following shall be mentioned. The complete document can be viewed on the EHRC website:

<http://euholsteins.com/info/documents/EHRCTOREuropeanShowingfv.pdf>

#### **Purpose of Code of Ethics**

The objective of this TOR for Showing Cattle is to create standardised uniformity and transparency for each Show, the participants, audience and other takeholders. Therefore, this Term of Reference focuses in particular on:

- Animal Welfare
- A fair competition
- The image of the Cattle Breeding and the Dairy sector

It guarantees that animal welfare should be considered to be of paramount importance and that the use of bovine medicine should be restricted to the level that is strictly necessary.

A transparent and uniform set of rules and regulations is an important basis for an equitable competition for both the participant and animal. Lastly but most importantly, all stakeholders (participants, organising committee, etc) must be aware of the impact a Show has on the image of the whole Cattle Breeding and the Dairy sector.

Health regulation is the responsibility of the hosting country as this is a very country specific area. All participants of Shows (like any citizen) must be aware of the national laws on Animal Health and Wellbeing: To know them and to abide by them.

These rules are adopted for the EHRC European Championship Show.

References to the EHRC Committee are therefore particular to the European Championship Show and are only recommendations for National Shows.

The Show Organising Committee is the people named by the host organisation, and who are locally responsible for the Show.

### Preparing cattle for showing

When animals are prepared/groomed to compete in individual judging, or group presentations or judging, the rules and regulations specified in this Terms of Reference apply.

**The guiding principles are:**

- **That the animal is presented as naturally as possible.**
- **That healthy animals should not be treated and sick animals should not be showed.**

A Welfare Committee is set up for many Shows, and they allow and decide the entrance of cows to the show ring after checking and inspecting the individual animals according to the set of TOR for Showing Cattle.

In general, the Show Organizer is responsible for implementing the TOR for Showing Cattle. However, the Judge should also consider overfilled udders or bodies harming the locomotion.

### Judging Cow classes, what to look for

To be an efficient dairy cow she must be well balanced in all traits and have good chances to produce well for many lactations. It is important to have all major characteristics such as Udder, Feet and Legs, Frame (including Rump) and Dairy Character well balanced and blended well together in good harmony for minor problems in productive lifetime. This means that there will be a functional harmony in all parts of the animal.

When judging a Show, consideration should be given in these approximate proportions:

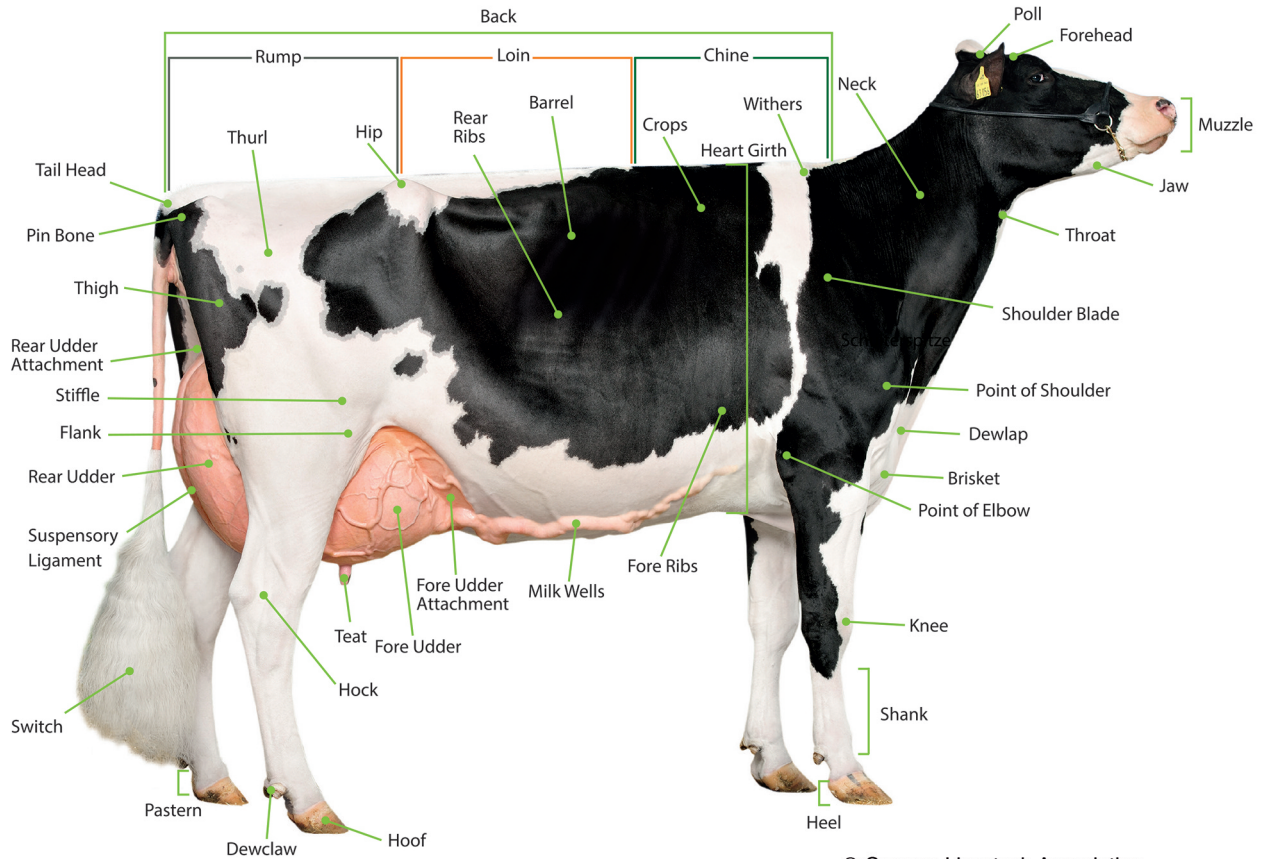
1. Udder: 40%
2. Feet and Legs: 25-30%
3. Frame (including Rump): 20-25%
4. Dairy Character: 10%

The percentages are for guidance only.



# BODY PARTS OF THE COW

# BODY PARTS OF THE COW



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# FOUR MAJOR GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

## FOUR MAJOR GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Understanding major general characteristics and ideal conformation is an important, fundamental skill when learning to Judge cattle. These breakdowns are Udder, Feet and Legs, Frame (including Rump) and Dairy Character.

The showing philosophy must reflect the breeding philosophy; cattle winners at Shows should represent the most profitable cattle for the dairy breeder. The system of judging should also correspond with the economic reality of breeding.

Judging should be based on official functional conformation. Priority must be given to the Udder followed by Feet and Legs.

### Udder

The udder traits are evaluated. Major consideration is given to the traits that contribute to high milk yield and a long productive life. Listed in priority order:

#### Udder Depth

- Moderate depth relative to the hock with adequate capacity and clearance.
- Consideration is given to lactation number and age.

#### Rear Udder

- Wide and high, firmly attached with uniform width from top to bottom and slightly rounded to udder floor.

#### Fore Udder

- Firmly attached with moderate length.

#### Central Ligament

- Evidence of a strong suspensory ligament indicated by clearly defined halving.

#### Teat Placement

- Squarely placed under each quarter, plumb and properly spaced. Ideally rear teats are placed mid point in the rear quarter.

#### Teats

- Cylindrical shape; uniform size with medium length and diameter; neither short nor long is desirable.

#### Udder Balance and Texture

- Udder floor level as viewed from the side.
- Quarters evenly balanced; soft, pliable, and well collapsed after milking.

## FOUR MAJOR GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

### Feet and Legs

Feet and Legs are evaluated.

Evidence of locomotion is given major consideration:

#### Locomotion

- The use of feet and legs, including length and direction of step.
- The stride should be long, straightforward, with force upon the step of the foreleg.

#### Rear Legs-Side View

- Moderate set (angle) to the hock.

#### Rear Legs-Rear View

- Straight, wide apart with feet squarely placed.

#### Feet

- Steep angle and deep heel with short, well-rounded closed toes.

#### Pasterns

- Short and strong with some flexibility, having a moderate, upright angle.

#### Hocks

- Adequate flexibility with freedom from swelling.

#### Bone

- Flat and clean with adequate substance.

### Frame (including Rump)

Rump is the skeletal parts of the cow, with the exception of rear feet and legs.

Listed in priority order, the descriptions of the traits to be considered are as follows:

#### Rump

- Should be long and wide throughout.
- Pin bones should be slightly lower than hipbones with adequate width between the pins.
- Thurl position, near central placement between the hips and pin bones.
- Vulva should be nearly vertical and the anus should not be recessed.
- Tail head should set slightly above and neatly between pin bones with freedom from coarseness.

#### Front End

- Adequate constitution with front legs straight, wide apart, and squarely placed.
- Shoulder blades and elbows set firmly against the chest wall.

#### Back/Loin

- Back should be straight and strong, with loin broad, strong, and nearly level.



## FOUR MAJOR GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

### Stature

- Height at withers and hips should be relatively proportionate.
- Age and breed stature recommendations are to be considered.

### Style/Harmony

- Exhibiting overall style and balance.
- Head should be feminine, clean-cut, slightly dished with broad muzzle, large open nostrils and strong jaw.

### Dairy Character

Dairy Character is a combination of dairyness and strength that supports sustained production.

Major consideration is given to general openness and angularity while maintaining strength, width of chest, spring of fore rib, and substance of bone without coarseness.

Body condition should be appropriate for stage of lactation:

### Ribs

- Ribs should be wide apart and slanted towards the rear.
- Well sprung and have adequate depth related to age.
- Chest deep and wide floor showing capacity for vital organs, with well-sprung fore ribs.

### Barrel

- Long, with adequate depth and width, increasing toward the rear with a deep flank.

### Thighs

- Lean, incurving to flat and wide apart from the rear.

### Neck

- Long, lean and blending smoothly into shoulders.

### Withers

- Sharp with chine prominent.

### Skin

- Thin, loose and pliable.

## HEIFERS are DIFFERENT

# HEIFERS are DIFFERENT

Choosing a heifer with the best conformation and with future potential is not easy. Not only is the udder not developed on heifers, but as she grows, certain faults may disappear while new ones become apparent. Animals who placed at the top of their calf class may not develop the depth of rib desired by dairy producers, and plain yearlings may grow into stylish mature cows. The goal should be to choose heifers that will develop into productive and profitable cows.

When choosing a Show heifer, it's important to realize that, although the udder has not developed, its appearance can be a good indicator of future promise or problems. The udder of an open heifer should not show any signs of development. The characteristics that a person should look for when considering a heifer's udder are correct teat size and placement with the teats pointing slightly inward. Teats that point slightly inward are an indication that the heifer will develop a strongly attached udder. Avoid selecting heifers whose udders are fatty or overdeveloped, as this could lead to poor udder quality and cause difficulties during milking. It may also be a sign of infection or being sucked at a younger age. Strutted teats and flat udder floors are signs of a potentially weak central ligament that could shorten the productive life of a dairy cow.

In General Appearance and Stature the heifer must show attractive individuality and harmonious blending of parts.

When evaluating Dairy Character we should look for evidence of potential milking ability. Major consideration should be given to general openness and angularity without weakness, flatness of bone and freedom from coarseness.

By Feet and Legs locomotion is given major consideration together with moderate set of rear legs and bone quality.



# JUDGING GROUPS, DIFFERENT APPROACHES

## JUDGING GROUPS, DIFFERENT APPROACHES

### Quality vs Uniformity

Many Shows have competitions between groups, e.g.:

- Herd groups.
- Cow family groups.
- Regional groups.
- Progeny groups.
- etc.

For the Judge it is important to have a clear definition from the Show management as to what is expected in the class.

Judges should look first for overall quality of the group; closest to the breeding goal of the Country, then in the final ranking they should look for uniformity.

### Herd group



### Regional group



### Progeny groups





# JUDGING AND RING PROCEDURES

To ensure neutrality, the Judge should not visit the barns before judging and he should not socialize with exhibitors until after the Show. After the Show the Judge is mostly welcome in the barns to have a chat with exhibitor and guests and give better answers to questions from exhibitors and leadsmen.

The Judge can initially explain his expectations and thoughts about being invited as a Judge, and at the end of the show express his feelings about the Show and the quality of animals presented by exhibitors as well as giving his thanks to the organization and crew in general.

### Preparation before the Show begins

It is important for the Judge to create a favourable impression by his manner, appearance and sincerity.

The Judge and ring steward should check details of the Show before it begins:

- Number of animals per class and number of classes.
- Time schedule.
- Place of microphone.
- Display of classes in the Show ring.
- Position for presenting reasons.



## JUDGING AND RING PROCEDURES

### Classes, proposal for line up

Judging a class is judging each animal to the ideal. Judging dairy cattle teaches you to observe, compare and make decisions. First impression is valuable.

A point to distinguish ranking classes in some countries start with the top animals whereas other countries start with the bottom animals. The ranking should end up with same result, just with different ways of keeping the excitement amongst exhibitors and audience.

The Judge must realise which system is common in the country and follow the directions. In this description we explain ranking from top, but guidelines are the same when ranking from the bottom of a class:

- Animals enter the Show ring and move clock wise.
- First observe all animals at a distance.
- Close inspection of each and ALL animals.
- Both sides and from the rear and front.
- Locomotion.

Before starting to rank the cows, it is important to remember and understand the ideal conformation.

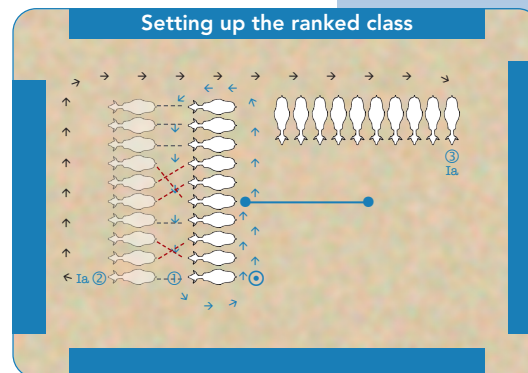
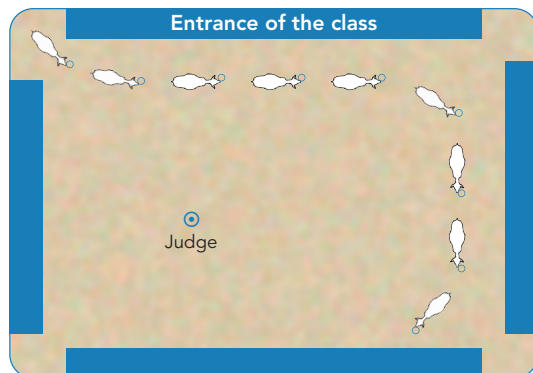
Start ranking and pull top (or bottom) to a point in the ring agreed upon with the ring steward and finalize the class. Let the ring steward be responsible for the line ups.

Check your ranking, walk behind and in front of the cows and form the final line up with the necessary changes.

Use the same procedure in all classes for a better understanding for exhibitors and audience.

Move at the pace indicated by the Show organizer, usually around 1 minute per cow.

- Spent enough and active time on evaluating and ranking.



## JUDGING AND RING PROCEDURES

- Slow Judges may display a lack of confidence by exhibitors and ring side audience.
- If judging too quickly a Judge may miss animals or exhibitors may see the speed as being ignorant of how to judge.
- In general, there will be greater respect for a Judge who moves the Show along at a good pace. It displays confidence on the part of the Judge, "he/she knows what they are looking for".

### Championships, proposal for line-up

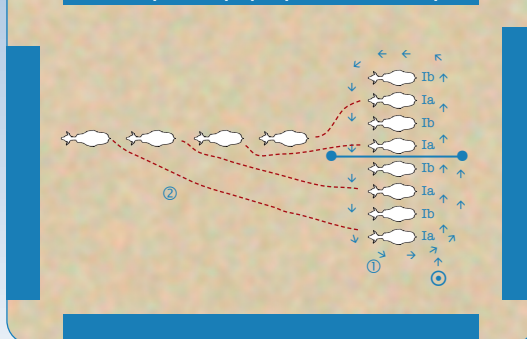
At the end of judging Champions will be selected. The candidates from different classes will be compared according to age and at the final the 4 or 5 best cows are placed on line.

When the Judge has finalized his considerations he will shake hands with the leader of the cow being his Champion, Reserve Champion and Honourable Mention.

This will take place in all age groups and finally between all the Champions when the Grand Champion is selected.



#### Championship, proposal for line-up



#### Grand Championship





# reasons are very IMPORTANT

An important part of judging is giving reasons and justifying your placings to the audience, clearly and accurately.

- **Confidence** is very important, and having confidence in placing the class and convincing the audience that you examined the animals and have reasons for placing them as you did.
- **Accuracy:** the Judge must consider accuracy in selecting the terms to compare or describe specific traits. One way to prevent using inaccurate phrases is to develop a large terminology vocabulary.
- **Presentation:** speak clearly and loud enough so you are easily understood and to show you are confident in your placing.
- **Start out** by visualizing each animal in your mind. Official reasons are a brief and complete statement to justify your placement. Make notes about special features that you remember about the animals. Use comparative rather than descriptive terms.

Verbal reasons: can make or break a Judge

- **Compare**, do not describe, use the parts of a dairy animal in reasons.
- Use terms that are **understood**.
- Use colourful expressions to indicate **individuality**, but do not use slang
- **Do not make comparisons** that are not true or identifiable.
- Go down 5-6 placings in large class **on the microphone**. However, speak person to person with those placed below this placing, and have one positive comment on each animal, even the last one.
- When giving your reasons, **slow down** and use a few words to describe the class overall.
- Be **articulate**, permitting exhibitors and audience to hear your reasons on the class.

reasons are very  
IMPORTANT



## HOW TO TAKE YOUR REASONS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

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### Identifiers

Using “identifiers” is an easy way to add a little “extra” to your reasons and demonstrate to the reasons official that you remember the cattle. Identifiers are things that are obviously different about one cow than all of the others. Make sure that the difference is apparent to anyone that would look at the class so the officials don’t get confused. Identifiers can be used in place of the animal’s number to help add variety to your reasons.

Examples of identifiers:

- Black cow, white cow, speckled cow, red cow.
- Cow with catalogue number...

### Connecting words

Connecting words help greatly with the flow of your reasons but are often overlooked by novice Judges.

Examples of connecting words:

- “In a close top placing...”
- “Next, in my middle pair...”
- “Finally, in a more logical bottom placing...”

Using terms such as these rather than just jumping from one pair to another helps catch the reason listener’s attention and ensures that they know which placing you are describing. Using these connecting terms often also gives you a chance to pause briefly and refocus yourself between pairs. This is a good place to note if you felt a pair was close, or an easier placing.

### Positive reasons are important

It is always useful to use comparisons that give an advantage to the lead individual rather than citing the disadvantage of a cow.

Decisive, positive, descriptive terms such as:

- She shows me more width in chest, being deeper and fuller in the heart region.
- Today she has an advantage in the way she uses her feet and legs, moving more freely in the hock and standing on a stronger set of pasterns.
- She has a great advantage in depth of fore and rear rib and in openness of rib, she is far superior in dairy Character, indicated by her refinement through the head and neck overall angularity and cleanliness of bone.

## HOW TO TAKE YOUR REASONS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

- The cow at the top of this class has a decided advantage in her mammary system being longer and stronger in her fore udder attachment and a more correct (desirable) front teat placement.
- In placing this class of well balanced, very dairy stylish cows I found a definite top, being the best uddered cow in the line up today, she is higher, wider and stronger in her rear attachment with a deeper medium suspensory ligament.



## HOW TO HANDLE UNDESIRABLE EXPRESSIONS OR ABNORMALITIES

# HOW TO HANDLE UNDESIRABLE EXPRESSIONS OR ABNORMALITIES

### Udder

1. Udder definitely broken away in attachment: serious discrimination.
2. A weak udder attachment: slight-serious discrimination.
3. Blind quarter: disqualification.
4. One or more light quarters, hard spots in udder, obstructions in teats: slight-serious discrimination.

### Feet and Legs

1. Lameness-apparently permanent and interfering with normal function: disqualification.
2. Lameness apparently temporary and not affecting normal function: slight discrimination.
3. Evidence of crampy hind legs: serious discrimination.
4. Evidence of fluid in hocks: slight discrimination.
5. Weak pasterns: slight-serious discrimination.

### Horns

No discrimination.

### Eyes

1. Blindness in one eye: slight discrimination.
2. Cross or bulging eyes: slight discrimination.
3. Evidence of blindness: slight-serious discrimination.
4. Total blindness: disqualification.

### Wry Face

Slight-serious discrimination.

### Parrot Jaw

Slight-serious discrimination.

### Shoulders

Winged: slight-serious discrimination.

### Tail Setting

Wry tail or other abnormal tail settings: slight-serious discrimination.

### Capped Hip

No discrimination unless effects mobility.

# TERMS THAT CAN BE USED GIVING COMMENTS

## TERMS THAT CAN BE USED GIVING COMMENTS

### Udder

- ✓ Longer fore udder, blending more smoothly into the body wall.
- ✓ Smoother fore udder attachment.
- ✓ Less bulgy fore udder.
- ✓ More length of udder from front to rear.
- ✓ Higher (and/or wider) rear udder attachment.
- ✓ More fullness to the top of the rear udder.
- ✓ Showing more balance and symmetry to the udder.
- ✓ Less quartering on the side of the udder.
- ✓ Udder shows more balance from front to rear.
- ✓ More width of rear udder.
- ✓ Stronger central ligament.
- ✓ Stronger central ligament, resulting in teats that pointed more inward.
- ✓ Udder held higher above the hock.
- ✓ More desirable teat placement.
- ✓ More desirable in teat size and shape.
- ✓ Teats placed more squarely on the udder floor.
- ✓ Teats that were more centrally placed under the quarter.
- ✓ Rear teats are too close.
- ✓ More capacious udder.
- ✓ Has an advantage in stage of lactation, with more bloom of udder today.

### Feet and Legs

- ✓ Stands with her legs placed more squarely beneath her.
- ✓ Less sickled in the hock.
- ✓ More set to the hock.
- ✓ Stands wider at the hock.
- ✓ Moving behind the cows, I noticed...
- ✓ Viewing the cows on the move, I noticed...
- ✓ Moves more freely with more strength of pastern and more depth of heel.
- ✓ Shorter and stronger pasterns.
- ✓ A deeper heel.
- ✓ Steeper foot angle.
- ✓ Tracks more straightforward in the rear legs.
- ✓ More graceful on the move.
- ✓ Less coarse about the hock.
- ✓ Cleaner-boned about the hock.
- ✓ More strength and substance of bone.
- ✓ She exhibits a preferred squareness and strength through the front feet and legs.
- ✓ Tracks more straightforward in the rear legs and in the front legs (too).



## TERMS THAT CAN BE USED GIVING COMMENTS

### Frame (including Rump)

- Rump: ✓ Longer and more nearly level from hips to pins.  
✓ More width of rump.  
✓ More slope to the rump.  
✓ Thurls centrally located between the hips and pin bones.  
✓ Lower pin bone position.
- Stature: ✓ Taller and longer.  
✓ More upstanding.  
✓ Greater size and scale.  
✓ Shows more length from head to tail.
- Style: ✓ More style and balance.  
✓ A more youthful appearance.  
✓ Straighter lined individual.  
✓ Moves with more style and elegance.
- Shoulders: ✓ Blends more smoothly from neck to shoulder and from shoulder to barrel.  
✓ Tighter in the shoulder.
- Back: ✓ Straighter throughout the topline.  
✓ Straighter topline, particularly stronger loined.

### Dairy Character

- ✓ Displays more openness and angularity throughout.
- ✓ More definition and refinement from end to end.
- ✓ Cleaner-cut about the neck.
- ✓ A longer and leaner neck.
- ✓ Sharper at the withers.

#### More definition...

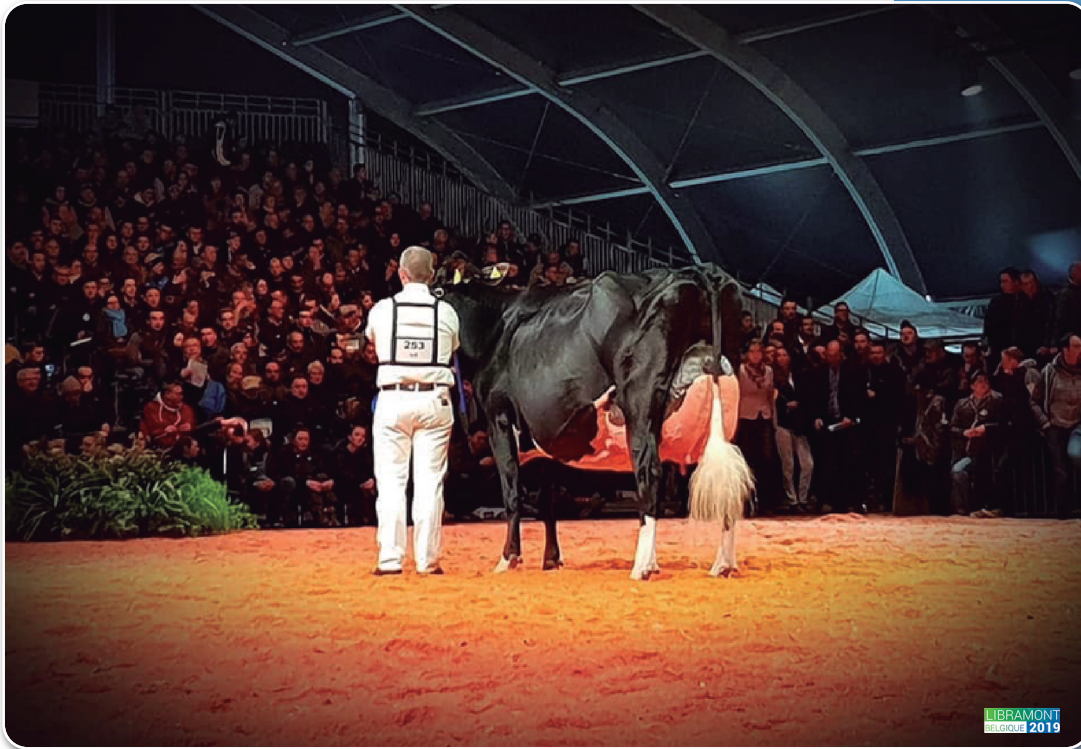
- ✓ Showing more flatness and openness of rib.
- ✓ More open ribbed.
- ✓ Flatter boned.

### Body Capacity

- ✓ More powerfully built.
- ✓ Greater overall capacity.
- ✓ Greater strength and substance.
- ✓ More width of chest.
- ✓ Toes out less in the front end.
- ✓ More depth and spring of rib.
- ✓ Greater spring of fore and/or rear rib.
- ✓ Greater depth of fore and/or rear rib.

FINALLY...

FINALLY...



When judging an animal and giving reasons it is extremely important:

- To know what you are talking about.
- To use the correct terminology.
- To remember that the best cow of the show has to be a functional cow.

## LINKS & REFERENCES

### Links

EHRC  
WHFF

<http://euholsteins.com>  
<http://www.whff.info>

### References

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## Guidelines on How to be a Dairy Judge

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---

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European Holstein & Red Holstein Confederation  
Working Group for Judging and Harmonisation

[www.euholsteins.com](http://www.euholsteins.com)