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How to Score Placing Classes For Livestock Judging

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This NebGuide explains how to properly calculate scores for placing classes associated with livestock judging contests.

Introduction

While in today's world the vast majority of livestock judging competitions will be scored using various computer programs, it is still important for the competitive livestock judge to understand how the scores are calculated.

Official Placing and Cuts

For each placing class within a contest, the designated official or committee of officials will determine an official placing to which all contestant placings are compared. For each class of four animals, 24 different potential placings exist. Each placing of four animals may be further subdivided into a top pair, middle pair, and bottom pair. For example, given the official placing of 1-2-3-4, 1 over 2 represents the top pair, 2 over 3 represents the middle pair, and 3 over 4 represents the bottom pair of animals. If the contestant's placing matches the official placing, they will receive a perfect score (50 points). However, points are lost when the placings do not match. To determine the number of points lost, the designated officials will assign "cuts" (*Table I*) to each of the three pairs (top, middle, bottom) in a placing class. A cut represents the number of points that will be lost by the contestant if that particular pair is switched in comparison to the official placing. The smaller the cut value assigned by officials, the more difficult the placing. Larger numerical cut values represent easier decisions. The sum value of the three cuts may not exceed 15 points, and no individual cut may exceed eight points.

Table I. General Description of "Cut" Values

Cut	*Type of Decision*
1-2 points	Difficult
3-4 points	Challenging, but sortable
5-6 points	Relatively easy
7-8 points	Extremely easy

How to Score Pair Switches

For single- or double-pair switches from the official, determination of the placing score is relatively straightforward. Simply subtract the cut value associated with that particular pair from the 50 points possible for the class. For example, if the official placing is 1-2-3-4 with cuts of 2-5-3 ($1_2 2_5 3_3 4$) and the contestant placing is 2-1-3-4, the score equals 48. This individual switched one difficult pair from that of the official placing and lost two points (50 – 2 = 48). If the contestant had switched the top and bottom pairs (2-1-4-3), the score would be 45. That individual lost two points for switching the top pair and three more points for switching the bottom pair.

How to Score a Bust

What if the contestant more severely scrambled or "busted" the class? To determine the score in this situation, a series of questions designed to compare the contestant placing to the official placing will be asked. If the answer to a particular question is "yes," no points will be deducted. If the answer to a particular question is "no," points will be deducted. Additionally, if an animal is out of place by more than one position compared to the official, the appropriate cut values will be added together. This is more easily explained using the following examples (*Tables II* and *III*).

Table II. Scoring Example 1 — Calculating a Simple Bust

Official Placing:				1-2-3-4 with cuts of 2-5-3 ($1_2 2_5 3_3 4$)
Contestant Placing:				3-1-2-4
Questions to Ask (based upon official ranking)	*Answer*	*Points Lost*	*Total Points Lost*	*Explanation*
Is 1 placed over 2?	Yes	0	0	It doesn't matter where the two animals are placed, provided 1 is placed over 2; if so, no points are lost.
Is 1 placed over 3?	No	-2, -5	-7	According to official, 1 should be placed two positions above 3. Cuts associated with these two positions were -2 and -5. Cuts are added together.
Is 1 placed over 4?	Yes	0	0	Again, it doesn't matter where the two animals are placed, provided 1 is placed over 4.
Is 2 placed over 3?	No	-5	-5	According to official, 2 should have been placed one position above 3. The cut associated with this pair switch provided a 5-point deduction.
Is 2 placed over 4?	Yes	0	0	
Is 3 placed over 4?	Yes	0	0	
Total Point Deductions			-12	All deductions are added together. This represents the number of points "dropped" on the class.
Final Score			38	To calculate the actual score, total deductions are subtracted from 50.

Table III. Scoring Example 2 — Calculating a Major Bust

Official Placing:				3-2-1-4 with cuts of 4-2-5 ($3_4 2_2 1_5 4$)
Contestant Placing:				4-1-2-3
Questions to Ask (based upon official ranking)	*Answer*	*Points Lost*	*Total Points Lost*	*Explanation*
Is 3 placed over 2?	No	-4	-4	Please note: Comparative questions are determined by the official placing. According to official, 3 should be placed one position above 2. The cut associated with this pair switch provided a 4-point deduction.
Is 3 placed over 1?	No	-4, -2	-6	According to official, 3 should be placed two positions above 1. Cuts associated with these two positions are -4 and -2. Cuts are added together.
Is 3 placed over 4?	No	-4, -2, -5	-11	According to official, 3 should be placed three positions above 4. Cuts associated with these three positions are -4, -2, and -5. Cuts are added together.
Is 2 placed over 1?	No	-2	-2	According to official, 2 should be placed one position above 1. The cut associated with this pair switch provided a 2-point deduction.
Is 2 placed over 4?	No	-2, -5	-7	According to official, 2 should be placed two positions above 4. Cuts associated with these two positions are -2 and -5. Cuts are added together.
Is 1 placed over 4?	No	-5	-5	According to official, 1 should be placed one position above 4. The cut associated with this pair switch provided a 5-point deduction.
Total Point Deductions			-35	All deductions are added together. This represents the number of points "dropped" on the class.
Final Score			15	To calculate the actual score, total deductions are subtracted from 50.

Scoring Livestock Keep-Cull Classes

Some livestock judging competitions also have "keep/cull" classes. The keep/cull class generally consists of eight animals, and the contestant will usually be asked to identify the four best animals to "keep." For scoring purposes, order is not important. Each of the eight animals will be assigned a set of points that commonly range from 0 to 20. The more desirable animals, as determined by the officials, will receive larger point allocations compared to less desirable animals. *Table IV* provides a general descriptive guideline for assigning points to a keep/cull class. The point allocations given to the top four animals in the class must equal 50 when added together. To calculate scores, simply add together the point allocations for each of the four animals designated by the contestant as "keeps."

Table IV. Point Allocation Guidelines for Keep/Cull Classes

Points	*General Description of Animal and Associated Decision*
≥ 16 points	High quality individual; it should be an EASY decision to KEEP this animal. This point allocation is reserved for animals considered to be the very best within their class.
12-15 points	Quality individuals; it should be a relatively easy decision to KEEP these animals. In most cases, this point range is used in association with the second or third best animals in the class.
8-11 points	These point allocations represent difficult decisions within the keep/cull class.
4-7 points	Low quality individuals that retain some value and beneficial attributes. It should be a relatively easy decision to CULL these animals. In most cases, this point range is associated with the second or third poorest quality animals in the class.
0-3 points	It should be an EASY decision to CULL these animals. This point allocation is reserved for animals that have major structural, performance, or functionality issues.

Example Scoring of Keep/Cull Class

Official: 1 = 16 pts; 2 = 6 pts; 3 = 1 pt; 4 = 7 pts; 5 = 14 pts; 6 = 11 pts; 7 = 4 pts; 8 = 9 pts

Contestant 1 keeps 1, 5, 6, 9 Score = 50 points (16 + 14 + 11+ 9 = 50)

Contestant 2 keeps 1, 5, 6, 7 Score = 48 points (16 + 14 + 11 + 4 = 45)

Contestant 3 keeps 2, 5, 7, 8 Score = 33 points (6 + 14 + 4 + 9 = 33)

This publication has been peer reviewed.

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