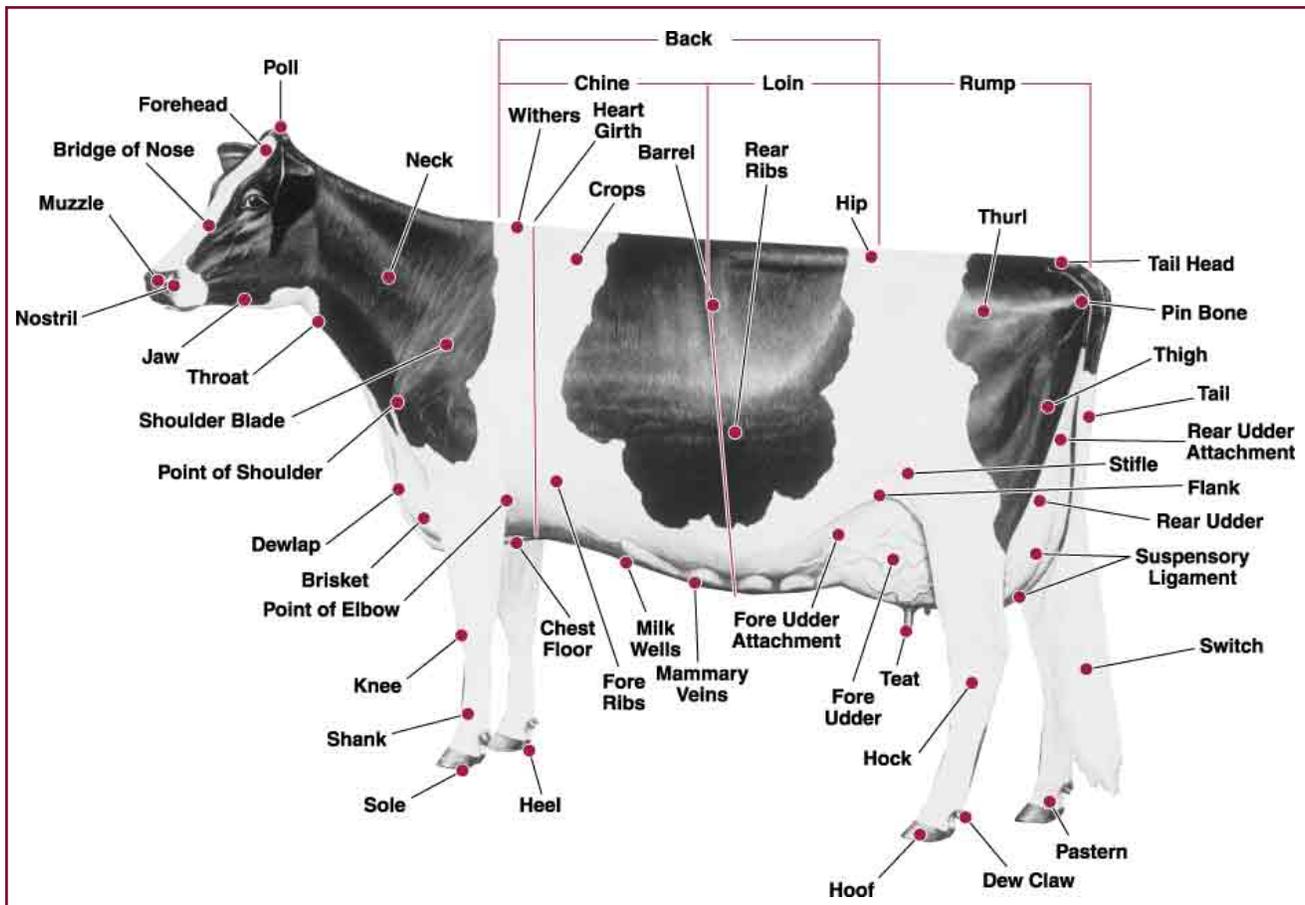# Judging Dairy Cattle—
Giving Reasons

Illustration courtesy of Holstein Canada.

Terms and phrases

When you want to talk about dairy cattle with someone, you need accurate, meaningful vocabulary words (**terminology** or **terms**) in order to understand each other. When you give a set of reasons, an accurate set of terms is just as important as it is in conversation. Also, to compare one cow with another, you need to use phrases and expressions that the listener can clearly understand. So, it is important to develop a good vocabulary of dairy cattle terms.

This guide does not include all the terms used by dairy judges. But, students of judging can use it to broaden their dairy cattle vocabulary.

All the phrases and expressions listed here are **comparative** rather than **descriptive**. This is because when you judge cattle, you compare one animal to

another. When you give reasons, use the comparative form (for example, "1 is taller than 2 with more crease in the udder."). Avoid using descriptive terms ("1 is a tall cow with a nice udder."). These give no frame of reference, and the listener does not know what you might mean by "tall" and "nice."

Descriptive terms like "winged shoulder" are not listed here, because beginners probably should not use them. Use descriptive terms only to clarify when faulting or criticizing an animal (see "Reasons for two-way traits").

Be accurate, use present tense, add interest

Accuracy is the most important factor in any set of reasons. It's important that you understand each phrase or term completely before you try to add it to your vocabulary. Do not try to memorize the list overnight. Developing a vocabulary of terms and phrases is a gradual process.

Always use the **present tense** when giving reasons. A technique that can help you do this is to visualize the class, and then give reasons as though you were standing in the ring with the cattle. Avoid using the past tense, because any observations you made in the ring will still be true when you give your reasons following the completion of judging.

There are certain phrases that are used sometimes to add special "color" or "interest" to a set of reasons. Like salt or pepper, use them only sparingly. When you add them carefully to a set of reasons, they can catch the listener's attention and make reasons more interesting. These phrases appear with a star next to them in the lists of terms that follow.

Reasons for two-way traits

Giving reasons for **two-way traits** is slightly more complicated than giving general reasons for placings. A two-way trait is one in which the most nearly correct (or most desirable) point is somewhere between the extremes. **Rump angle, leg set, levelness of udder floor,** and **teat size** are some two-way traits. For example, when judging rump angle, too much slope (or angle) is undesirable and too much forward tilt (high pins) is also undesirable. To compare the rumps on a pair of cows where one is nearly correct (pins slightly lower than hips) and the other is quite high in the pins (reverse tilt), the reasons should indicate that "1 has a more nearly level rump, *faulting 2 for being too high in the pins*." The **clarifying statement** (in *italics*) describes what you see in 2, which explains to the listener how you are making the comparison that 1's rump is more nearly level.

All reasons involving one of the two-way traits require a clarifying statement. To avoid repetition and add variety, try to use terms that indicate the **degree** of criticism or fault. One way to do this is to use the words **noting** or **recognizing** to clarify a two-way trait if the fault is minimal or if it is part of the discussion of the top pair.

- I place 1 over 2 because she is somewhat leveler on the udder floor, **noting** that 2 is slightly heavy in the rear quarter.
- I place 2 over 3 because she has a more correct set to her rear leg, **recognizing** that 3 is posty and has some swelling in front of the left hock.

This is especially true if you need to criticize the top cow as part of the grant statement (see "Linking terms and phrases together").

For more serious faults, you can emphasize the problem by using the words **faulting** or **criticizing** as the clarifiers. "Faulting" denotes a less serious problem than "criticizing" does.

- I place 2 over 3 because she has a definite advantage in rear leg set, **faulting** 3 for being too straight in the leg and for the swelling in the hocks.
- I place 3 over 4 because of her definite advantage in teat size and placement, **criticizing** 4 for having large teats that are set too far on the outside of the udder.

Terms for comparing dairy character

1. More angularity
2. More openness of rib
3. Cleaner about the head, neck, and withers
4. More dairyness throughout
5. More length and stretch
6. Longer and leaner in the neck
7. More prominent about the hips and pins
8. Cleaner down the topline
9. Has the appearance of more dairyness
10. Flatter (leaner or thinner) in thighs
11. More incurving thigh
12. Sharper at the point of withers
13. Longer, more open throughout
14. More chiseled over the chine
15. More dairy sweep to her rib
16. Shows more cleanliness in the head and neck and prominence in withers, hips, and pins
17. More desirable balance between dairy and strength
★ 18. Spells more milk
★ 19. Longer from the tip of her nose to the end of her tail
★ 20. Spells more milk from the tip of her nose to the end of her switch

Examples

- She is cleaner cut about the head; longer and leaner in the neck; sharper over the withers, cleaner over the back and rump (less patchy through the hips and pins); and flatter and cleaner in her thigh with more angularity and sweep to her rib (cleaner, flatter, more refined bone).
- She is sharper at the point of withers, cleaner about the hips and pins, and flatter in the thigh. Plus, she shows more openness of rib along with a more dairy sweep to the rib.

Terms for comparing udders

Udder support

1. Stronger center support in the udder
2. A deeper crease in her udder
3. A deeper cleft in her udder
4. More clearly defined halving in the udder
5. More halving when viewed from the rear
6. Stronger center attachment
7. Leveler on the udder floor, faulting 3 for having a reverse (forward tilt)
8. A more youthful udder
9. Carries her udder higher above the hocks
10. More crease in the udder
11. More cleft in the udder
12. An udder carried higher off the ground
13. Has a crease that cuts deeper through the rear udder as viewed from the rear
★ 14. Has her udder tucked up higher above the hocks

Rear udder

1. Higher in the rear udder
2. Wider in the rear udder attachment
3. Higher and wider in the rear udder
4. Fuller at the top of the rear udder
5. More fullness of rear udder
6. More height, width, and fullness to the rear udder
7. More correct turn to the rear udder
8. More symmetry and balance of rear udder
9. More balance of rear quarters (faulting 2 for being light in the left rear quarter)

Fore udder

1. Stronger fore udder attachment
2. Tighter in the fore udder (attachment)
3. More firmly attached fore udder
4. Fore udder that blends more smoothly into the body wall
5. Firmer in the fore udder attachment
★ 6. An udder "tied on more tightly to the body wall"

General udder terms

1. Larger, more capacious udder
2. More symmetry of udder
3. More balance of udder (noting 3 is light in the right front quarter)
4. More level on the udder floor
5. More bloom of udder
6. She has an advantage in stage of lactation, having more bloom and capacity of udder.
★ 7. Giving 3 the "best udder ribbon" because…

Teats and teat placement

1. More correct teat size and shape
2. Teats placed more correctly beneath each quarter, faulting 3 for...
3. More nearly correct front teat placement, criticizing 4...
4. Teats hanging more nearly plumb
5. Teats placed more squarely beneath the quarters, noting the wide teat placement...
6. More nearly correct teat size, faulting 2...
7. More correct teat placement as viewed from the side, noting the close (wide) teat placement on 2
8. More desirable teat shape, faulting 3 for...
★ 9. Squarer teat placement, noting the "strutting" front teats on...

Udder quality (be sure you are right before you say anything about udder quality)

1. More apparent quality in the udder
2. An apparently softer, more pliable udder
3. More desirable texture to the udder, noting the congestion in 3's udder
4. An advantage in stage of lactation, noting the congestion in 3's udder
5. Appears to have less meatiness in the udder
6. More apparent udder quality
7. More "bloom" to the udder, faulting 3 for being too stale to compete with the fresher cows in the class

Examples _____

- Her udder is held higher above the hock and held tighter to the body wall. She shows a smoother and stronger fore udder (tighter, snugger, firmer); stronger, deeper suspensory ligament; more desirable (correct) teat placement; and smaller, more desirable teat size and shape. She also shows a more level udder floor and a more balanced udder.
- She shows a higher, wider, and fuller rear udder; and a longer and stronger fore udder, along with a more defined crease to the udder.

Terms for comparing legs and feet

1. Straighter in her rear legs as viewed from behind (or the side), faulting 2 for...
2. More correct set to the hock, noting the straight (set) leg on 3
3. Cleaner through the hock, faulting 2 for being puffy in the left hock
4. Handles her rear legs more correctly on the walk, faulting 3 for...
5. More mobility, noting 2's crampiness
6. More strength and substance of leg bone
7. A cleaner, flatter hock (leg bone)
8. Flatter leg bone
9. Stronger in the pasterns
10. Shorter in the pasterns
11. Deeper in the heel (and shorter in the toe)
12. Walks more correctly on her front feet, noting that 4 toes out
13. Stands and walks on a more correct foot and leg
14. Steps down on a foot that is deeper in the heel
★ 15. Tracks straighter ahead on those front feet

★ 16. Walks (or stands) more comfortably on her rear legs
★ 17. Walks straight at you
   Example _____
   • She shows a more desirable set to the hock, as viewed from the side. In addition, she exhibits a stronger pastern and more depth of heel.

Terms for comparing frames (structure, form)

Stature (height)
1. Taller, more upstanding
2. Taller at the point of withers
3. More stature
4. More height at the point of withers
5. A taller front-ended cow
6. More size, scale, and substance
7. More height of withers and prominence of chine
★ 8. Walks (or stands) more uphill
★ 9. Simply towers over the little black cow

Topline
1. Straighter down her topline; especially harder in the loin (or chine)
2. Stronger in the loin
3. Stronger in the chine
4. Smoother (more level) down the top (topline)
5. More nearly level from withers to pins
6. Stronger through the middle of her back
7. Wider through the loin
★ 8. Harder down that topline; especially in the loin (or chine)
★ 9. Stronger on top
★ 10. Carries her top (loin) stronger on the move

Rump
1. More nearly level from hooks to pins; faulting 2 for being too low (or high) in the pins
2. Longer and leveler from hips to pins
3. More smoothness through the rump
4. Wider in the pins (and thurls), noting....
5. More correctly set tail head
6. Neater at the tail head
7. More correct in the tail setting
8. Tail head that sets more neatly between the pins
9. Wider through the rump
10. Wider at the thurls
11. More correct slope from hips to pins; criticizing 3 for being too high (or low) in...
12. Faulting 2 for having a reverse tilt to the rump

Front end (shoulders)

1. More width and strength of chest
2. Smoother blending shoulder
3. Tighter at the point of shoulder
4. Fuller at the point of elbow
5. Tighter at the point of elbow
6. Fuller in the crops
7. Blends more smoothly from neck to shoulder and shoulder to barrel
8. More harmonious blending through the front end (throughout)
9. Wider on the chest floor
★ 10. A stronger front-ended cow

Head

1. More breed character about the head
2. More femininity about the head
3. More alertness and style
4. Stronger through the jaw
5. More strength of muzzle
6. More flare to the muzzle
7. More style about the head
8. Brighter eye
9. More dish to the face
10. A deeper, stronger jaw

Terms for comparing strength (body capacity)

1. More width and strength throughout
2. More width and strength in the chest
3. Fuller behind the shoulders
4. Deeper in the chest
5. More spring of rib
6. More spring of fore rib
7. Deeper in the barrel
8. Fuller in the heart
9. Wider through the chest floor
10. Deeper in the rear rib
11. A stronger, more powerful cow
12. A cow with more strength and power
13. More powerful through the front end
14. Longer from pole to pins
★ 15. More cow power

Examples

- She is deeper through her heart and fore and rear rib. She shows more openness of rib when viewed from the side and more spring of rib when viewed from the rear.
- She shows more length, depth, and overall capacity to her barrel.

General appearance
1. A more youthful cow
2. More style and balance (throughout)
3. More harmonious blending of parts
4. More symmetry and balance
5. A cow with more bloom
6. More balance throughout
7. More size, scale, and substance
8. A smoother blending cow throughout
9. A cow with more quality from end to end
10. She has an advantage in stage of lactation

Example
- She is taller at point of withers and longer from head to tail; straighter over the topline, stronger through her loin, wider through her hooks, pins, and thurls with a neater tail setting. She walks on a more correct set of feet and legs with a straighter, more desirable set to the hock. She shows a shorter, stronger pastern, deeper heel, and more shapely foot (style and balance).

Description for individual animals

Whenever you can, make reasons more interesting by using the color, markings, or some other clearly distinctive characteristic instead of the number of the animal. It's much more interesting to begin a set of reasons with a statement like, "I started this class by placing the big black cow over 2..." than to say, "I started this class by placing 1 over 2..."

Try some of the phrases listed below. You might think of many more that are not included in the list.
1. The black cow (Holstein)
2. The dark-colored cow (Holstein, Brown Swiss, or Jersey)
3. The light-colored cow (Guernsey, Brown Swiss, or Jersey)
4. The white cow (Holstein or Ayrshire)
5. The speckled cow (Holstein, Ayrshire, or Guernsey)
6. The spotted cow (Holstein, Ayrshire, or Guernsey)
7. The broken-colored cow (Jersey)
8. The red cow (Guernsey or Ayrshire)
9. The horned cow
10. The sub-horned cow
11. The cow with the (blue, red, etc.) ear tag
12. The tall cow
13. The little cow
14. The best-uddered cow
15. The cow wearing the neck strap
16. The cow with the black (or red, etc.) halter

Taking notes for reasons

The best notes for reasons are **well-organized**, **specific**, and **complete**. Begin by noting unusual color markings, differences in size, and extremes in other type traits. This is especially useful in recalling the class later as you prepare your reasons.

Decide how you want to place the class, and then take notes indicating the major differences between each pair in the class. You can add details as the time allotted for the class expires.

Organize your reasons so that you discuss the most important factors that influence a placing first. High-priority traits include dairyness (angularity), udder support (crease), foot angle, and rear udder height and width. These are important when judging dairy cattle, and they are equally important when organizing reasons. The most significant and most obvious difference you see must be the focus of your reasons.

Far too many students try to memorize the reasons they intend to present. Instead, learn to remember the cattle in the class. Be able to visualize them in the order you have placed them. Develop a mental image of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the animals while you take notes. It is easier to recall exactly how the cattle looked than to remember some term or phrase you wanted to include in your reasons.

Reasons are scored on how organized, specific, and complete they are, so take accurate notes that allow you to prepare the best possible reasons.

Linking terms and phrases together

"Putting it all together" is an essential part of presenting a formal set of reasons. An interesting set of reasons is not only accurate and comparative; it also uses a **variety** of expression and **flows smoothly.** The opening statement must attract the listener's attention, and the closing statement must leave the listener with a favorable impression.

When you see there is an obvious placing or a close placing, note these observations in the reasons. **Statements of admission**, or **grants**, allow the judge to recognize the good qualities of cows placed lower in the class. If cows have distinctive colors, markings, or characteristics, refer to them to add variety to the reasons.

Listed below are expressions that you may use to tie a set of reasons together. Each individual must use the style that suits him or her best, so experiment with various phrases and combinations of statements to find the ones that work best for you.

Opening statements
1. 1-2-3-4 is my placing in this class of (identification)
2. I place this class of (identification) 1-2-3-4
3. My placing for this class of (identification) is 1-2-3-4
4. This class of (identification) had a logical placing of 1-2-3-4
5. This class of (identification) has an outstanding top cow and places 1-2-3-4

6. I place this outstanding (strong, fine, excellent, etc.) class of (identification) 1-2-3-4
7. In placing this class of (identification) 1-2-3-4, I found a top pair of angular dairy cows and a bottom pair of poor uddered cows.

Closing statements
1. For these reasons, I place this class of (identification) 1-2-3-4.
2. These are my reasons for placing this class of (identification) 1-2-3-4.
3. For these reasons, this class of (identification) is placed 1-2-3-4.
4. These reasons justify my placing of this class of (identification) 1-2-3-4.
5. This is the logic I have used to justify my placing of this class of (identification) 1-2-3-4.

Criticism of last cow
1. 4 has adequate_____ but lacks the_____ to merit a higher placing.
2. 4 has adequate_____ but lacks the_____ to place any higher in the class.
3. Even though I admire the_____ of 4, I'm leaving her last because she lacks the_____.

Transitional phrases
1. To tip the scales further
2. Continuing on
3. I didn't (or, I did not) fail to recognize
4. Still further
5. In addition
6. Additionally

Always use present tense!
Give reasons as though the cows are in the ring *now!*