



# Judging Meat Goats and Oral Reasons 101

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Photos by Cindy A. Kinder

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## Overview

This booklet will help youth and beginning producers to understand the four basic criteria for selecting a meat goat. It will also help beginners in 4-H and FFA livestock judging to understand proper note-taking format and the structure to oral reasons.

It should be used by youth and adults together, at club meetings, in classrooms, at field days, or at workshops as a livestock judging reference. As judges gain more experience, they can build their note-taking and oral-reasons skills by attending regional judging camps or clinics.

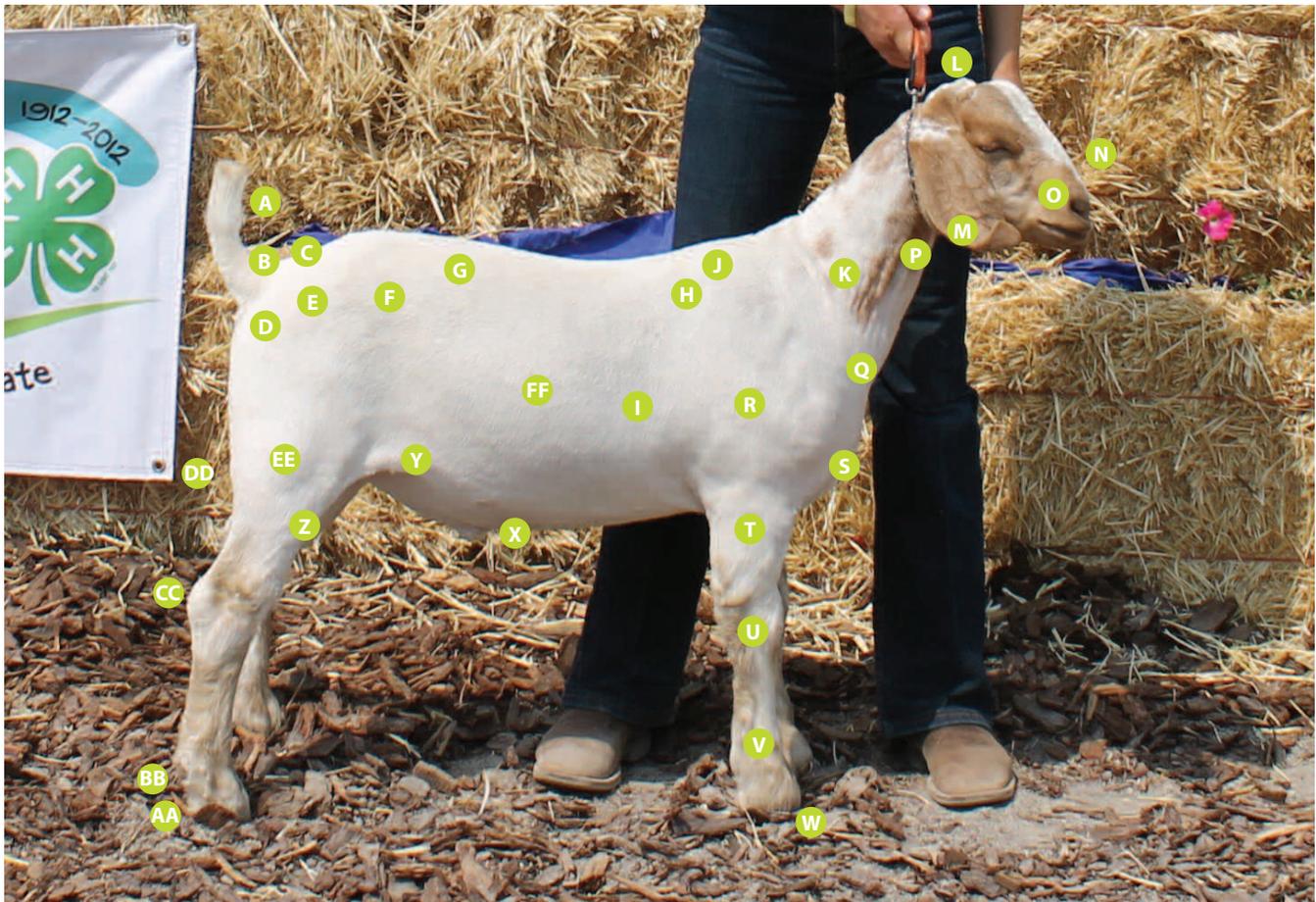
### Life skills

4-H livestock judging programs help youth develop the following life skills that make them better leaders and citizens and build stronger communities.

- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Self-motivation
- Marketable skills
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Communication
- Self-esteem
- Character
- Self-responsibility

# Parts of a meat goat

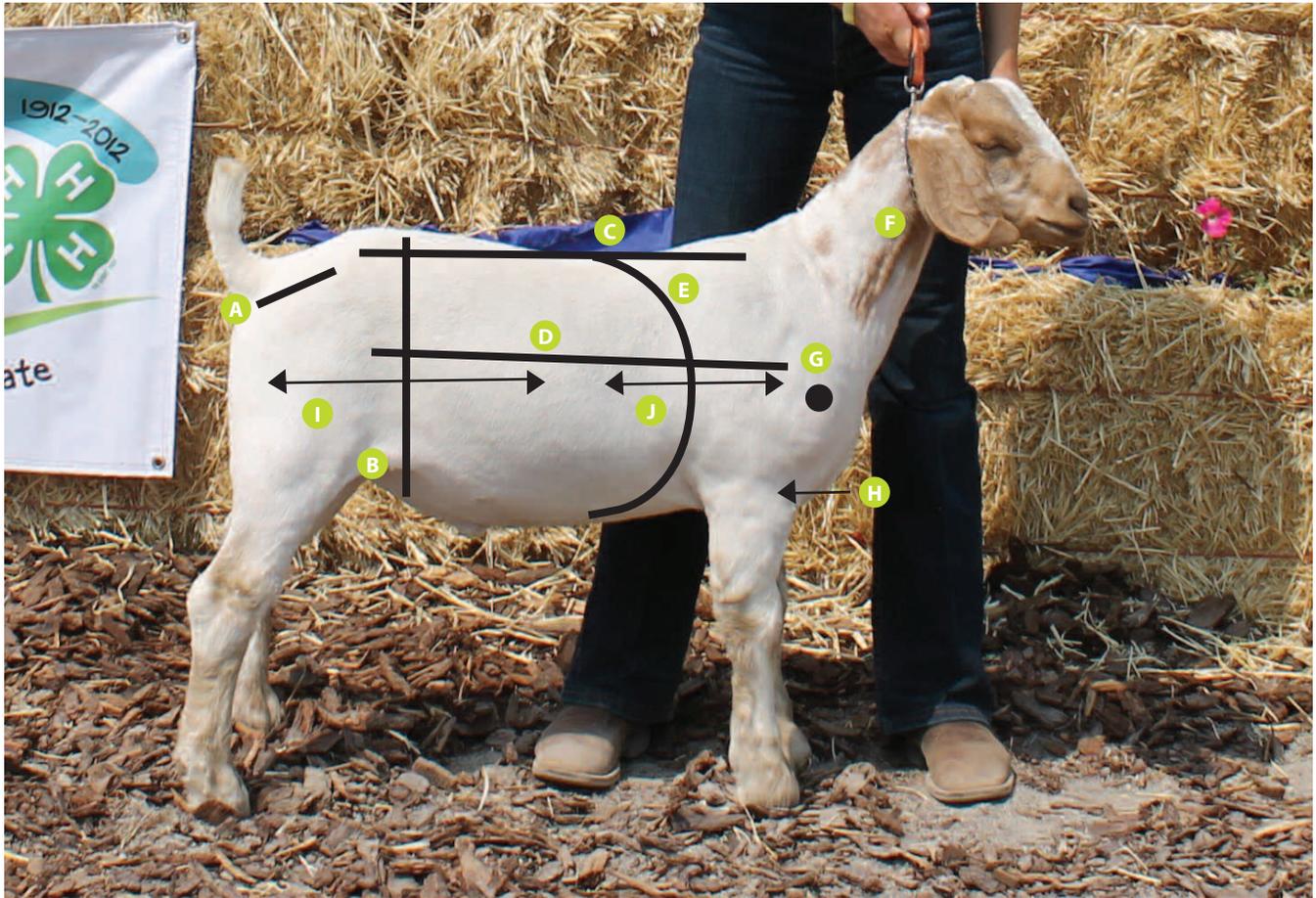
Knowing the parts of an animal will help you understand what someone is referring to about that animal. It will also help you give correct information about your animal. Study the parts of the goat below.



- |                     |                          |                            |                        |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>A.</b> Tail      | <b>I.</b> Heart girth    | <b>Q.</b> Dewlap/neck fold | <b>Y.</b> Rear flank   |
| <b>B.</b> Tail head | <b>J.</b> Withers        | <b>R.</b> Shoulder         | <b>Z.</b> Stifle joint |
| <b>C.</b> Rump      | <b>K.</b> Neck           | <b>S.</b> Breast/brisket   | <b>AA.</b> Pastern     |
| <b>D.</b> Pin       | <b>L.</b> Poll           | <b>T.</b> Forearm          | <b>BB.</b> Dew claw    |
| <b>E.</b> Thurls    | <b>M.</b> Ear            | <b>U.</b> Knee             | <b>CC.</b> Hock        |
| <b>F.</b> Hip       | <b>N.</b> Bridge of nose | <b>V.</b> Cannon bone      | <b>DD.</b> Twist       |
| <b>G.</b> Loin      | <b>O.</b> Muzzle         | <b>W.</b> Hoof/toes        | <b>EE.</b> Thigh       |
| <b>H.</b> Chine     | <b>P.</b> Throat         | <b>X.</b> Navel and sheath | <b>FF.</b> Rib         |

# Terms used to describe a meat goat

Knowing the parts of an animal is important, and so is knowing the terms that are associated with those parts. You can build confidence and portray competence when you talk the same terminology as other producers.



- |           |                      |           |                   |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| <b>A.</b> | Hooks to pins        | <b>F.</b> | Thin necked       |
| <b>B.</b> | Depth of flank       | <b>G.</b> | Point of shoulder |
| <b>C.</b> | Top or topline       | <b>H.</b> | Chest floor       |
| <b>D.</b> | Length of body       | <b>I.</b> | Hind saddle       |
| <b>E.</b> | Spring of rib/barrel | <b>J.</b> | Front saddle      |

# Selecting a meat goat

Selecting the right meat goat for your operation is important. Whether you have a small operation, a large operation, or just one animal, having the wrong animal can cost you money. The goats you select should have the potential for meeting market goals (see the box at right). There are four main criteria to consider when selecting meat goats: (1) muscling, (2) volume, capacity, (3) condition, trimness, and (4) structure, soundness, balance.

## Muscling

Muscling is important to the meat industry. Heavy-muscled animals produce more meat and less fat.

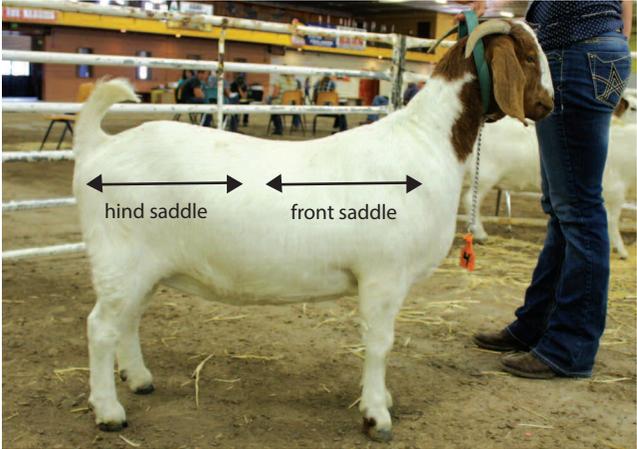
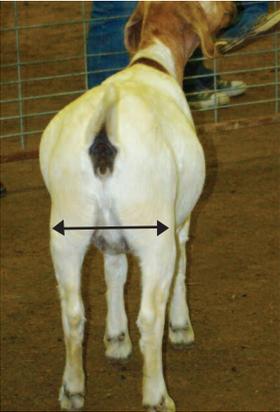
The degree of muscling in meat goats is best seen through: (1) the thickness of the thigh and hind legs, (2) a wide stance of the rear feet and legs, and (3) the length, width, and thickness of the loin and saddle. The hind saddle should be at least as long as the front saddle.

### Discussion Question

*Identify the goats below with the thick, average, and thin muscle. (Answer: Thick, average, and thin muscled goats are arranged from left to right.)*

**MARKET GOALS**

**Age at market:** 6–10 months  
**Live weight:** 70–120 pounds  
**Rate of gain:** 0.3 to 0.6 pounds per day



## Volume, capacity

The volume, or capacity, of an animal indicates how well the animal may perform. You want a deep, long-bodied animal with good spring of rib. Indicators of volume are length of body, width of chest floor, depth and shape (spring) of rib, and depth of flank.

### Discussion Questions

*In the top-view pictures, compare the spring of rib in the two goats. Which has more spring of rib? (Answer: The goat on the right.)*

*In the top two side-view pictures, which goat is shallow bodied and which is deep bodied? (Answer: The bottom goat is the deep-bodied goat.)*



## Condition, trimness

The amount of trimness and condition (fat) an animal has relates to its performance. Depending on the type of animal you have (market or breeding), you want an animal that is not too fat or too thin. You can see indications of fat over the front saddle, loin, and ribs and in the flank and breast.

### Discussion Questions

*Look at the bottom two side-view pictures. Can you see trimness differences in these two meat goats? (Answer: The bottom goat is trimmer.)*



## Structure, soundness, balance

Strong bone and correct skeletal structure is essential for any animal wanting access to feed and water. Goats should have a level top line, strong pasterns, and straight legs.

Balance is the overall attractiveness of the animal. Animals should be evenly balanced from the front to the rear.



# Judging meat goats

## Note taking

Presenting oral reasons is the most valuable experience you will have in livestock judging. It helps you to think and state your thoughts clearly. It also demonstrates your knowledge and vocabulary. Being able to defend a decision builds your confidence and self-esteem. No matter what career you choose, communicating effectively is a must to be successful. Success in judging starts with note taking.

During contests, you will judge several different classes in a short time and give your oral reasons later. You will need to take notes on what you see about the animals in each class. You will then study the notes before giving oral reasons to a judge. A good set of notes should help you remember the class in your mind.

You will take notes only on classes that have been assigned as reasons classes. Once you have evaluated and placed the animals in the class, then take notes. A 5- by 8-inch steno notebook is suggested for use in taking notes.

***This is what a blank note page should look like. Leave enough space in each box for your notes.***

Class Name:		Class Placing:	
Introduction:			
# and ID	Grant (Good)	Criticize (Bad)	Compare (Good)
# and ID	Grant (Good)	Criticize (Bad)	Compare (Good)
# and ID	Grant (Good)	Criticize (Bad)	Compare (Good)
# and ID	Grant (Good)	Criticize (Bad)	Compare (Good)

## Note-taking format

### The format for notes is broken down into rows:

- THE FIRST ROW and heading is the introduction to the class. It tells what you judged (market wethers, for example) and how you placed the class (4-1-3-2, for example). The introduction also explains how easy or hard it was to place the class of animals.
- THE SECOND ROW explains why the 1st place animal is over the 2nd place animal.
- THE THIRD ROW explains why the 2nd place animal is over the 3rd place animal.
- THE FOURTH ROW explains why the 3rd place animal is over the 4th place animal.
- THE FINAL ROW explains why the last animal is last and is the conclusion of the reasons.

### The format has four columns:

- NUMBER AND IDENTIFICATION—Animals are numbered 1 through 4, and an identification point is used to describe individual animals in the class.
- GRANT—Give an overall big picture of an animal by stating a good quality of the animal in that row. Sometimes there may be no grant for an animal.
- CRITICIZE—List 1 or 2 bad qualities of the animal in that row. Sometimes there may be no criticism.
- COMPARE—List two or three good qualities of the animal in that row, stating why it placed over the next animal.

## TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE NOTE TAKING AND REASONS

1. Don't start taking notes until you have placed the class and marked your card.
2. Write your notes in the format below in order to help you give a fluid, organized set of reasons.
3. Try to be general in the terms that you use to describe the animal in each box, but write as much as possible to describe the animal. You will have time to use "terms" when you prepare to deliver your oral reasons.
4. Keep your notes readable and brief; this will prevent you from memorizing your notes. You should be able to remember the animals, not your notes.
5. Don't forget to write down an ID point and sex, if needed, for each animal.
6. Be sure to use the correct sex of the animal in classes that are of mixed sex and use your ID points when describing the animals.
7. Use the time during non-reasons classes to look back at your notes and prepare your reasons or complete your notes.

*This is how you would fill in your note page.*

Class Name:

Class Placing:

Say how easy or hard it was to place the class. State overall comment about outstanding individual animal or top pair of animals.			
# and ID	Grant (Good)	Criticize (Bad)	Compare (Good)
Animal # and list one ID.	Say why 1st place animal wins the class.	Say any bad qualities of the 1st place animal (optional).	Say why 1st place animal beats 2nd place animal by saying the good qualities of 1st place animal.
Animal # and list one ID.	Say one overall good quality of the 2nd place animal.	Say any bad qualities of the 2nd place animal.	Say why 2nd place animal beats 3rd place animal by saying the good qualities of 2nd place animal.
Animal # and list one ID.	Say one overall good quality of the 3rd place animal.	Say any bad qualities of the 3rd place animal.	Say why 3rd place animal beats 4th place animal by saying the good qualities of 3rd place animal.
Animal # and list one ID.	Say one overall good quality of the 4th place animal.	Say why the 4th place animal is last.	Thank you

## Using your notes to prepare oral reasons

Here is an example set of notes. They are color-coded to show you the transfer of information from your notes to your oral reasons.

Class Name: Market Wethers

Class Placing: 1-2-3-4

Easily started, highest quality top pair of muscular fresh appearing wethers			
# and ID	Grant (Good)	Criticize (Bad)	Compare (Good)
1 Blaze face	Heaviest muscled	Long pasterns, off behind his shoulder, off in his hip	Wider, longest bodied, pounds heavy, longest and most extended
2 Lightest caped	Nicer balanced, stronger pasterns, stronger topped	Short fronted and short bodied, gives up the muscle needed to win, narrower ended	More shapely/muscle and carcass Nicer balanced, stronger topped and leveler rumped, deeper bodied
3 Red hocks	Longest bodied, more width from stifle to stifle	Shallow and flat ribbed, off behind shoulder and steep hip	Fresher appearing, wider made, heavier muscled
4 Red caped	Stronger behind his shoulders	Stale, lightest muscled, poorest balanced	Thank you

### Using these notes, here is an example set of reasons:

The words that are highlighted in green are transition phrases that are to be used in every set of reasons. These transition phrases help you move from box to box in your notes.

I placed the Market Wethers 1-2-3-4. I easily started with a close top pair of fresh appearing wethers and used the muscle advantage of the blazed faced wether to beat 2. I would like to make him stronger over his top but when compared to 2 he is wider from the ground up. He has more muscle expression in his forearm, rack and leg and is wider tracking from behind. There's no doubt that the lightest caped wether is the nicest balanced. He's the strongest topped and the leveler rumped, but he falls short of the muscle needed to win. He is narrower ended when viewed from behind. He is second.

Balance places the middle pair. 2 is stronger topped and more attractive when on the profile. He is also bolder sprung and deeper ribbed and handle with more shape to his rack and depth to his loin. The red hocked wether is the longest bodied; he is wider from stifle to stifle. However, he is the shallowest and flattest ribbed of the initial three, and he is off behind the shoulders and steep in his rump. He is third.

Still, 3 easily beats 4 in the bottom pair. He is fresher appearing, wider made, and heavier muscled wherever analyzed. The red caped wether is stronger behind his shoulders, but he is simply the poorest quality, lightest muscled wether in class. So, I left him last.

## Terms and transitions in oral reasons for meat goats

Use the "est," superlative form, of a word when talking about an individual animal that is the best of a group. Use the "er" superlative of a word when comparing two animals. The terms below are grouped by criteria you would use in placing a class.

### Muscle

#### *Good quality*

More muscle expression in the forearm, loin, and leg  
Thicker/squarer rump/hip  
Deeper through the twist  
Wider from stifle to stifle  
More forearm muscling

#### *Bad quality*

Flat/narrow loined  
Tapers into lower leg  
Flat legged  
Shallow twisted  
Narrow tracking

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### Carcass

#### *Good quality*

Higher percent hind saddle  
More shapely carcass  
Should have a longer shelf life  
Less cooler shrink

#### *Bad quality*

Least shapely, lightest muscled  
Least shelf life  
Most cooler shrink

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### Structure

#### *Good quality*

Strong topped  
Leveler hiped  
More correct set to her hock  
Stands squarer up front  
More correct angle to her shoulder  
More correct angle to his/her hock  
More fluid/flexible stride  
Bigger boned  
More correct bite

#### *Bad quality*

Weak topped  
Steep rumped  
Too much set to her hock  
Toes in/out  
Straight shouldered  
Cow hocked  
Short and tight in their stride  
Frail made  
Parrot mouthed/monkey mouthed

---

### Balance

#### *Good quality*

More style and balance  
Leveler through the top/rump/hip  
Most attractive  
Nicer profiling  
Smoothly made

#### *Bad quality*

Poorest balanced  
Off behind the shoulders  
Steep hiped/rumped  
Weak topped  
Coarse made

---

### Handle/Freshness

#### *Good quality*

Freshest handling  
Most correct in his/her finish  
Most uniform in his/her finish

#### *Bad quality*

Stalest handling  
Dry/sharp handling in the rack/loin  
Harsh handling

*continued on page 11*

**Volume/Growth****Good quality**

Broody made doe  
 Higher volumed  
 Bold sprung  
 Big ribbed  
 Wide chested  
 Deeper and more expandable in her rib  
 More opened up in her rib  
 More future and growth  
 Higher weight per day of age

**Bad quality**

Shallow bodied  
 Tight ribbed  
 Flat ribbed  
 Least rib shape  
 Narrow chested  
 Pinched behind the shoulder  
 Constricted in her forerib  
 Early maturing  
 Lower weight per day of age

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**Femininity****Good quality**

More femininity through head, neck,  
 and shoulder  
 Blends smoother from shoulder to forerib  
 Longer cleaner necked  
 More desirable size/number of teats

**Bad quality**

Wasty fronted  
 Too coarse or too small teats  
 Too masculine  
 Short fronted, coarse shouldered  
 More functional udder

---

**Transition terms**

Use these words to help with the flow of your reasons.

**Grants**

I realize  
 I admit  
 I agree  
 I saw

**Action words**

Exhibited  
 Displayed  
 Showed  
 Presented

**Transitional terms**

Plus  
 Besides  
 Also

**Opening pairs**

Coming to the bottom pair  
 Moving to  
 In closing I preferred to  
 In the top pair

# Oral reasons worksheet

Use this worksheet to practice moving your notes into reasons.

I placed the \_\_\_\_\_  
Identify class Placing

Say how easy or hard it is to place the class

# and ID	Grant	Criticize (est)	Compare (er)
	I started with a(an) _____ (top pair) (outstanding individual) _____ _____	I realize <i>(Optional: only if class winner has obvious disadvantages)</i> _____ _____ _____	But in the top pair I placed _____ over _____ because _____ _____
	There is no question _____ is the <i>(What is the second place animal's class advantage?)</i> _____ _____	But when compared to the class winner _____ _____ _____ he/she is second.	Still in the middle pair I used his/her advantage in _____ _____ to place over (3rd). _____ _____
	I realize that _____ is _____ _____ _____	But I placed him third because _____ _____ _____	In the bottom pair it is a difficult/easy decision to place _____ over _____ _____
	I admit _____ is a _____ _____ _____	However _____ is the lightest, smallest, poorest, etc . . . so he/she is 4th.	Thank you.