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4-H 291 The Dog Judging Contest : a Guide for 4-Hers, Leaders and Parents

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Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service 4-H 291

THE DOG JUDGING CONTEST



A guide for 4-H'ers, leaders and parents

The 4-H Dog Judging Contest is a challenging and fun event that encourages youth to learn more about dogs and to practice decision making skills. Participants will have the opportunity to:

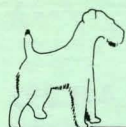
- Learn about standards of different breeds
- Recognize good conformation as well as unsoundness
- Learn to evaluate and compare one dog with another
- Learn terms used in describing dog conformation
- Learn to make and defend good decisions
- Learn to recognize quality in various dog breeds
- Learn to evaluate obedience and showmanship



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Preparing For A Judging Contest

A judging contest is a test of knowledge where the 4-H contestant has an opportunity to learn and practice the same decisions made by the official show judge. As in the show, there may be different kinds of classes. The contest may include classes on:

1. Conformation — the physical appearance of the dog
2. Obedience — the response of the dog to the handler
3. Showmanship — the skill of the handler in training and presenting the dog.

Preparation will include:

- learning the dog judging scorecard (conformation — obedience — showmanship);
- learning the standard of the breed being judged;
- practicing decision making;
- knowing the rules and procedures of the contest.

Let's look more closely at each.

Conformation Scorecard

Note the 4-H dog scorecard and explanation on pages 3-5. Learn the meaning of the terms and the points given in each category. Some terms such as color markings, size and shape may be easier to understand than balance, style and elegance. Practice and explanation by those who know dog conformation will help you better understand the scorecard and terms.

Breed Standards

Each of the 143 recognized breeds has its own official standard determined by the breed association. The standard is a description of the ideal dog. In conformation shows, the judge is looking for the animal which best matches the breed standard.

The "perfect" dog is very rare, if it exists at all. The dogs you see in the judging classes will likely have a number of faults, some

minor and some major. Your task is to recognize faults and differences between animals, determine the importance of each and reach a decision about which dog is best overall.

Making Judging Decisions

Making judging decisions can be confusing. It will be helpful to develop a decision process. The following steps are one approach to making judging decisions in a conformation class of four animals:

Step 1 — Observe each dog carefully: Animal 1, then 2, then 3, then 4

- Look for good points.
- Look for unsoundness.
- Get an overall impression of each animal.

Step 2 — Make your first placing

- Which is the top dog? No. 3
- Which is the bottom dog? No. 1
- Rank the middle pair. No. 2 is better than No. 4
- First placing is: 3-2-4-1

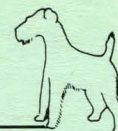
Step 3 — Compare each pair in more detail

- Top pair No. 3 and No. 2
- Middle pair No. 2 and No. 4
- Bottom pair No. 4 and No. 1

Look at each pair according to the scorecard. Compare each pair according to:

General Appearance	25 points
Soundness	25
Type	25
Condition	15
Style	10
	<hr/>
	100 points

Upon closer examination, you decide in the middle pair that No. 4 is better than No. 2. Now the pairs have changed.



Top pair is No. 3 and No. 4
New comparison, is it okay?
Middle pair is No. 4 and No. 2
Already decided.
Bottom pair is No. 2 and No. 1
New comparison, is it okay?

The new comparisons leave the top and bottom animals as they were. The final placing is No. 3, No. 4, No. 2, No. 1.

Congratulations, you have made a good decision!

Don't be influenced by someone else in the contest. They are not the official judge. They may be guessing and will just confuse you. Learn to trust your own judgment.

When the placing cards are turned in and the questions or reasons have been taken, the class will be explained. The official judges will give their placings. If you don't understand or agree with the placing, ask questions. Try to understand their viewpoint.

Know the Rules and Procedures of the Contest

Each contest will be different depending upon the dogs available for classes and the experience of the judges. Let's use the State Dog Judging Contest as an example.

- The contestant must meet the age requirement — 12-19 years birthday during the current year.

- Each year one breed is chosen for conformation classes. The official breed standard is available from the county extension service. This will help the 4-H'er learn about the breed before they judge the dogs. Contestants are not allowed to use the standard or any other notes during the contest.

- The contest will consist of classes of four dogs each — either adult male dogs or adult females (bitches). The contest is conducted like a regular conformation class. The dogs enter the ring and complete a pattern (L, T, I, ∇). The 4-H'ers will view each dog. No touching or physical contact with the dogs is permitted. This is a strict rule made and en-

forced for the safety of the 4-H'er. Within the time allotted for each class, the 4-H'er will mark the judging card with what she believes to be the correct placing.

- After each class has been judged, the 4-H'ers may be asked questions about the breed. The questions are taken from the breed standard and must be answered on the question card.

- The scores are tabulated to determine the ranking of the contestants. Winners will be announced and awards presented at the contest if possible. Contest scores and results are posted.

How A Contest Is Scored

Not all judging contests are the same. In addition to placing a class, the contest may require written answers to questions or oral reasons.

Placing Score

Usually the highest possible score for a class is 50 points. The official judge or judging committee will make the placing for the class and determine the cuts between each pair. A "cut" is the penalty points deducted from the total score for an error in the contestants placing. For example:

Placing	1	2	3	4
Cuts		7	2	5

In this example, a cut of 7 indicates a major difference. A cut of 2 between the middle pair indicates a very close placing. The cut of 5 is somewhere in between. A switch of the top pair means a loss of 7 points. A switch of the middle pair is a loss of only 2 points, etc.

Question Score

Usually 20 points are awarded for questions. If there are 10 questions, then each is worth 2 points.



Reason Score

Usually 50 points are awarded for reasons. Each contestant orally explains his reason for placing the class as he did to the reason judge. The judge will give a score to each set of reasons. Either questions or reasons (but not both) may be added to the placing class.

Obedience Classes

Evaluating an obedience class puts the 4-H judging contestant in the position of the obedience judge. A class of four handlers and their dogs will make up the class.

The 4-H Dog Obedience Scoresheet

See appropriate obedience scoresheet:

Beginning Novice	F 3-03 76
Novice Obedience	4-HF 53
Graduate Novice	4-HF 44
Open Obedience	4-HF 45
Utility Obedience	4-HF 46

Some handlers may be instructed to make deliberate errors to make it easier for contestants to see differences in handlers. The focus is on the handler and the response of the dog.

Showmanship Classes

If showmanship is selected as a class in the judging contest, the focus is on the showmanship skills of the handlers.

The 4-H Dog Showmanship Scorecard

Handler's Appearance	10
Dog-Grooming & Condition	20
Handling	70
Total	100

Again some handlers may be instructed to make deliberate errors so the judging contestants may see differences between handlers.

Alternative: In both Obedience and Showmanship, an alternative would be to have the judging contestants evaluate an actual class at the show along with the judge. Contestants would turn in their placings before the official judge announced placings and discussed the class.

4-H Dog Judging Scorecard Explanation

General Appearance and Balance - 25 points

General appearance refers to the overall picture of the dog. (Does it look like the intended breed?). Balance in dogs means that the dog is in proportion. A well-balanced dog has neither glaring faults nor one outstanding feature. He pleases the eye by his nicely proportioned appearance. The various features of a well-balanced dog are in correct relation to each other, height to length, neck to back, head to neck and body, length and width of skull to foreface, all fitting to each other in the manner described as correct by the Standard.

Soundness/Structure/Movement/ Temperament - 25 points

Soundness refers to the freedom from disability. It is the most used word to describe the manner in which dogs gait (move). A dog moving correctly in accordance with its breed requirements is referred to as a "sound" dog. Soundness of temperament is a dog that is neither too shy nor too aggressive but has the personality in accordance with its breed Standard.

Type/Breed Characteristics - 25 points

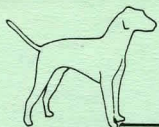
Type and breed characteristics are the same. Type, in connection with purebred dogs, refer to the combination of distinguishing features which make each breed unique. A dog of correct type must be strong in those features which the Standard considers characteristic of its breed. In some breeds the males are stronger in breed characteristics than the females, but not of different type. In all breeds, type is never a matter of



Dog Judging Conformation Scorecard

Consider breed characteristics when using this scorecard

Order of Observation	Perfect Score
I. GENERAL APPEARANCE - Balance	25
II. SOUNDNESS	25
Structure and Movement	
1. Front	
2. Rear	
3. Sides	
Temperament	
III. TYPE/BREED CHARACTERISTICS	25
1. Head	
2. Outline	
3. Size	
4. Coat	
a. Healthy	
b. Dead	
IV. CONDITION	15
1. Weight	
2. Coat	
a. Healthy	
b. Dead	
V. STYLE	10
1. Balance	
2. Elegance	
3. Animation	
4. Alertness	
5. Showmanship (Dog)	
Total	100



personal preference, but rather an adherence to desired breed characteristics. A dog of poor type is incorrect in those special features peculiar to its breed. Any dog lacking type is weak in distinguishing breed characteristics. (For example, type would not be correct for a bulldog with a head like a collie or a cocker spaniel with prick ears.)

Condition - 25 points

Condition refers to well-being. A dog in top

condition is exactly the right weight, being neither too fat nor too thin. Its eyes are clear and bright, and its coat is full, healthy and shows care.

Style - 10 points

Style is the result of a combination of balance, elegance of carriage, showmanship (of dog) and personality. A stylish dog possesses eagerness, alertness and an air of pride, which is extremely attractive and appealing.

DOG JUDGING TERMS

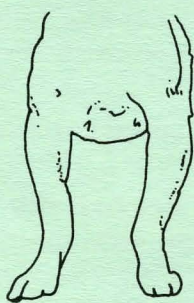
Front Legs



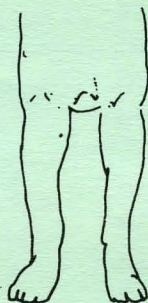
Straight Front



Straight Front



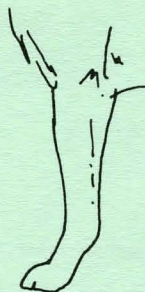
Fiddle Front



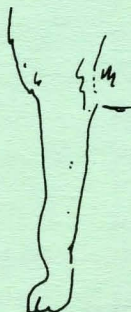
Narrow Front



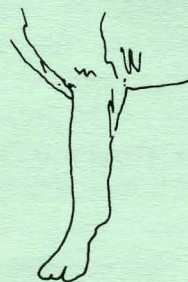
Out at Elbow



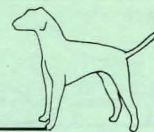
Down in Pastern



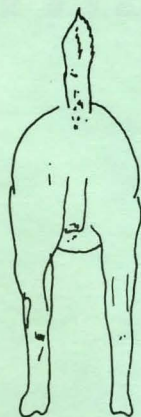
Knuckled Over



"Wolf" Shoulder



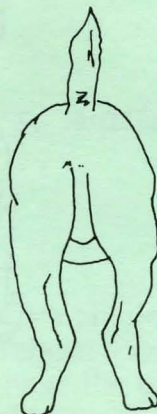
Rear Legs



Correct Hind End



Moderately
Angulated Hindquarter



Cow-Hocked



Straight Stifled



Cat Foot



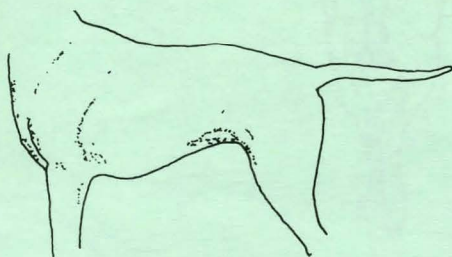
Hare Foot



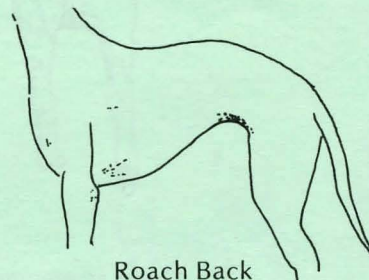
Splay Foot



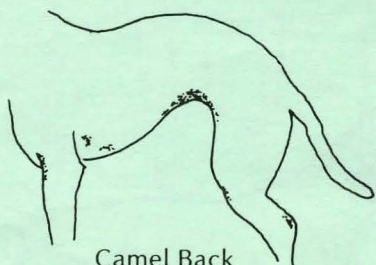
Paper Foot



Level Back



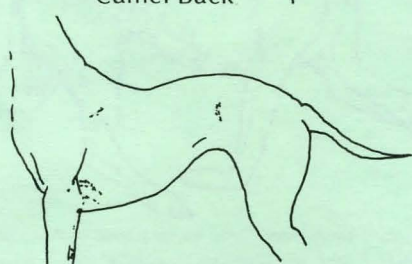
Roach Back



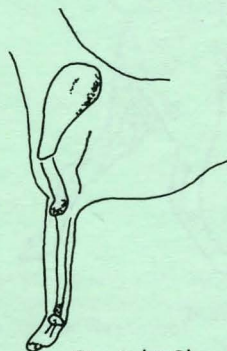
Camel Back



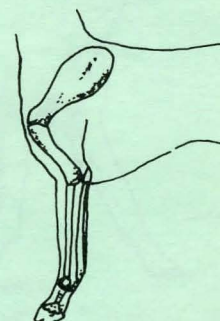
Ewe Neck



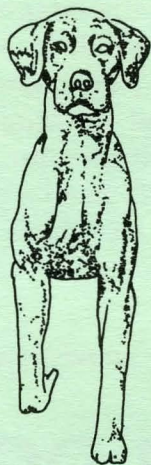
Hollow Back



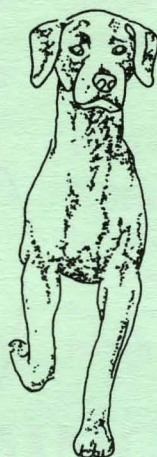
Straight Shoulder



Sloping Shoulder



Correct Movement
Front



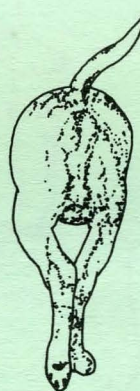
Paddling



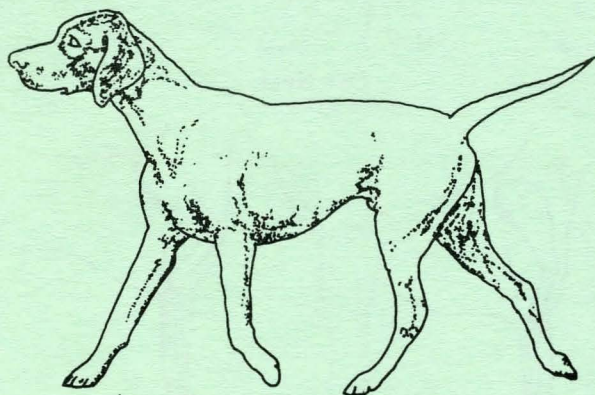
Weaving



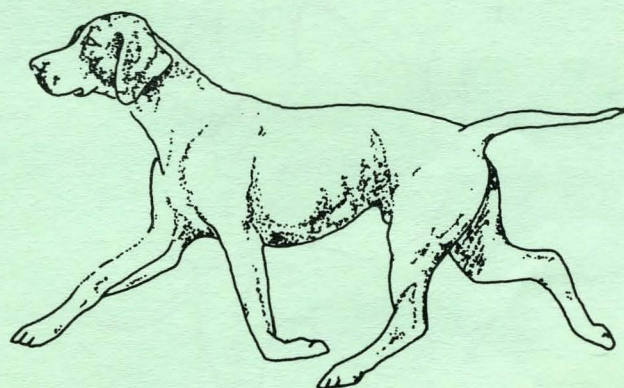
Good Movement
Rear



Poor Movement
Rear



Poor Movement
Side View



Good Movement
Side View