

Meat Judging Programs and Why They Matter

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What Is a Meat Judging Program?

Meat judging programs are currently the most effective tool for the recruitment and development of future meat science technologists. Meat judging is more than just the determination of the quality and lean meat yield of a carcass or wholesale cut; *the program serves as a training tool to develop young leaders in the meat and livestock industries*. Judging is a competitive event for youth through collegiate-age students and it has a deep-rooted history with the meat industry.

STEM and the Relevance of a Meat Judging Program

Teachings and concepts are rooted in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) foundations geared toward the meat industry. These include meat quality (science), grading system and use of the camera (technology and engineering), and calculations of percent saleable product as yield grades and value base pricing per 100 pounds (mathematics). A meat judging program teaches future leaders the US grading system, industry terminology, anatomy, muscle myology, and quality assurance.

What Are The benefits of a Meat Judging Program?

KNOWLEDGE

Students equipped with general knowledge in meat evaluation are competitive in the judging arena, but more importantly, become the individuals that lead our industry into the future. Judges are exposed to a network of small to large-scale meat plants as well as colleges and universities seeking future employees. Overall, students will understand the impacts of livestock management practices on the end product. Meat judging programs are an integral part of workforce development.

21st CENTURY SKILLS

Meat judges acquire 21st Century Skills needed for the workforce. These include problem-solving, critical thinking, decision-making, written communication, work ethic, teamwork, confidence, and reasoning.

NETWORKING – JOB PLACEMENT

Meat judges will network with undergraduate students from other universities that develop into long-lasting friendships. Once entering the workforce, it is common for meat judges to work with someone from the year they were on the meat judging team.

EXPOSURE TO UNIVERSITIES AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

In preparation for a contest, many meat judging teams will not only practice in their own university meat labs but will also stop at other universities to practice. This is an opportunity for students interested in or questioning graduate school to visit with other faculty/staff and see facilities first hand.

Meat judges will also practice at large-scale meat packing plants where they will see the inside of the facility when tours are available. Plant supervisors, superintendents, and/or plant managers will visit with students and share what they are looking for in the workplace. It is common for students to receive job offers before graduating as a result of the visits.

Moreover, meat judges are exposed to many industry representatives hosting meat judging contests and/or serving on official committees. As the industry continues to recruit young, talented employees, meat judging is a prime sector in connecting our students to graduate school and/or job placement.

Two competitive AMSA Divisions

Division A: Open to all post-secondary educational institutions where instruction in meat grading and judging is regularly offered.

Senior Division: Open to all Bachelor of Science granting agricultural universities and colleges where instruction in meat grading and judging is included as a regular part of the curriculum.

What does a meat judging team look like?

A team consists of four members. Remaining team members are automatically entered into an alternate's contest.

Contests

The Buckeyes compete in six contests per year. Contests are organized under the direction of the American Meat Science Association (AMSA) along with large-scale meat processing facilities and university animal/meat science programs. Contest officials are determined by a committee consisting of faculty, industry representatives, and a USDA grader.



List of contests the Buckeyes will compete in from January to November.

Jan – April	September – November
Southwestern Livestock Exposition – Ft. Worth, TX	Eastern – Cargill, Wyalusing, PA
Iowa State University Invitational – Ames, IA	American Royal – Omaha Beef, Omaha, NE
Southeastern – Co-hosted by The Ohio State University and the University of Kentucky	International – Tyson Foods, Dakota City, NE (Championship)

Meat Science and a University Meat Laboratory

A Meat Science program is commonly housed in an animal and/or food science department(s). The program teaches the underlying principles of biology, physiology, and nutrition. Students will understand factors that drive animal growth and the impact they have on meat quality and safety. The meat science program at Ohio State focuses on connecting scientific principles to the end-product through hands-on experiences. The CFAES department of animal sciences houses a federally inspected meat laboratory (lab). The meat lab serves teaching, extension, and research needs. Additionally, a small Meat Shoppe is used to sell OSU meat products. A meat lab is an important component to a meat science program as well as a meat judging program as this is where the hands-on learning occurs.

Most of the employees in a university meat lab are student workers who work while they attend school. A student employee will learn proper techniques for animal harvest, fabrication, packaging, and labeling as well as food safety regulations, good manufacturing practices, and safety sanitation operating procedures.

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