

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION**

### **2017 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE MEAT ANIMAL EVALUATION CONTEST**

#### **Introduction**

During the instructors meeting at the 1992 Ak-Sar-Ben Meat Animal Evaluation Contest (MAEC), a proposal was made to formulate a communications component to the event. This was in response to the growing demand for improved communications, problem solving, and interpersonal skills required of our students as they graduate. The MAEC has always been regarded as an innovative educational opportunity for undergraduate agriculture students, but lacked a communications aspect. The instructors of the MAEC participants also desired to develop a "team work" aspect to the contest.

The formation of this fourth division at the MAEC was approved and conducted on an experimental basis in 1993. A committee of coaches representing each team in the 1993 contest approved the Communications Division as conducted in 1993 with minor procedural and scoring modifications. The Communications Division was conducted officially for the first time in 1994 under the guidelines presented in this document, and counted as a maximum of 100 points towards a team total. In 1994, the coaches approved an increase the point value to a maximum of 150 points.

#### **Educational Outcomes Expected**

1. Enhanced communication abilities from small group interaction and team oral presentations.
2. Improved abilities in small group dynamics such as consensus building, active listening, constructive criticism.
3. Improved knowledge of subject matter related to contemporary issues in the meat animal industry through cooperative learning.

#### **Team Structure**

Students will work as teams of variable number, each team consisting of students from the same institution. All students participating must also be entered and participating in the other 3 events of the MAEC. This activity will represent the sole opportunity that students from the same university will have to work together as a team because all other events in the MAEC require individual effort. Teams should have at least 4 students participating in the communications event, but all team members are encouraged to participate in the presentation.

## The Challenge

The Challenge will represent a situation (real, futuristic, or hypothetical) facing some aspect of the meat animal industry that involves a need for a decision or recommendation to be made. The Challenge will likely be more complex than simplistic in nature in that numerous possible conclusions could be justified depending on one's perspective on the situation.

Many of our complex situations in the meat animal industry are analyzed from different perspectives. The students will be required to consider the challenge from the following perspectives in order to successfully complete this event:

1. The **breeder/producer** perspective (one which considers those who raise the livestock and the associations that support them directly).
2. The **packer/processor** perspective (one which purchases from the producer and provides to the retailer).
3. The **retailer/consumer** perspective (one which considers the needs of the consumer for product and services).

The successful analysis of the Challenge from these three perspectives will be a large part of the evaluation of a team's efforts, so it behooves a team to organize themselves according to interest and knowledge of these three segments of our industry.

The Challenge will be presented to the teams in a written format and may be supported orally if the need arises or if people directly related to the Challenge are available. Attempts will be made to develop Challenges that are real-life and that can be presented and evaluated by individuals who directly face the situation in their work life (budget and time constraints may prevent this).

The Challenge will be complex enough to provide for lively debate, and to provide for numerous realistic conclusions, but not so complex as to require research effort, literature reviews, etc. Remember, the main focus of this division is to exercise and evaluate communication skills.

Some examples of possible Challenges include the following:

1. Should central bull, boar, and ram tests be eliminated, altered, or conducted as they are now?
2. Should a quality assurance program for our various meat animal industries be funded by tax dollars?

The Challenge will be presented to the teams at the time of the event.

## **Team Objectives and Conduct**

The objective of each team is to analyze the challenge from the three perspectives, to reach a consensus as to the best "recommendation", and to prepare and give a substantiated oral presentation of their recommendation. The score a team receives will be made on the quality of their final oral presentation.

Each team will be provided a private area in which to work. After the Challenge is presented, the teams should begin to organize themselves. Teams are not allowed to use any outside materials as they prepare their presentations -- this includes printed materials brought with them, internet access, etc. Teams are free to organize their presentation in any manner they wish, but the following suggestions might be considered:

1. Determine an overall chair whose job is to keep the group(s) on task, on time, and to assimilate information for the presentation. Of course some of these duties may even be assigned to different individuals.
2. After brief review of the Challenge, divide the team into workgroups according to areas of expertise and interest. Remember that the Challenge is to be evaluated from three perspectives (breeder/producer, packer/processor, retailer/consumer). Hence, these might be natural divisions and objectives of each workgroup.
3. Within each workgroup, perhaps a taskmaster and/or recorder should be designated so that the discussion is efficient.
4. The teams should allow ample time to consolidate their efforts, come to a collective consensus of what the team's recommendation will be, and prepare a format for the presentation. Decide who is going to do what during the presentation. Organization at this point is critical to success; make sure everyone knows what they are to do and when.

Because different teams will have different numbers of members, they will obviously have to organize themselves in different ways. Because of the structure of this event, it appears that at least four people should be involved in the oral presentation. Teams using less than four in their presentation will be discriminated against in the scoring of a team; however, having more than four will not necessarily bring additional benefits in the scoring.

## **Presentations, Evaluations, and Officials**

The final product of a team's efforts is the oral team presentation of an analysis of the Challenge and team's recommendation to the Challenge's presenter. Teams will be provided a flip chart and markers that may be used during the presentation. If needed, flip chart paper can be provided to the teams during the one hour preparation time that teams are given prior to presentations. Each presentation will be videotaped so that the officials may convene, review the tapes, and reassign scores that are consistent between concurrent sessions. The following score sheet will be used to evaluate the presentation:

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ORAL PRESENTATION EVALUATION

Evaluation Item	Points Available	Points Awarded
<b>Clarification and Analysis of Perspectives</b>	<b>40</b>	_____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Was the audience defined and "stage set"?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Were assumptions made by team germane to the challenge statement?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Are the three perspectives clearly analyzed?</i></li> </ul>		
<b>Support (Defensibility) of Recommendations</b>	<b>50</b>	_____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Was a consensus or overall conclusion presented?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Was reasoning logical? Were conclusions sound and defensible?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Were ideas appropriately innovative and creative?</i></li> </ul>		
<b>Communicative Success</b>	<b>60</b>	_____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Was the presentation clear and concise?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Were team members used effectively to communicate the team's views and position?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Was the presentation organized? Did all members involved know their role?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Was innovation of approach used effectively to make a point or develop and hold audience interest?</i></li> </ul>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	_____

**Additional Comments:**

Judges will be instructed to consider scores (on a percentage basis) in each category of scoring to reflect the following qualities:

above average qualities	80 to 100%
entirely satisfactory performance	40 to 70%
needs some improvement	10 to 30%

In order to finish the presentations on time, there will be three concurrent sessions. Teams will be assigned at random to one of these sessions. All students will be expected to listen as an audience to each presentation in their session EXCEPT the one which immediately precedes their own. This will allow time for a team to collect their thoughts prior to their own presentation. Failure to be fully in attendance at required sessions, unless pre-approved by the superintendent, will disqualify a team from earning any points in the communication division.

Teams are allowed to use visual aids during their presentation. Flip charts will be available, but the use of overheads or PowerPoint slides will not be allowed.

Attempts will be made to invite officials who are not coaching a team in the MAEC but who are connected in some way to the industry. Preference will be given to individuals with broad-based experience in the livestock industry who can appreciate the various differences that the perspectives defined for this contest bring.

### **Dress Code For Event**

Semi-formal dress (e.g. "sport coats and ties", etc.) for the communications contest will not be required or necessary. At this point, we would like to discourage "overdressing" for the event in order to maintain a somewhat comfortable setting for the contest. However, a clean, neat appearance will be important. T-shirts, old jeans, etc. will be discriminated against because this will obviously distract from the communication effectiveness of the presentation.