

Philosophy on Writing Questions for Meat Evaluation
2010 RMC Coaches Clinic
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Asking questions from previously observed carcass or cut classes in meat evaluation is one of the most academic exercises that we do in a meat judging contest. It is much like studying for and taking a pop quiz that you recently discovered about ten minutes before class time. Some students are prepared and some are not. It is different from reasons in that it is usually an observation of the entire class rather than making a comparison of two exhibits and there is no partial credit for each answer for the contestant. At the same time, the student doesn't get to use their notes while answering the questions whereas the reason writer has full access to their notes while writing. Yet there is one consistency, there's no magic, just hard work and repetition for success. Also, it is as important to the "A" division as reasons are to the senior division.

The biggest problem I see in questions is two or three fold. First, the large majority of the officials are former judges that have judged at the senior division level and didn't participate in the "A" division. Thus, their focus and training lends itself to making comparisons for each of the three pairs in the class, not focusing on the big picture. Secondly, many, not all, but many officials do not come to coaches clinics year-to-year and they usually do not read the Officials Handbook as instructed. I will say that the "after-thought approach" by officials has gotten much better over the past ten years. Many of the committee chairs and Dr. Wise has made it a point to have the officials make the questions before they take notes for reason grading. Thirdly, when coaches deem a question as bad it is either because the point of question was not distinguishably different or it was not relevant to the placing and big picture of the class. Furthermore, some coaches in the past have indicated that terminology was an issue. Maybe so, but I contend that we have a standard of nomenclature in both the Meat Evaluation Handbook and the Officials Handbook that should be consistent. However, for example, this was not evident for the senior division last year at the southwestern. Students were using incorrect terminology, yet coaches had taught something else and didn't want the incorrect terminology to be counted against their student. ????? How can we expect correct terminology from officials when they didn't teach it correctly when they coached for reasons?

This is very short and concise, but I think questions should be very short, concise and to the point. If it's a good class then there will be ten good questions. They should pertain to the differences in the placing of the class and that relate to the big picture for that class. I had a role in the writing of the sections regarding "Questions" in both the Meat Evaluation Handbook and the Officials Handbook, thus my reference and comments should be pointed in that direction. There are numerous examples of both "good" and "bad" questions listed in the Officials Handbook. This is online for everyone. I think it is really important for coaches to understand when teaching, and for officials to understand when writing questions that the questions should depict the true value that dictated the placing of that class and that the actual question and the way it is written is as important to the "A" division as reason grading is to the senior division. Our students will be much more successful if we train them properly and if officials adhere to the guidelines.

GUIDELINES:

- 1) All questions must be written in a manner that they can be answered by only one of the following responses: 1, 2, 3, 4, Yes, No.
- 2) Questions should pertain to the criteria and differences used in placing the class (Trimness, Muscling, Quality and/or Sex). Questions that do not relate to the placing of the class or are not significant to the overall evaluation are not desirable questions and should not be used if possible.
- 3) When asking questions about the differences within a class, the differences must be visually distinguishable. (If the difference for questions would not be observed for reasons, then it is not likely a good question).