

# Livestock Judging Guide



By

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# Module 7: Sheep



## Handling Market Lambs

# Handling Market Lambs



- ❧ Purpose of Handling Sheep:
  - ❧ Confirm what your eyes have told you
- ❧ If offered, take opportunity to handle lambs
- ❧ Occasionally, visual appraisal doesn't give true picture





# Handling Market Lambs



## ☞ First Step:

- ☞ Handle a lamb down its top
- ☞ Place an open hand over the top of shoulder
- ☞ Feel for neatness, or lack of neatness of shoulder
- ☞ Also, feel for:
  - ☞ How smooth shoulder blends into rack & forerib
  - ☞ Firmness of shoulder



# Handling Market Lambs



- ☞ Continue handling lamb down its top to evaluate firmness and thickness



# Handling Market Lambs



## ☞ Second Step:

☞ Use your thumb to roll the muscle coming out of the shoulder approx. 2 to 3 inches off the midline of the back

☞ Butterfly shape to the rack muscle:

☞ Is desired

☞ Indicates high degree of muscling





# Handling Market Lambs



## Third Step:

- ☞ Handle lamb over ribs to evaluate finish or fat cover
- ☞ Using fingerprint area of first two fingers:
  - ☞ Lightly feel over lower rib
  - ☞ Keep fingers together
- ☞ Lambs should be:
  - ☞ Very lean (approx. 0.10 – 0.20 inch)
- ☞ Soft feel indicates too much fat (excess of 0.20 in.)
- ☞ Handle down backbone with thumb or forefingers



# Handling Market Lambs



## Fourth Step:

- Measure length of hindsaddle
- First – find last rib
  - Compare length from last rib to dock (hindsaddle)
  - To length from last rib to neck-shoulder junction (foresaddle)
- Length of hindsaddle should be at least equal, or preferably longer than foresaddle





# Handling Market Lambs



## ☞ Fifth Step:

- ☞ Measure width of loin
- ☞ Place one hand on each side of loin to determine width
- ☞ Wider the loin, the higher degree of muscling



# Handling Market Lambs



## ☞ Sixth Step:

- ☞ Measure length of loin
- ☞ Place index fingers on last rib
- ☞ Extend hand to loin-leg junction (hipbone)
- ☞ Observe length of loin
- ☞ Longer the loin, the higher degree of muscling



# Handling Market Lambs



## Seventh Step:

- Measure length of rump
- Place index fingers on the hipbone
- Extend hand to dock
- Observe length of rump
- Longer the rump, the higher degree of muscling





# Handling Market Lambs



## ☞ Eighth Step:

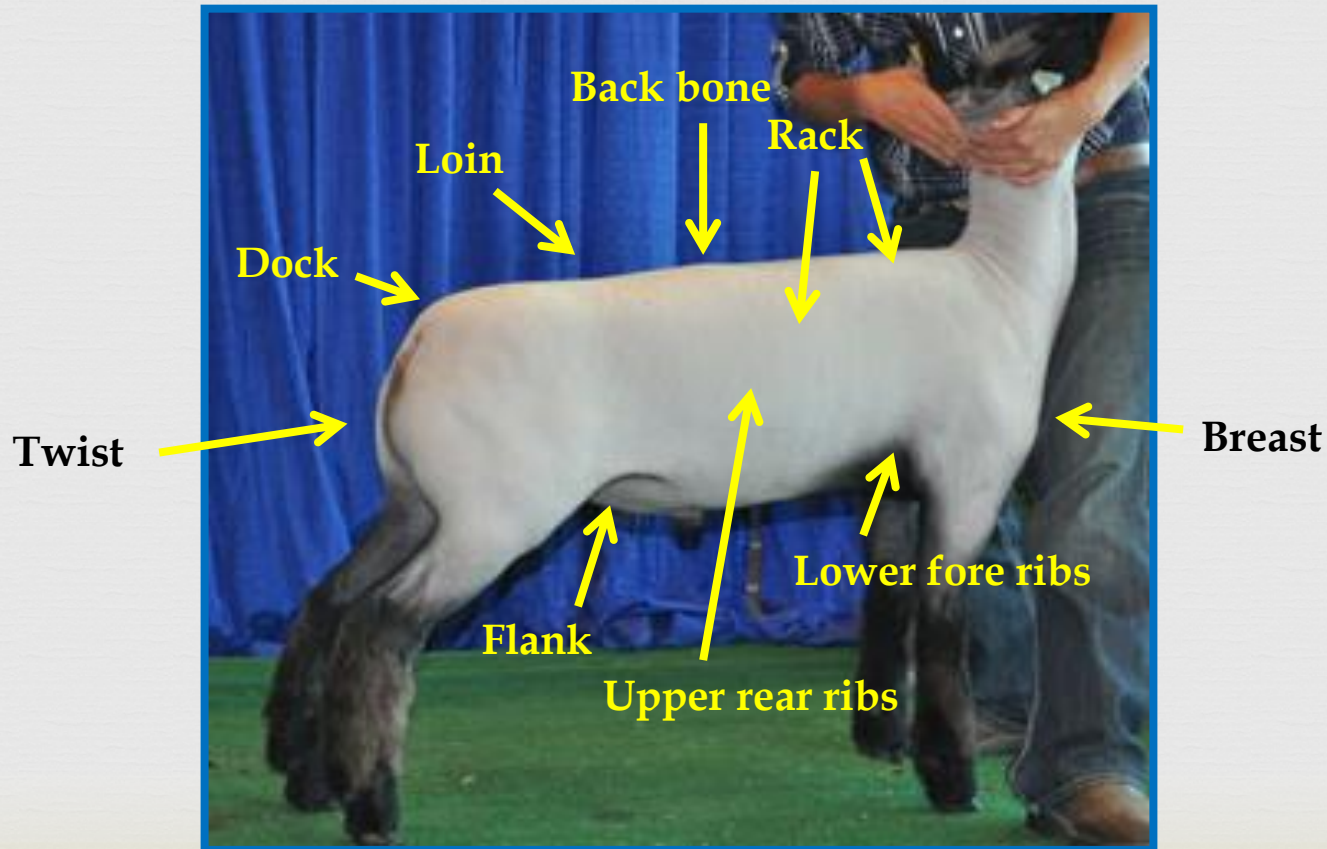
- ☞ Determine volume of leg muscle
- ☞ Place both hands under rear leg, as high as possible
- ☞ Touch middle fingers on inside of leg
- ☞ Wrap hands around leg from both directions
- ☞ Evaluate distance between thumbs on outside of leg
- ☞ Greater distance between thumbs, higher degree of muscling



# Handling Market Lambs



Locations on the body where condition is evaluated and fat is deposited



# Handling Market Lambs



- ☞ Good indicator for estimating fat on a lamb:
  - ☞ Place one finger over the other hand's knuckles
  - ☞ Move finger back & forth
  - ☞ Boney and not very smooth
  - ☞ Less than 0.10 inches of fat
  - ☞ Next, place a finger over the back of hand
  - ☞ Move finger back and forth
  - ☞ Approx. 0.10 to 0.20 inch of fat
  - ☞ Ideal market lamb finish, over ribs, should feel like back of your hand





# Summary



- ❧ When Handling Lambs Evaluate For:
  - ❧ Firmness down the top including:
    - ❧ Rack
    - ❧ Loin
    - ❧ Leg
  - ❧ Finish over the back & ribs
  - ❧ Finish over the sternum, in twist & in flank
  - ❧ Amount of muscle in loin
    - ❧ Determining depth, width & length of loin
  - ❧ Amount of muscle in leg
    - ❧ Determining length & depth of leg

# Review



Neatness of top of shoulder  
Smoothness of fit to rack  
Firmness



Rack muscle expression  
Firmness



Width & firmness down  
the top



Roll of muscle in the rack



Finish over ribs



Length of hindsaddle vs.  
length of foresaddle



Width of loin



Length of loin

# Review



Length of rump



Volume of leg



Questions?