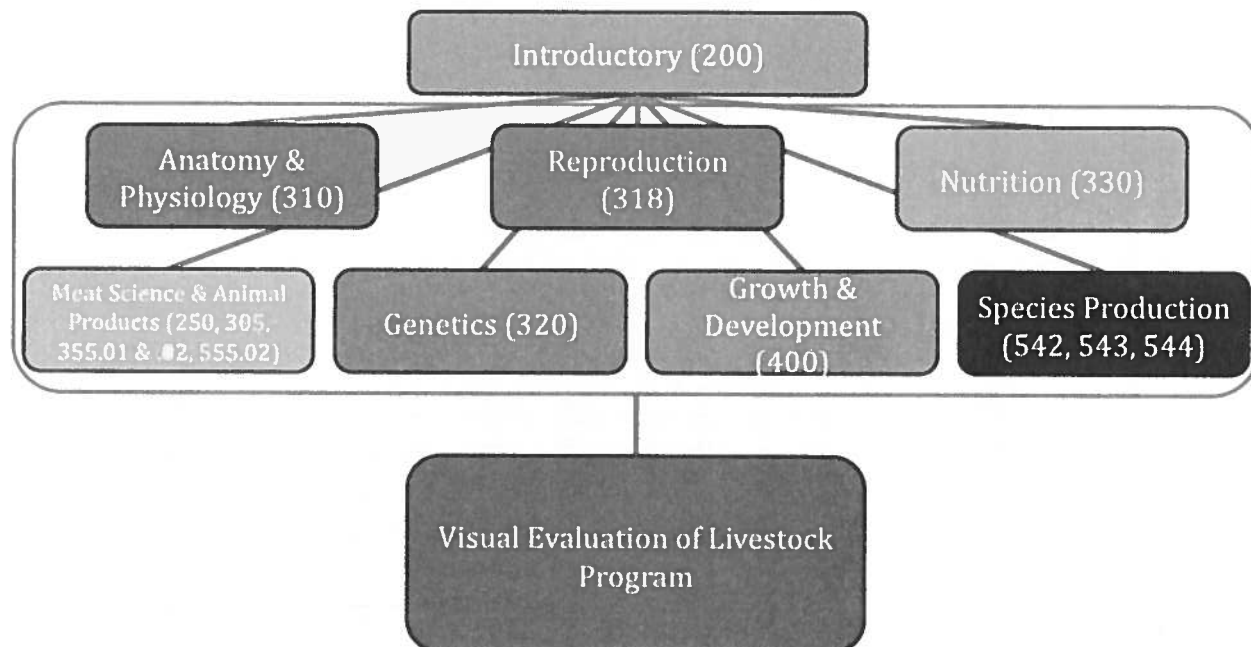


Oral Reasons

“The most valuable experience you will encounter in livestock judging is the presentation of oral reasons. No matter what career you choose effective communication is a must to be successful. Reasons will assist you in organizing your thoughts and presenting them in a confident, precise, and logical manner.”

Dr. Mark Johnson
Former Livestock Judging Team Coach
Oklahoma State University



members to improve their oral reasons ability, and be willing to do so. For people with very little livestock experience, the top portion of the rubric is often the most difficult to master due to their infamiliarity with livestock.

ID's – Correct identification of each animal. This includes physical identification, and keeping numbers assigned to the correct animal during the entire set.

Accuracy – How accurately the person describes each animal. This section tends to improve with the more people become familiar with evaluating livestock. To maintain accuracy, only discuss differences that are obviously different. There is no need to try and describe subtle differences that could be interpreted differently by the listener. Instead, describe subtle differences between animals together. For instance, two steers that are both heavy muscled could be described as the pair of heavy muscled cattle.

Logical Descriptions – How effectively your descriptions logically describe the animals and are easy to follow. We will operate on a priority based system where our reasons will describe the same details that affect a larger picture. For example, when describing a steer's carcass value it makes sense to describe all of the muscle features and all of the finish features at the same time. It does not make sense to describe muscle, then balance, and then come back to finish.

Logical Argument – Reasons are nothing more than building an argument for defending your placing. The argument needs to be logical to be effective. In order to be truly logical, we need to begin each description of the animal with "BIG Things", the attributes that are the main reasons for the placing. In addition, the reasons listener needs to know why an animal being heavier muscled than another has value. That is why we will describe the reasons that place the class, and then elaborate on why those reasons matter from a placing standpoint.

Industry Application – does what you are saying mean anything in the livestock industry? If you are saying something that is unique, but doesn't hold any value to livestock production, or the livestock industry then you are just saying something flowery that actually makes you sound like a poser and unintelligent. We want to sound like we understand the livestock industry, and that is why our decision makes sense, not like some idiot that is only saying something unique because someone told them it was "cool".

The bottom half is often the portion that "scares" newcomers. Keep in mind, the actual presentation of reasons is really only worth half of the 50 points each set of reasons is valued at. Being professional, and prepared are two categories that can easily be fixed, and the other three all come with practice. Keep in mind, many of the students you will be competing against have literally given 1000's of sets of reasons before the 2011 Winter Quarter even started. If you want to be competitive, be ready to give LOTS of sets of oral reasons. You have already been taught how to properly take notes for reasons, now lets focus on how to incorporate each item listed above.

The most basic concept of reasons is to explain your thought process, clearly, concisely, and exhibiting as much livestock savvy as possible. Keep in mind, you are simply carrying on a one-sided conversation with another person, and you want them to remember you in a positive light, so be polite, truthful, and respectful. Also, you are one of maybe 150 students that will give reasons that day, so the worst thing you can do is upset or bore the listener. If they become upset at you, it would be very easy for them to torpedo your score, and then your day is done.

Identification Points (ID's)

Names

Correctly identifying each animal is one of the easiest ways to pick up points in the reasons room. I've found that students as not being very important often overlook these, and in terms of time spent on reasons, we will spend the least amount of time working on perfecting these. The reason we won't spend as much time on this aspect is because I expect you to not waste time learning and incorporating ID's. These are absolute "gimme" points, and frankly, we can't afford to waste time focusing ID's when the other areas require more time to master. These are easy! Learn what ID's are, and incorporate them immediately!

Identification points are simply ways of identifying each animal in the class. Each animal is assigned a name; one, two, three or four, and we need to treat it as such. The name is said just like you would say one of your friend's names. In normal conversation you wouldn't say, "the man, Kyle", you would just say "Kyle". The same applies to animals with numbers as names; you **must** say "one", not "the steer number one". As far as numbers are concerned, you **must** keep them correctly assigned throughout the set. Remember, it is their name, and nobody likes to have their name forgotten or mistaken.

Nicknames

The other part of identification points is nicknames. Birth dates, colors, horns, scurs, being dehorned or polled, sexes, navel sizes, sheath sizes, testicles, vulvas, underlines, udders, nose rings, length and quality of hair or wool, etc., are all great nicknames for animals. Tags, halters, and another item that is artificial and easily removed are not good nicknames. In fact, I will not allow you to use them as ID's. We can use nicknames in the same fashion as regular names; "the scurred steer" is acceptable, "the scurred steer, one" is not. **Never** use a number in conjunction with an ID, if an ID needs clarification it is not a good ID, and should not be used.

Positive and Negative ID's

If you are using something like vulva or testicle size as an ID, always use the positive traits when describing positive attributes and visa versa. It doesn't make sense to be describing a high quality bull as an easy winner, and to lead off by saying "The small testicle bull is the most massive, masculine bull that should...". Instead, use a negative when going into criticisms; "...however, the small testicle bull is straight fronted and narrow

structured." By doing this, you can keep the reasons listener in tune with what you are saying, which is highly valuable.

Organizing ID's

You can also use ID's to set yourself up for what you are about to describe next. For instance, if you have a white footed steer that is also poor structured, saying something like, "Now, the white footed steer not only offers more cushion at the ground when set in motion..." will bring the focus of the listener to the foot you are about to describe. Basically, you can use natural reaction of the listener (who will immediately think of the steer's foot) to concisely describe a very important detail very effectively.

When to Use ID's

As often as possible, without losing the focus of the listener. A good rule of thumb is to alternate a number and an ID throughout the set. The names (numbers) of the livestock must be used to keep the listener in sync with what you are saying.

Accuracy

There is no quicker way to lose points and upset a reasons listener than to say something that is inaccurate. You must be 100% certain that what you are about to say in no way could be misinterpreted, or could be inaccurate. A way to do this is to use similarities as pair openings, "In my top pair of heavier muscled steers, I preferred the thicker quartered 1 over the wider topped 2." Not only will you explain that you recognize they are close in muscle, and accurately describe them, but the listener will appreciate your truthfulness.

For beginners, stick to the big differences you know are true, and as you become more confident in your ability to evaluate, incorporate more details. Students often try to progress their reasons prior to gaining a complete understanding of livestock. You must know what you are looking at, and be able to accurately describe it before you can increase the details of your reasons. Take your time, and don't get frustrated. Start with the big things, and the rest will come.

Logical Descriptions

Keep the reasons listener attentive, by describing the livestock in a logical fashion. Beginning students are often taught to describe the animals from front to rear, and this certainly keep the descriptions flowing in a logical fashion. However, We must describe the livestock with a higher level of cognition. Therefore, we will describe the main objectives that place pairs entirely, and then move on to other objectives. In many market classes, for instance, decisions will be made based on carcass value. So, we will describe the traits affecting carcass value in entirety before describing other aspects that may have played a role in the placing.

Example: 1 places over 2 because he is heavier muscled, more correctly finished (muscle and finish together equal carcass value), and nicer balanced.

Priority System

"I prefer the added carcass value and look from the side of 1 over 2. The black steer not only starts stronger behind his shoulder with more shape and dimension to his rib and loin, and is stouter when viewed from behind, but he is blanketed with a higher degree of finish, so I'd expect him to rib a larger eye out of a carcass more likely to grade choice. Plus, he's the nicer balanced steer that's neater fronted and leveler in his topline. Sure, 2..."

By staying committed to the priorities, there can be no confusion as to your understanding of what affects carcass value and what affects balance, and that they are independent of each other. The reasons listener will feel as if you have a very clear understanding of the cause and effect relationships important in the placing.

Anatomical System (front to rear)

"I prefer the added carcass value and look from the side of 1 over 2. The black steer not only is neater fronted, starts stronger behind his shoulder with more shape and dimension to his rib and loin, while being leveler in his topline, but he is also stouter from behind. Ultimately, I'd expect him to rib a larger eye out of a carcass more likely to grade choice."

Using this system makes it very easy for the presenter to keep things straight in their own mind, but is not as effective at thoroughly explaining their reasoning. The description of the animal is accurate, however, it does not logically describe the animal in a way to explain cause and effect. Listeners will question your understanding of livestock if they have difficulty following the logic of your descriptions.

Logical Arguments

Once we are able to logically discuss the animals, we must then focus on building logical arguments. In the example above, we can see how the descriptions lead to a projection about the carcass of the animal. We must be able to describe the animals logically, and then form an argument as to why that increases the value of the animal. If we are unable to do this, then we cannot convince anyone that our decision makes sense.

Projections are not the only way we can indicate our understanding of what traits increase value. We can do it in transitions, and by the way we set up pairs. Again, using the example above, if we added a transition from the criticism of 1 to beginning of the pair, and set the pair up, we can sound very logical in our description.

Despite these skeletal limitations, 1 still brings forth carcass value with added look when compared to 2 in a bottom pair of already structurally challenged steers.
~~"I prefer the added carcass value and look from the side of 1 over 2.~~ The black steer not only starts stronger behind his shoulder with more shape and dimension to his rib and loin, and is stouter when viewed from behind, but he is blanketed with a higher degree of finish, so I'd expect him to rib a larger eye out of a carcass more likely to grade choice. Plus, he's the nicer balanced steer that's neater fronted and leveler in his topline. Sure, 2..."

By adding those statements, the middle and bottom pair will seem to flow together, and we can use his fault (structure) to actually help validated our argument because both of the steers in the bottom are poor structured, and 1 still has carcass value and is well balanced. Plus, we can shorten up our description without losing any effectiveness, but rather by adding uniqueness.

In order to become highly effective at building logical arguments, I cannot stress how important it is to understand how livestock operations make and lose money, and how livestock are raised. I promise, large-scale animal agriculture is much more precise and in depth than the small show operations many of us are used to. It's not to say those operations aren't useful, but they pale in comparison to what drives animal agriculture. Exceptional livestock judges will understand both industries, and be able to talk to producers from each effectively.

Industry Application

Learn the industry! We will work on how to build the other components of reasons content, but you cannot master this component until you make the commitment to learn about animal agriculture. You must have a full working knowledge of this, because regardless of how much preparation we have prior to a contest, you will be encountered with situations we have not covered exactly (I cant predict everything), and you will be forced to think on your feet.

Think of learning this like preparing for a job interview. You would probably spend hours researching the company you wanted to work for so you would sound intelligent your interview. The same applies here, we must be more intelligent about all species we are judging than the people we are giving reasons too so we can sound intelligent when we give reasons to them.

LEARN THE INDUSTRY! LEARN THE INDUSTRY! LEARN THE INDUSTRY!

Presentation Skills

Professional Appearance

The attire of the students on the front page of the manual is acceptable for contestants in livestock judging contests, with the exception of women wearing skirts. Ladies should wear dress pants just like guys. Guys, be clean-shaven.

Guys

- Sport coat (preferably not blue)
- Solid colored, button-down collared shirt with collar buttons (earth tones recommended)
- Matching tie (nothing too wild)
- Pleated and starched dress pants
- Matching belt and cowboy boots

Ladies

- Look attractive, but not like your going shopping or to the club
- Western Professional

Preparedness

Always have your notebook placed in between your pants and shirt when you walk into the room. The reasons listener should never see you looking at your notebook, or still practicing. If you need an extra minute, calmly ask the listener for some. However, do all that you can to be prompt and ready when it is your turn. As soon as the listener acknowledges they are ready, fire away! Nothing is more annoying than to be asked if you are ready to listen. Be patient and observing, and you will know when to start.

Confidence

Walk in like you own the place, but don't be arrogant. You are building a logical argument to justify your placing, so you want to sound believable. Stand up straight and square with the judge, and speak loud enough to hear comfortably. There is a thin line between arrogance and confidence, and we need to walk it!

Correct Emphasis

You are giving a one-sided persuasive argument, and a mastery of voice inflection will greatly increase your ability to score high sets of reasons. When speaking in public, many people put emphasis on the incorrect words. Often times, it is the word just before the main descriptive word that should be emphasized.

For example, in the statement "1 is the heaviest muscled", many people would emphasize "heaviest". Try saying it out loud to yourself doing that. The correct word to emphasize is "the". Try saying that to yourself. You should notice a difference in pronunciation and meaning. Sure the words are the same, but in the latter you actually draw more attention to the word "heaviest" by emphasizing the word just before it. We will work extensively on perfecting this.

Pleasant Delivery

When I was first learning to give reasons, my Ag teacher had me yelling as loud as I could. It didn't take long to realize how annoying this was to the listener, and I soon altered my presentation. The key is to speak firmly and clearly, without shouting. Remember, we want the experience to be pleasant both for you and the listener, so speak in a pleasant tone.

Oral Reasons Format

The format basically contains four sections; an opening statement, top pair, middle pair, and bottom pair.

- I. Opening Statement
 - a. Class name and placing
 - i. Be short and sweet, this does not need to be fancy, I promise, you cannot gain points here, but you can easily lose them
 - ii. I placed the market steers 1-2-3-4
 - b. Description of why class winner wins the class, or why top pair is close

- i. Superlative statements (ests)
- ii. Never use comparative terms unless it is a close top pair and you are introducing them together
- iii. Is separate from top pair, but should transition smoothly
 - 1. Leading off with the most practically designed steer that brings forth an abundance of carcass value, and **I prefer his body type and structure over 2 in a top pair of heavier muscled cattle.**

II. Top Pair

a. Discussion of placing

- i. The reasons 1 beats 2 (BIG THINGS; comparative terminology)
- ii. Start with big things **body type** and **structure**, then break them down
 - 1. 1 is not only offers more functional angle and use out of his shoulder, and takes a longer more flexible stride from behind. But he too is the bigger bodied, heavier finished steer that should be more likely to grade choice,
- iii. Remember, describe them logically, and complete your descriptions with a logical argument that indicates there is actual value to your decision.

b. Grant

- i. Use comparative and superlative terminology to grant all of the major positive attributes 2 has over 1.
 - 1. No doubt, 2 is the heaviest muscled, stoutest featured steer that is neater fronted
- ii. Be complete, but don't spend all of your time here (if that is the case, maybe you placed them wrong)

c. Criticism

- i. Use descriptive and superlative terminology (no comparative terminology)
- ii. Always criticize the animal on their own merit, and end with a statement letting the reasons listener know you are finished with the pair
 - 1. This will indicate to the listener that you genuinely evaluated each animal, and didn't just compare them
 - 2. Also sounds much more confident than a comparison

III. Middle Pair

a. Discussion of placing

- i. The reasons 2 beats 3 (BIG THINGS; comparative terminology)
- ii. Start with big things and then break them down
- iii. Remember, describe them logically, and complete your descriptions with a logical argument that indicates there is actual value to your decision.

b. Grant

- i. Use comparative and superlative terminology to grant all of the major positive attributes 3 has over 2.

- ii. Be complete, but don't spend all of your time here (if that is the case, maybe you placed them wrong)
 - c. Criticism
 - i. Use descriptive and superlative terminology (no comparative terminology)
 - ii. Always criticize the animal on their own merit, and end with a statement letting the reasons listener know you are finished with the pair
 - 1. This will indicate to the listener that you genuinely evaluated each animal, and didn't just compare them
 - 2. Also sounds much more confident than a comparison
- IV. Top Pair
- a. Discussion of placing
 - i. The reasons 1 beats 2 (BIG THINGS; comparative terminology)
 - ii. Start with big things, and then break them down
 - iii. Remember, describe them logically, and complete your descriptions with a logical argument that indicates there is actual value to your decision.
 - b. Grant
 - i. Use comparative and superlative terminology to grant all of the major positive attributes 4 has over 3.
 - ii. Be complete, but don't spend all of your time here (if that is the case, maybe you placed them wrong)
 - c. Criticism
 - i. Use descriptive and superlative terminology (no comparative terminology)
 - ii. Always criticize the animal on their own merit, and end with a statement letting the reasons listener know you are finished with the pair
 - 1. This will indicate to the listener that you genuinely evaluated each animal, and didn't just compare them
 - 2. Also sounds much more confident than a comparison

The format is very repetitive; therefore you must use a variety of terminology to keep the listener engaged. When you are using projections, make sure to only do it when there is a vast difference in expected performance. There is no need to make close calls that could be interpreted as inaccurate.

*One last tip **ALWAYS** speak in present tense!

Sample Reasons Format

I placed the (name of the class) _-_-_-_, finding a winner that is the (list major advantages over the class). So, in my top pair of (similar item between top pair) I chose the (BIG THING 1) and (BIG THING 2) of ___ over ___. Not only is the (ID point), (describe BIG THING 1), but also (describe BIG THING 2). This convinces me that my winner should (projection). Admittedly, ___ is (grant second place animal), but, he/she is (individual faults; no comparisons), so I left him/her second

Even so, in my middle pair of (similar item between middle pair) I opted for the (BIG THING 1) and (BIG THING 2) of ___ over ___. The (ID point) is (describe BIG THING 1) and (BIG THING 2) and should (projection). I grant that ___ is (grant 3rd place over 2nd), but in criticism, (individual faults; no comparisons), so he/she's third.

Nevertheless, in my bottom pair of (a similarity) I like the (BIG THING 1) and (BIG THING 2) of ___ over ___. The (ID point) is not only (describe BIG THING 1), but also (describe BIG THING 2), and should (projection). I realize ___ I is (grant 4th place animal over 3rd), but (id point) is (list 2 or 3 major faults of last place animal), so I left him/her fourth.

**2010 Eastern National
Market Lambs
Mike Dyer**

I liked the Market Lambs 1-2-4-3. I elect to start the class with the Hampshire appearing ewe, as she is the heaviest muscled. When viewed from above, she is the most expressive over her top, and through her twist. She handles with the deepest loin, and offers more rib shape. Furthermore, she is the most rugged in her skeletal design, all while being the cleanest fronted. Now I understand that 2 is the freshest handling and is more powerfully constructed over his rack. But unfortunately, he is narrower based, and gives up the volume of muscle over the top and through the loin of my class winner, so I left him second.

Despite these criticisms, it is 2 over 4 in my intermediate, product driven comparison, as 2 is the freshest handling. He comes out of the backside of his shoulder with more shape to his rack, and spans a wider, and fresher loin. In addition, he is leaner made, allowing him the advantage in yield grade, when taken to the rail. Yes, 4 offers more rear rib dimension, and is less splayed out on his front feet. Yet 4 is staler when handled, specifically over the rack and through the loin, so I marked him third.

Nevertheless, it is 4 over 3 in my closing comparison as 4 will simply rail with more total pounds of retail cuts. Furthermore, he is trimmer through his chest, while handling firmer and fresher to the touch. Certainly, 3 is more extended in her skeletal design, still the rough shorn ewe simply gives up the basics of muscle and natural width, so I left her last.

Reasons Score: 50

2012 NAILE
Performance Angus Heifers
Bailey Harsh

I like the performance Angus heifers 4-3-1-2. Now in my mind there's two more moderately sized heifers to work up that should be more appropriate for use on the plains. But, when you pair that with 4's quality look, I just think she puts together the best combination for the class. Now from the outside, she's the high quality female that is the most genuine at the ground and the softest footed. Now when you couple that with her balanced genetic script, I just see her bulls appealing the greatest variety of buyers. Now on the profile, I can certainly appreciate that 3 is deepest sided heifer that's the longest and most extended through her front one third. When at the same time the white flanked heifer still gets a touch weak right behind her shoulder, and given her grid index, I just see her bulls having less true terminal value.

But that aside, in the middle, its still not even close. Both visually and on paper, 3 has to beat 1. She's the super broody heifer that's longer sided and still stouter pinned. Plus given her calving ease advantage, I'd feel more comfortable using her bulls on virgin heifers. Now, while I can appreciate 1 has the most balanced udder, at the same time, the January heifer is still just plainer made, and for a breed that's built a reputation on calving ease females she's entirely too far on the wrong side of breed average. She's a distant third.

Now, I know I get tough on her, but for making commercial bulls we still need to keep some carcass traits in mind, and the high dollar B heifer's sons should ultimately still make cattle that can excel in the yard and still have the performance advantage especially when put on the rail. Now at the same time, its from the side that I was tempted to switch the pair. 2's a level topped heifer that in direct comparison to 1 is actually bolder at the top of her forerib, but for the business breed, she'd make the least profitable bulls. Given her extreme energy requirements and low performance indicators, she just represents cattle that are inefficient at converting their resources. I like her fourth.

Official Placing: 4-3-2-1

Cuts: 3-4-1

Reasons Score: 48

2012 NAILE
Market Hogs II
Kyle Nickles

I placed the market steers 2-4-3-1. I quickly sorted up two heavy muscled, carcass driven barrows, and the top pair is close. I like the narrow belted hog to win. Here's the heavier structured, fresher centered barrow that spreads the most shape over the boldest rib cage, and drives off the stoutest hip and ham. I'd expect overall yield to be in his favor. Now I know 2 could be a bit sounder, that's where 4 has the advantage. The taller shouldered, nicer balanced hog drives with more reach and flex to his hock, and he does hit the ground squarer coming right at me. As I get right over top of him, I like the frailer boned, softer pasterned hog a close second. He's comparatively flatter in his upper rib and rounder over his loin edge, and he's starting to drive a bit high in his chine.

But still, keeping endpoint value in mind, I'm quick to keep 4 in the top pair. When directly compared to 3, here's the bigger bladed, wider chested hog that spreads more lean shape from blade to hip. As he goes away from me, he's certainly wider from stifle to stifle and squarer from hock to ground. Now I'll admit from the profile, the deep sided, wide belted hog can give you a really practical look. It's as I study him both coming and going he's a distant third in terms of genuine width and muscle shape. Here's the flatter bladed, narrower chested barrow that's flat and off in his hip. Going away from me, he rolls out in his hock and closes up at the ground.

Now I know I've been hard on him, but in the bottom pair I still see more topside power and expression in 3 over 1. I think the larger outlined, bigger centered hog that's more descript down his top should end with more total pounds of product. Now to no surprise, the Duroc appearing barrow stands down on the most foot and bone, and he has the cutability advantage. Unfortunately, he reads the flattest and plainest in his shape, and in terms of product potential, I left the narrowest made, lightest muscled hog in fourth.

Reasons Score: 47

**2014 NWSS
Boer Goat Does
Levi Criswell**

I rank the breeding does 4213. I quickly sorted up a highly presented stout skulled class winner, whose as wide chested and dimensional as any, and she remains ahead of the group on the move, but her most intriguing views from the side, and I'd anticipate the most excitement from this angle through transfer. Now the red hocked doe in second is the only choice to match her in terms of depth of body and flank, but the steep hipped doe is simply outclassed from the side, and still she needs more correct and squarer in her hock.

However in the middle it's her undeniable performance advantage that keeps her over 1. Still the doe whose laid back slightly further in shoulder is bigger footed and deeper in her body and flank. But like I said I'd really like to fix this one from a balance perspective, especially in her hind leg, and that's where the caped doe in third comes into play. As she's more correct about her hock and pastern while certainly being bold in her rib cage design and body. But of the initial trio she's by some margin the lowest performing, and still she needs to laid back a touch in her shoulder and deeper about her flank to split my top pair.

But still on bottom its her quality build that beats 3. As she's the stronger topped doe, whose bolder in her fore rib, while also being much more correct in the set to her hock, and squarer from hock to ground. Now sure there's a higher performing doe rounding out the class, and she's still a big footed wide chested doe. But in a class of this magnitude, shes the off quality choice, as shes the weak topped doe whose the flattest in her fore rib, while still being one of the two poorer structured does, I liked her 4th.

Reasons Score: 49