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Carcass Contests May Outshine Live Animal Competition at Shows

Carcass contest grand championships may soon overshadow the grand championships in shows for live steers, barrows and wethers, according to a prediction made by Dr. H. H. Kildee, Dean Emeritus of the College of Agriculture, Iowa State College, and vice-president of the International Live Stock Exposition.

The prediction was made in a recent speech at the University of Florida. Dean Kildee is director in charge of the carcass contest of the International show.

Kildee based his view on livestock research findings that point the way to breeding and feeding livestock that produces carcasses that cut out the greatest amount of lean meat — a decided consumer preference.

Red meats have partially lost favor to other meats in recent years due largely to the present consumer reaction against fat on meats. While beef consumption last year was at a record of 83.5 pounds per capita, it is significant that red meat consumption has only increased 29 per cent since World War II compared to 78 per cent for poultry.

"It is logical and desirable that each industry improve its products, their presentations on the market and, therefore, their sales and the industry's economic well-being."

Poultry raisers have made vast strides in the improvement of product and its processing, packaging, marketing and merchandising.

The homemaker who buys 75 per cent of all food and 73 per cent of all beef for home consumption and has clearly shown a preference for lean meat has established the goal for those industry leaders "who know that it is impossible to breed, feed process and merchandise beef, pork and lamb that provide large rib and loin eyes of lean meat that are tender, well-marbled, juicy and of the desired texture, color and flavor, and with a minimum of 'bark' or external fat."

Carcass contests spotlight the need for improved breeding and feeding to meat consumer wants. The need is apparent in discrepancies between on-hoof judging of contest animals and final carcass judging. Kildee noted greatest improvement in swine judging in recent years, while lamb judging has done nearly as well.

The primary purpose of these contests is to increase the yield and to improve the quality of beef, pork, and lamb in order to measure up to consumer preference. They give convincing evidence of marked variations in carcass quality among the breeds in each species and also within each of the breeds.

The International Live Stock Exposition has had a carcass contest since its first show in 1900. Last year it increased cash prizes, expanded classifications, revised the rules and spotlighted the contest by auctioning the champion carcasses in the main arena before Horse Show crowds. Carcasses were displayed prominently through the week in a refrigerated, glass-enclosed trailer, made possible by William Wood Prince of the Union Stock Yard and Transit Company. Other prize winners were displayed, with photographs of the live animals, in packing house coolers where meat specialists answered questions during a continuous "open house."

In the beef cattle contest, separate classes for senior calves, summer yearlings, and junior yearlings are now provided for Angus, Herefords and Shorthorns and purebreds, grades and crosses of other breeds. Entries are judged on foot on Friday morning, slaughtered that afternoon, and carcasses judged on Monday so that prize-winning carcasses are displayed for study by breeders and feeders through the week.

Stated Doctor Kildee: "The fact that there are variations within each breed is a major reason why carcass contests merit the greater emphasis and increased participation which they are now receiving."

Dressing percentage is not a factor in the placing of the International contest. Dr. R. W. Bray, associate professor of animal husbandry at the University of Wisconsin and superintendent of the contest, points out that high yield is sometimes associated with excessively fat or over-

finished animals. The "fills" of animals varies, and it is difficult to give proper credit to major by-products of animals.

The major criteria of the International are as follows: 1. Loin eye area in square inches (thus varied in the 1956 contest from nine to more than 16 square inches), 2. Fat thickness over the eye (not excessive), Marbling which is scored on a basis of 1 to 10.

The speaker believed a good goal for market steers is provided by Dr. L. E. Kunkle of Ohio State University — steers that in conformation, natural flashing and degree of finish provide the following:

1. An edible portion of 80 per cent of carcass weight
2. Trimmable fat not in excess of 14 per cent of carcass weight
4. Rib eye of about 13 square inches and a texture and marbling that indicates tenderness, juiciness and desired flavor and color
5. A degree of finish not too high and limited external fat or "bark."

Research in Europe and New Zealand by Dr. C. P. McKeekan dispels a widely accepted idea that small bone in animals is correlated to a large proportion of lean meat. Weighing and measuring every individual muscle and bone in many thousands of slaughtered animals, the investigator concludes:

"It is not possible to get a carcass with a really great wealth of flashing without

having associated with that flesh a heavy weight of bone.

Muscles are tied to the bone; they are there to operate the bone; so their size and shape must, for mechanical reasons, be associated with the size and shape of the bone."

This study indicates that it is possible to breed cattle that are markedly deficient in lean meat and having excessive fat by selecting breeding animals with fine bone. The shorter and thicker the bone the greater depth or thickness of muscle over that bone. Studies in this country substantiate these conclusions.

Doctor Kildee also cited recent discoveries by Department of Agriculture research that flavor in meats is 68 per cent heritable.

"It is not difficult," he concluded, "to project one's thinking to the point of picturing the carcass contests of the future with a much greater educational and inspirational value to the breeders of purebred seed stock, producers of market beef cattle, swine and lambs and to all consumers of red meat."

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