

# TEXAS 4-H MEAT JUDGING AND IDENTIFICATION

2024-  
2025



TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI**LIFE  
EXTENSION



# 2024-2025 Texas 4-H Meat Identification and Judging Contest Rules

## Objective

Texas 4-H Meat Judging and Identification is a competitive educational event that helps youth develop important skills in meat science, critical thinking, and decision-making. Participants in this contest learn to evaluate and identify different cuts of meat, determine the quality and yield grade of beef, lamb, and pork, and assess carcasses, wholesale cuts, and retail cuts for their value in the marketplace.

The contest typically consists of:

1. **Judging Classes:** Contestants evaluate, and rank meat carcasses and cuts based on industry standards.
2. **Retail Identification:** Participants identify specific cuts of meat and their corresponding species, primal cuts, and cooking methods.
3. **Placing Reasons:** Competitors explain their decisions and reasoning behind how they ranked a class.

Meat judging also teaches young people about the importance of meat quality, safety, and how different meat products are prepared for consumers. It's a key part of agricultural education, especially for those interested in meat science, animal production, or related careers.

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*The information included in this document has partly been adopted from the National 4-H Meat Judging Contest rules and regulations as put forth by the American Meat Science Association. All rules stated in the Texas 4-H Roundup Handbook take precedence over rules stated in this document.*

## **Eligibility**

A. This contest is open to a team of four 4-H members to be selected and/or certified by the State and District 4-H leaders/Specialists. The three high scoring members of a team shall constitute the official team for each division and for the total contest. The fourth ranking member in each division and total contest shall automatically become the alternate in that division or total contest. All four members of each team are eligible for individual awards.

B. The Senior, Intermediate, and Junior contestant designation will be established by the State and District 4-H Leaders/Specialists.

C. All the members, including alternates, shall meet the eligibility requirements found in the Policies and Guidelines for National 4-H Competitive Events approved by ECOP and all State of Texas 4-H eligibility requirements.

Specifically, contestants:

- Must be 14-18 years old as of January 1 in the year they compete; Must be a 4-H member during the year they compete; Must not have participated in official post- secondary (university, college, junior college or technical school) competitive events of a similar nature in the same subject matter area, nor be a member of a post-secondary team undergoing training in preparation for such an event.

D. In addition to the Policies and Guidelines for National 4-H Competitive Events, contestant will be selected in the 12-month period prior to the contest date.

## **4-H Contests Held During the Texas State Round-up**

**QUALIFYING MEAT JUDGING AND IDENTIFICATION CONTEST** – From this contest teams are identified for the advancement to the Qualifying National Contests for Meat Judging and Identification. This contest entails the evaluation and selection and identification of meat cuts from beef, swine, and sheep species. Contestants will give three sets of reasons. The three high scoring members of a team shall constitute the official team for the contest, the fourth ranking automatically being the alternate. Contestants shall not have competed in an intercollegiate meat contest or be currently enrolled in or completed a college level meats course.

**INVITATIONAL MEAT JUDGING AND IDENTIFICATION CONTEST** - Team of 2. Limit of 3 teams per county. This contest will give youth the opportunity to further their knowledge and skills when evaluating meat through a practicum setting. The contest will be held simultaneously with the Qualifying Meat Judging and Identification contest. The contest consists of the evaluation and selection of meat cuts from beef, swine, and sheep species. Contestants in the Invitational Contest will be asked 5 questions per class in two classes (10 total questions) held during the contest. There will only be a Senior division for this contest; therefore, participants will be expected to know all the retail cuts on the Senior Retail ID list. County leader must specify the teams of two when registering or the State Office will assign the teams.

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## **Selection of Facilities, Products and Judges**

A. The selection of facilities and product for the contest will be made by the Contest Superintendent (Dan Hale Extension Meat Specialist) or his designee.

B. The contest site will be "Off Limits" to all coaches, contestants and associated persons one week prior to the contest.

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## General Conduct of Contest

- A. Contestants will move from exhibit to exhibit during the contest in four or more separate groups.
  - B. If possible, no two members of the same team will be in the same group.
  - C. Where possible, a Group Leader will be provided for each group of contestants whose duty shall be to enforce the rules of the contest and to keep the exhibits of the class on which his group is working in an orderly arrangement.
  - D. Contestants will have 10 minutes to evaluate each class and identify each set of ten retail cuts. For each carcass and wholesale cut class, the contestant will have a 2-minute stand back time period at the beginning of the class and then a one-minute stand back time period at the end of each class. A one-minute warning will be given towards the end of class time period.
  - E. After all the classes have been evaluated each contestant will be given five minutes to review their scorecard to ensure that it has been filled out correctly. After this five-minute period scorecards will be picked up. Contestants should fill out their scorecards as they evaluate each class and as they are identifying each retail cut. There is not enough time to completely fill out their card during this five-minute review.
  - F. Contestant will not be permitted to:
    - 1. Handle or touch cuts or lean cut surfaces under any condition;
    - 2. Use any mechanical aid, such as a measuring device, light, etc.;
    - 3. Talk to fellow contestants at any time during the contest;
    - 4. Monopolize any one exhibit for any unreasonable length of time;
    - 5. Separate themselves from the class on which their group is working;
    - 6. In any way willfully obstruct the work of any other contestant.
  - G. Team members and coaches will be given the official placings and reasons by the Judges after the contest is completed.
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## Scantron Card

A. Contestants will be provided a scantron in their packet, which must be used for the contest. **Failure to use the scantron provided by the contest official will result in a disqualification of the individual.** The class and retail identification scores will be based on the bubbled-in portions on the scantron. If the bubbles are blank the contestant will receive a zero for that item regardless if the answer is written on the card. If two items are bubbled in for the same class or retail cut code, then the contestant will receive a zero for that item.

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## Selection of Classes

The Judging Committee will give special consideration to the following items:

### A. General - Judging Classes

1. The Officials shall be the final authority in how the cuts are trimmed. The contestants will not be expected to make allowances for faulty workmanship.
2. An effort will be made to select classes that will hold their characteristics for the duration of the contest.
3. All exhibits within one class will be of about the same weight, so that the size of the exhibit is not a major factor in determining the placing. The Contestant should assume that all carcasses and cuts are of the same weight.
4. A special effort will be made to avoid unusual conditions in the contest area which would tend to change the appearance of the exhibits during the contest.
5. A check will be made to see that all hanging exhibits in one class are on about the same length hooks and at a height for best observation.
6. A check will be made to see that marks of identification, such as plant or official federal grades, tags, or other common marks of identification are removed from every exhibit prior to the start of the contest.

*(Exceptions to the above—or other unusual cooler area or exhibit conditions—will be carefully explained to coaches and contestants prior to commencement of the contest.)*

## B. Retail Identification

1. The retail cuts to be used for the identification portion of the contest will be selected from the latest approved national 4-H Meat Identification Cut Master List (Retail Cut Identification Codes \*Updated 2017) available from the American Meat Science Association

[https://meatscience.org/docs/default-source/Student/Meat-Judging-Program/National-4-H-Meat-Judging/4-h-retail-cuts-beginning-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=2c3eb8b3\\_2](https://meatscience.org/docs/default-source/Student/Meat-Judging-Program/National-4-H-Meat-Judging/4-h-retail-cuts-beginning-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=2c3eb8b3_2)

2. Steaks or chops will not exceed 1-1/4 inches thick. Roasts will be 1-1/2 inches thick or more. Efforts will be made to avoid borderline calls. Cuts may or may not be packaged and packaging materials are at the discretion of the contest officials. Contestants may not touch retail cuts at any time. Retail cuts and names shall be among those found in the Uniform Retail Meat Identity Standards approved list, and the Guide to Identifying Meat Cuts. The following web address is the official Texas A&M University site for Retail ID pictures <https://meat.tamu.edu/aggie-meat-judging/meat-identification/>

## C. Retail Cut Class List

1. Beef retail cut placing/reason classes shall be selected from among the following:

- Beef Chuck, Arm Roast
- Beef Chuck, Blade Roast
- Beef Rib, Rib Steak, Lip-on
- Beef Rib, Ribeye Steak
- Beef Loin, T-Bone/Porterhouse Steak
- Beef Loin, Top Loin Steak, Boneless
- Beef Loin, Top Loin Steak, Bone-in
- Beef Loin, Top Sirloin Steak, Boneless
- Beef Round, Round Steak (Bone-In or Boneless)

2. Pork retail cut placing/reason classes shall be selected from among the following:

- Pork Shoulder, Blade Boston Roast • Pork Shoulder, Blade Steak
- Pork Loin, Blade Chop
- Pork Loin, Blade Roast
- Pork Loin, Rib Chop or Rib Roast
- Pork Loin, Loin Chop or Loin Roast
- Pork Loin, Sirloin Chop
- Pork Ham, Fresh Center Slice, Smoked Center Slice

3. Lamb retail cut placing/reason classes shall be selected from among the following:

- Lamb Rack, Rib Chop, Double Rib Chop, rib roast
- Lamb Shoulder, Blade chop, Arm Chop
- Lamb Loin, Loin Chop, Double Loin Chop, Loin Roast
- Lamb Leg, Sirloin Chop, Leg Slice

D. Wholesale/Primal-Subprimal Judging Class list.

Different numbered options are listed because of regional or market availability preferences. \* Denotes the preferred choices, if available, variations of these wholesale cuts may also be considered.

- Beef Ribs (103/107\*/109/112A)
- Beef Rounds (158\*/160)
- Beef Loin (172)
- Beef Short Loins, Short-Cut (174\*)
- Beef Strip Loins, Bnls (180)
- Pork Fresh Hams (401\*/401A)
- Pork Shoulder Boston Butts, Bone-In (406)
- Pork Loins (410/411/412\*/413 or a derivation of one of these)

E. **SENIOR** - Classes and scoring for a Standard Contest for Senior Contestants

<b>Judging Classes</b>	<b>Possible Score</b>
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<i>Retail Classes (2)</i>	<b>100</b>
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Classes Selected from list in Part C: one beef, one pork, or one lamb

<i>Carcass and/or Wholesale/Primal/Subprimal Classes (4)</i>	<b>200</b>
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Beef—2 Classes Carcasses and/or Cuts Wholesale/Primal/Subprimal and

Pork—2 Classes Carcasses and/or Wholesale/Primal/Subprimal Cuts is preferred; however, this may need to be altered based on the availability of product at the host institution. Having up to two classes in the same category is allowed, if necessary, because of product availability issues. Additionally, based on product availability, a third retail, beef, and/or pork class may be used.

Lastly, a **lamb carcass class** may replace one of the four carcass or wholesale/primal/subprimal cut classes.

<i>Oral Reasons (3)</i>	<b>150</b>
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Reasons will be given on three of the above classes at 50 points each

<b>Total Judging Score Possible</b>	<b>450</b>
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**Retail Identification**

*Identify 30 Retail Cuts*

Beef, Pork, and Lamb Fresh, Processed or Variety

(A) Name of Species at 2 points each	<b>60</b>
(B) Name of Primal Cut at 3 points each	<b>90</b>
(C) Name of Retail Cut at 4 points each	<b>120</b>
(D) Recommended Cookery Method at 1 point each	<b>30</b>

***Total Identification Score Possible*** **300**

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**TOTAL CONTEST SCORE POSSIBLE** **750**

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F. **INTERMEDIATE** - Classes and scoring for a Standard Contest for Intermediate Contestants

<b>Judging Classes</b>	<b>Possible Score</b>
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<i>Retail Classes (2)</i>	<b>100</b>
Classes Selected from list in Part C, one beef, one pork, or one lamb	

<i>Carcass and/or Wholesale/Primal/Subprimal Classes (4)</i>	<b>200</b>
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Beef—2 Classes Carcasses and/or Cuts Wholesale/Primal/Subprimal and  
Pork—2 Classes Carcasses and/or Wholesale/Primal/Subprimal Cuts is preferred; however, this may need to be altered based on the availability of product at the host institution. Having up to two classes in the same category is allowed, if necessary, because of product availability issues. Additionally, based on product availability, a third retail, beef, and/or pork class may be used.

Lastly, a **lamb carcass class** may replace one of the four carcass or wholesale/primal/subprimal cut classes.

<i>Questions (2)</i>	<b>100</b>
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Questions will be answered on two of the above classes. These questions will be answered at a designated time during the contest. Both sets of questions will be answered at the same time without notes at 50 points each

***Total Judging Score Possible*** **400**

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**Retail Identification**

For the Intermediate Division the Retail cuts for the identification portion of the contest will be selected from the entire latest approved National 4-H Meat

Identification Cut Master List (Retail Cut Identification Codes \*Updated 2017)  
available from the American Meat Science Association  
<https://agrillife.org/4hmeat/files/2018/01/Senior-Retail-Identification-Code-Sheet.pdf>

They will do 30 cuts and answer all four categories for each cut (Species, Primal Cut, Retail Cut and Cookery).

*Identify 30 retail Cuts*

Beef, Pork, and Lamb Fresh, Processed or Variety

(A) Name of Species at 2 points each	<b>60</b>
(B) Name of Primal Cut at 3 points each	<b>90</b>
(C) Name of Retail Cut at 4 points each	<b>120</b>
(D) Recommended Cookery Method at 1 point each	<b>30</b>

***Total Identification Score Possible*** ***300***

**TOTAL CONTEST SCORE POSSIBLE** **700**

G. **JUNIOR** - Classes and scoring for a Standard Contest for Junior Contestants.

**Judging Classes** **Possible Score**

*Retail Classes (2)* **100**

Classes Selected from list in Part C, one beef, one pork, or one lamb

*Carcass and/or Wholesale/Primal/Subprimal Classes (4)* **200**

Beef—2 Classes Carcasses and/or Cuts Wholesale/Primal/Subprimal and

Pork—2 Classes Carcasses and/or Wholesale/Primal/Subprimal Cuts is preferred; however, this may need to be altered based on the availability of product at the host institution. Having up to two classes in the same category is allowed, if necessary, because of product availability issues. Additionally, based on product availability, a third retail, beef, and/or pork class may be used. Lastly, a lamb carcass class may replace one of the four carcass or wholesale/ primal/subprimal cut classes.

***Total Judging Score Possible*** ***300***

**TOTAL CONTEST SCORE POSSIBLE**

**300**

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**Oral Reasons/ Written Questions**

- A. There will be three reasons classes selected from beef, pork and retail classes. Each contestant will give three sets of oral reasons. The reasons classes will be chosen by the Officials and announced to the contestants at when they begin a reason/question class. The contestant may not use notes while giving reasons or answering questions, but will be provided note cards during the contest to be used for review and preparation for the oral reasons and questions.
  - B. Reasons should be given to the Officials, in the order of the contestant's placing. Major comparisons, criticisms and grants should be used, where appropriate.
  - C. For questions contestants will be given 10 minutes to review their notes on both question classes. Contestants will not be able to use their note while answering questions. Following the review period contestants will put their notes away and then be given written questions. Participants will be given 10 minutes to answer the 5 questions per class for both classes.
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**Contest Time and Materials**

- A. Ten minutes will be allowed in the cooler per placing each judging class and taking notes for reasons.
- B. Contestants will stand back two minutes for reviewing judging class. Seven minutes will be allowed for close inspection of each class and one minute will be allowed for stand back and filling out placing cards.
- C. Three 10-minute periods will be allowed for identifying the 30 retail cuts, with no stand back.
- D. The Officials will decide all official placings and cuts for the contest.
- E. Immediately preceding the start of oral reasons, there will be a warm-up period of at least 15 minutes for contestants to study notes for their oral reasons.
- F. Oral reasons may not exceed two minutes for any one class.

- G. All forms, placing cards, note cards for reasons, etc. shall be provided by the contest administration.
- H. Clipboards, pens, pencils, clean frocks, cooler coats and hard hats shall be provided by the contestant.
- I. Cards with bubbles on the scantron not marked will be scored as a zero. Any written information in the blanks on the scantron will be disregarded.
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## Awards

- A. Suitable trophies or awards will be given the high individuals and teams in appropriate contest divisions and in total contest.
- B. All individuals participating, including alternates shall be eligible for individual awards.
- C. Ties in judging categories shall be broken by:
- 1<sup>st</sup> Reasons or Questions in that category
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Lowest total placing score
- Ties in Reasons/Questions shall be broken by:
- 1<sup>st</sup> Contestant with the lowest total placing score
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Highest Reason Score in a selected class.
- Ties in Retail ID
- 1<sup>st</sup> Total Reasons or Questions Score
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Total Placing Score
- Ties in Placing
- 1<sup>st</sup> Total Reasons or Questions Score
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Total Retail ID
- Ties in Total Contest
- 1<sup>st</sup> Total Reasons or Questions Score
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Retail ID
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Total Placing Score
- Ties not broken by the tiebreakers listed above will be broken using criteria selected by the lead contest official.
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## Study Material

Retail cuts and names shall be among those found in the Uniform Meat Identity Standards 2009 Edition <https://agriflife.org/4hmeat/files/2018/01/Guide-To-ID-Meat-Cuts.pdf>

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension AggieMeat Site <https://meat.tamu.edu/aggie-meat-judging/>

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension 4H Meat Judging Site <https://agriflife.org/4hmeat/>

Texas A&M Site to Study Retail ID and Meat Judging Example Classes <https://agriflife.org/4hmeat/>

Nebraska Site to Study Retail ID <https://animalscience.unl.edu/meat-id>

Nebraska Site to Example Classes <https://animalscience.unl.edu/pase-and-cde-meats-contest>

Official Meat Judging Collegiate Handbook – Has pictures with terminology and example questions [https://meatscience.org/docs/default-source/student/meat-judging-program/intercollegiate-contest-materials/2020-officials-handbook-\(revised-november\).pdf?sfvrsn=cf2fa050\\_0](https://meatscience.org/docs/default-source/student/meat-judging-program/intercollegiate-contest-materials/2020-officials-handbook-(revised-november).pdf?sfvrsn=cf2fa050_0)

Questions relating to the contest should be directed to: Dan Hale Extension Meat Specialist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, [Daniel.hale@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:Daniel.hale@ag.tamu.edu)