

## Tips for County Fair Judges - Corn



Wisconsin 4-H recommends that you use the following criteria to judge corn entries at county fairs.

### **Judging Criteria for Corn Sheaf (Bundle) Exhibits**

If corn from this year's crop is to be exhibited, it can be shown in sheaves because it is not yet ripe. Bundles should include 3-6 stalks, depending upon the fair. Use these criteria when judging:

- *Leaves, Stalks, and Color:* Leaves should be free of damage from pests and weather. Stalks should have good color, and be uniform in size and height.
- *Ear Development:* The ears should be of uniform maturity. Look for ears with well-filled, straight, regular rows of yellow, dented kernels. The ears should have good tip and butt development. There should be no insect, disease, weather, or other indication of damage on the kernels or the cob.
- *Preparation of Sheaf:* Stalks should be tied together loosely in three places in an attractive arrangement. The roots are either to be removed or cleaned, depending upon the fair. (Tell exhibitors that a high-pressure stream of water from a hose works well for cleaning roots.) The exhibitor or the fair may provide a container for the roots, such as a five-gallon pail, burlap, or plastic bag. Sometimes, county fairs say roots can be trimmed to fit into a container.

### **Judging Criteria for Ear Corn Exhibits**

Youth are generally required to enter 5-10 ears of corn from the previous year's crop. Sometimes a lot number calls for the "best single ear of corn." Use these criteria when judging:

- *Maturity:* When corn is to be exhibited as an ear sample, ears should be mature. Kernels should be bright and plump. When kernels are loose and flexible on the cob, the ear probably was immature at harvest.
- *Condition:* Ears should be in good condition. Look for ears with well-filled, straight, regular rows of kernels. The ears should have good tip and butt development. There should be no insect, disease, weather, or other damage on the kernels or cob. Encourage youth to husk the ears carefully by hand to prevent loss of kernels. They should harvest more than they will need for the exhibit, and pick only the best for display.

- *Uniformity:* Ears should be as much alike as possible in size, shape, color, and kernel type. The butt, middle, and tip of the ear should all have about the same diameter.

### **Judging Criteria for Shelled Corn Exhibits**

Depending upon the fair, youth are required to enter 4-8 quarts (a peck) of shelled corn from the past year's crop. Use these criteria when judging:

- *Maturity:* Kernels should be dry and fully mature.
- *Condition:* Shelled corn kernels should be bright, plump, and free from damage, mold, and rot. Samples should be free of foreign material.
- *Uniformity:* Shelled corn samples should be uniform in color and size.

### **Judging Criteria for Corn Silage Exhibits**

Corn silage must be fermented in a silo and come from the last year's crop. Some county fairs require that corn silage samples be exhibited in a five-quart ice cream pail or similar container with cover on. Other fairs require a clear plastic bag that is tied tightly to exclude air and retard the fermentation process. Exhibits generally consist of 8-10 pounds of silage that represent the corn crop. Exhibitors are often asked to include a statement about hybrid maturity, date planted, population, and date cut. Use these criteria when judging:

- *Preservation:* Corn silage should have a natural color. It should also have a very mild, clean, slightly sharp odor and taste, which indicates the correct amount of acidity for proper preservation. Silage should not have a musty, moldy, or burned odor. High moisture silages are usually the ones with strong odors. If a sample feels slimy or moisture is left in your hand when you squeeze it, the silage has too much moisture.
- *Crop Quality:* Look for corn silage with a high grain content, which makes it a superior livestock feed.