How much can you tell about carcass merit by looking at a live animal? The juniors and many parents attending the Pride of the Heartland Junior Classic in Des Moines had that opportunity. Participants were given only the live weights for the cattle pictured below and were asked to individually evaluate each animal for Fat Thickness, Rib Eye Area, USDA Quality Grade and Yield Grade. Based on those estimates they were also asked to predict the top dollar value and the low dollar value animal on a grid market.

The cattle were harvested and a rib section from each animal was brought back for the Classic attendees to evaluate. Register your estimates here and then turn to page 50 for results.

A big thanks to Mark Goes and the South East Community College at Beatrice, Nebraska for coordinating this educational program and to Ron Russell of the University of Wisconsin for assisting with the carcass evaluation. AGA Five-Year Plan breeder education dollars were used to support this educational program.

Flip to next page for results
Carcass Evaluation Results

#1 Data
- Live Weight: 945 lbs.
- Carcass Weight: 579 lbs.
- Fat Thickness: 0.1"
- Rib Eye Area: 13.2"
- Quality Grade: Std+
- Yield Grade: 1.0
- Carcass Value: $683.10

Comments
Steer #1’s light live weight should be indicative of the potential problem with quality grade. Actually this steer was less than 13 months old and had been fed for a short period. With only a tenth of an inch of fat cover, this steer could easily and likely efficiently been fed for another 300 pounds. He has a very desirable rib eye.

#2 Data
- Live Weight: 1195 lbs.
- Carcass Weight: 764 lbs.
- Fat Thickness: 0.60"
- Rib Eye Area: 13.1"
- Quality Grade: ChAvg
- Yield Grade: 3.2
- Carcass Value: $1,088.85

Heifer #2 produced a premium Choice carcass with slightly above average outside fat thickness, and a very desirable rib eye especially for a heifer. The Yield Grade of 3.2 does not result in a premium or a discount on most grids.

#3 Data
- Live Weight: 1240 lbs.
- Carcass Weight: 783 lbs.
- Fat Thickness: 0.45"
- Rib Eye Area: 13.9"
- Quality Grade: Ch-
- Yield Grade: 2.7
- Carcass Value: $1,108.10

Steer #3 This Gelbvieh cross steer hits a desired industry target of a Choice, Yield grade 2 carcass. At a carcass weight of 783 pounds he also generates the most carcass value of the four head.

#4 Data
- Live Weight: 1050 lbs.
- Carcass Weight: 660 lbs.
- Fat Thickness: 0.20"
- Rib Eye Area: 11.3"
- Quality Grade: Sel-
- Yield Grade: 2.2
- Carcass Value: $897.47

Steer #4 is another example of a steer that could easily be taken to a heavier live weight with more time on feed. Similar to #1 he had the potential to reach a desirable quality grade with more time. One note, this steer did have some bloat issues prior to the contest, that also emphasizes the long known fact that keeping cattle healthy throughout the feeding period is critical to quality grade.

All-in-all there are a lot of lessons in these four head of cattle!