



Common Livestock Breeds and Characteristics

Meranda Small, Extension Educator

Goal (learning objective)

Youth will learn what several popular livestock breeds are for each species (beef, swine, and sheep) along with some characteristics of those breeds.

Supplies

- Computer, projector, and screen to present PowerPoint Common Livestock Breeds and Characteristics
- Copies of notes of presentation (optional, enough for group)
- Breeds photos and descriptions from Ohio Learning Lab Kits

Pre-lesson preparation

Identify the top breeds for each species utilized in US Agriculture Production and research what their distinguishing characteristics are, ex: for swine American Yorkshire is typically a good mother that produces large litters, white in color (susceptible to sunburn), have a big frame and erect ears while the Duroc typically needs less feed per pound of muscle than any other breed, fast growth, feed efficient, vary in color from light gold to dark red and have droopy ears.

Lesson directions and outline

Ask the youth to share with the group the breed of animal of the species they are raising. Have them discuss the characteristics of the breed.

Explain each breed for each species has characteristics and attributes that make it popular in general and for specific purposes such as reproductive qualities versus meat qualities. For example, large framed cattle that make good mothers versus cattle that muscle well or some sheep breeds are used for wool production more than others leading to why there are differ-

ent breeds for the differing purposes. Understanding these should lead youth to understand why they may or may not select a certain breed for their project.

Ask the youth to share with the group the breed of animal of the species they are raising. Have them discuss the characteristics of the breed.

Conducting the activity (DO)

1. Popular beef breeds include Angus, Charolais, Gelbvieh, Hereford, Limousin, Red Angus, Short-horn, Maine Anjou and Simmental.
2. Popular dairy cattle breeds include Holstein and Jersey.
3. Popular swine breeds include American Yorkshire, Berkshire, Chester White, Duroc, Hampshire, Poland China, Landrace and Spots.
4. Sheep are categorized as Ram Breed, Ewe Breed or Dual Purpose. Ram breeds are meant for meat, not being used typically for continued breeding purposes. They have good size, growth rate, carcass merit, and ease of lambing. Ewe breeds are highly prolific and have superior mothering abilities. Dual purpose breeds can be used as either ewe or ram depending on the operation. Sheep breeds can also be classified by their wool, Fine, Medium, and Medium to Long Wool breeds. Popular sheep breeds include Merino Wool Sheep, Rambouillet, Suffolk, Hampshire, Dorset, Columbia and South-down.
5. Popular goat breeds include Angora, Spanish Boer, Kiko, Nubian, LaMancha, Alpine, Saanen, and Nigerian Dwarf.
6. Working with the Common Livestock Breeds and Characteristics PowerPoint, ask youth the questions the slides and others to encourage discussion.
7. Following this activity ask youth to find a picture

of a breed not covered and bring with them to the next meeting to share with the group. Also ask them to provide a few of that breed's characteristics (these pictures can be found in the Ohio Learning Lab Kits).

8. Optional activity: Play "Place Your Animal". Print a picture of each animal covered in the presentation. Hand out the pictures until all have been dispersed to the youth group. Have on a table/desk three plastic tubs. One labeled "Meat", second "Reproduction", and the third "Dual/Other". As you go through the presentation, following the explanation of each breed ask who has this animal and then have them place their animal card in what they think is the appropriate bin for that breed based on its characteristics.

What did we learn? (REFLECT)

- Ask: Is there one single superior breed for any of the species? (No, it comes down to what the production goals are)
- Ask: What are some important reproductive qualities? (Frame size, length of breeding season, number of offspring, milking ability)
- Ask: What are some important meat qualities? (Rate of gain and feed needed for gain, leanness, carcass yield, and marbling)
- Ask: For 4-H, do you want animals that are better for reproduction or for meat? (Depends on the type of project)

Why is that important? (APPLY)

- Ask: Does selecting the right breed for a certain process affect the success for a producer? Would you select a wool sheep breed if your goal was to produce meat?
- Ask: Why does understanding each breed's qualities make you as a producer, more knowledgeable in producing a better product?
- Ask: Where else can you apply this same type of knowledge? (Example: If you have an ear ache do you go to a doctor that specializes in feet? If your car breaks down do you go to an auto mechanic or

an airplane mechanic?)

Resources

- Ohio State University Extension. (2011). Selection. *Beef resource handbook* (pages 2-4 through 2-9).
- Ohio State University Extension. (2008). Choosing an Animal. *Goat resource handbook* (pages 21-30).
- Ohio State University Extension. (2011). Sheep Industry and Sheep Breeds. *Sheep resource handbook for market and breeding projects* (pages 107-116).
- Ohio State University Extension. (2000). Your Very First Step - Selection. *Swine resource handbook for market and breeding projects* (pages 3-1 through 3-8).
- Ohio State University Extension. (n.d.). Learning Lab Kits. Beef, Sheep, Swine, and Goat. Available from: <http://www.ohio4h.org/books-and-resources/learning-lab-kits> (NOTE: Check with your local county extension office on availability to check out).
- Small, M. (2014). *Common Livestock Breeds and Characteristics PowerPoint*. University of Idaho Extension.