

## Judging to a Standard

In 4-H we strive to “make the best better”. In doing so we evaluate the member’s exhibit in relation to a standard. A standard is something established as a rule or basis of comparison in judging quality or value. It is a model that stands for or is accepted as a basis for comparison.

It is the judge’s responsibility to know the standards in their area of expertise and how that correlates to the blue, red, or white ribbon award for each age division\* (see below for the Oregon 4-H age divisions). By having this standard in mind, the judge will be able to assess classes effectively and efficiently. Judging to a standard may result in a class of all blues, all reds, all whites, or a mixture of all three. Participants receive the color of ribbon determined by their exhibit only and not other exhibits in the class.

A judge may come across several exhibits or even a county full of exhibits where the quality is not up to the standard. This may result in feeling the need to lower the standard in order to award a blue. Judges should never drop their standards to compensate. A judge should not be afraid to give all red or white ribbons if appropriate. Judges who lower their standards do a disservice to the young exhibitors; exhibitors lose the chance to learn from their mistakes and it diminishes the feeling of achievement for those who truly earned blue ribbons.

There may be a time when a judge is faced with a fair superintendent or show manager who attempts to dictate the number of blues, reds, or whites to be given, or states “this county does not give white ribbons”, asks for higher scores to fulfill state fair quotas, or criticizes for giving all blues. The judge needs to stand firm and refrain from compromising the standards. If faced with an unfair or unethical situation and guidance is needed, please feel free to contact the State 4-H Program Specialist for that project area or the State 4-H program leader.

Judging requires a calculated process of observations and evaluations to arrive at a fair decision. When judges maintain high standards and evaluate exhibits accordingly, they will always be able to have a clear conscience at the end of the day. Maintaining high standards is not always easy, but it is something all judges should diligently work towards.

\*Oregon 4-H Age Divisions:

- Cloverbuds: Members age 5-8. They do not participate in competitive events.
- Juniors: Members age 9-11.
- Intermediates: Members age 12-15.
- Seniors: Members age 15-19.

(The member’s age on September 1 is used to determine their age division for the upcoming 4-H program year starting October 1.)

