

Tips for County Fair Judges – Small Grains



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

Judging Criteria for Small Grain Sheaf Exhibits

Exhibits must be from this year's crop. For a sheaf exhibit, small grain plants should be near the same stage of maturity and represent the field being sampled.

Use these criteria when judging:

- *Maturity:* Plants should be fully mature with kernels that are dry, plump, and uniform. The kernels should have good color.
- *Condition:* The exhibit should have clean straw and ripe heads. Sheaves should be free of weeds, disease, insect damage, and musty odors.
- *Preparation of Sheaf:* Sheaves should be attractive, symmetrical, firm, and neat. All leaves should be stripped off. (The exception is soybeans, which should be exhibited fresh, not dried, and shown with leaves on.) Sheaves should be tied tightly with 3-6 ties and measure 4-6 inches in diameter or as specified in the premium book. The preferred binding material is ribbon, though colored string, twine, or cord is acceptable. Butts should be squared off, neatly trimmed with a fine-tooth saw, knife, or shears. Remind exhibitors to cut several hundred stalks from a standing crop, then choose just the best for display. They could spread the stalks under cover to dry. After preparation, sheaves can be wrapped carefully in newspaper and stored in a cool, dark place until fair time.

Judging Criteria for Threshed Small Grain Exhibits

Grain is to come from the most recent harvest and dry for proper storage. For threshed small grain exhibits, most fairs specify a 1-2 quart, ½ peck, or 2-4 pound sample of seed. Check the premium list for the size of the sample required. Exhibitors may be asked to include a statement about the variety, number of acres raised, and yield per acre. Ideally, soybeans should be exhibited as a threshed grain sample. Use these criteria when judging:

- *Condition:* Ideal samples are clean with uniform, plump kernels of good color and free of musty odors. There should be no sign of mechanical or insect damage, mold, or rot. There should be no small, shriveled, cracked, broken, diseased, dull, or off-color kernels. Remind youth when preparing a sample for exhibit to begin with 4-8 times the amount required. They can hand harvest the large sample or take the sample from the bin after mechanical harvesting. They should first screen the large sample to remove objectionable matter, then finish by hand picking the sample to remove impurities of all kinds.
- *Single Seed Variety:* The sample should have a single, pure variety of seed.
- *Free of Weed Seeds:* Sample should be free of weed seeds and any foreign or inert objectionable materials.