University *of* Idaho
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# Common Livestock Breeds and Characteristics

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## Goal (learning objective)

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

## Supplies

- Computer, projector, and screen to present power-point *Common Livestock Breeds and Characteristics*

- Chairs - enough for group

- Copies of notes of presentation (optional, enough for group)

## Pre-lesson preparation

- Identify the top 5-10 breeds for each species utilized in US Agriculture Production and research what their distinguishing characteristics are. For example in swine the American Yorkshire is typically a good mother that produces large litters, white in color (susceptible to sunburn), have a big frame and ears. Where as, the Duroc typically needs les 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

Explain to youth that 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. Understanding these should lead youth to understand why they may or may not select a certain breed for their project

## Conducting the activity (DO)

1. Popular beef breeds include Angus, Charolais, Gelbvieh, Hereford, Limousin, Red Angus, Shorthorn, Maine Anjou and Simmental.

2. Popular swine breeds include American Yorkshire, Berkshire, Chester White, Duroc, Hampshire, Poland China, Landrace and Spots.

3. Popular sheep breeds, focus on the meat breeds but mention the Merino Wool Sheep. Cover Rambouillet, Suffolk, Hampshire, Dorset, Columbian, and Southdown.

4. Working with the *Common Livestock Breeds and Characteristics Powerpoint,* ask youth the questions the slides and others to encourage discussion.

5. Following this activity ask youth to find a picture of a breed (and characteristics) not covered in the presentation. Ask them to bring it to the next meeting to share with the group.

## What did we learn? (REFLECT)

- Ask: Is there one single superior breed for any of the species?

- Ask: What are some important reproductive qualities?

- Ask: What are some important meat qualities?

- Ask: For 4-H, do you want animals that are better for reproduction or for meat?

**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. (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).

Small, M. (2014). *Common Livestock Breeds and Characteristics PowerPoint.* University of Idaho Extension.