

Contest Tips: Sales Talk

By Austin Henthorn

Summer is just around the corner and for a lot of us cattle showing families; that means vacation is attending the Regional and National Classic. With the educational contest being a huge component of the Junior Simmental program, we all need to brush up on our skills to be competitive for the coveted over-all spot.

Of all the education contests, Sales Talk seems to get easier each year for me. It starts to become natural and the words just flow from your mouth once you get accustomed to the contest—but it takes practice! When I first started, I just didn't know what to do. I want to save you from that, so I've got some beginner tips on how to give a sales talk and a few little pointers that might give you that special knack so the judges remember you.

What to wear: Wear a nice pair of jeans, button down shirt, boots and a belt.

What to bring: You're only allowed to bring your registration paper and your animal. You must have a fellow AJSA member hold your animal, so make sure you find someone in the barns ahead of time who can help you. If you'd rather leave your calf in the stalls or perhaps sell a cow back home, you can bring an 8 x 10 photo and the animal's registration paper.

The actual talk: The contest organizers will send you to your station of two judges. Once you walk up to your judges and the organizers say "time in," you have 7 minutes to complete your sales talk. Immediately shake hands with your judges and introduce yourself. Tell them your name and where you are from. Then quickly show them your animal and start selling. There are many different approaches on how to sell an animal, but traditionally exhibitors start out by showing the judges the registration papers. Tell them your animal's name; explain the pedigree and the age of the animal. Get your judges involved; ask them what kind of operation they run, so you can cater your selling points to them, explaining how your animal can fit into their program.

Sometimes you get the perfect answer like, "We run purebred Simmentals and are looking for a good show heifer." Other times the judges say things like, "Well we run 50 head of purebred red Simmentals and want a red replacement heifer," when your heifer is homozygous black! Which means it's time to get creative. Work with the situation the best you can, and tell them how your animal will be beneficial to their program.

After figuring out what they're looking for, I usually start to talk about the phenotypic and genetic traits of the animal. If your judge asks you what you would change about the animal and you are stumped, you can always say that you'd like to put the judge's name on the registration papers as the owner. That should give them a good laugh.

Before you do your sales talk, make sure you know all the abbreviations, such as BW, API, etc. Know what the abbreviations mean. These are common questions. Talk about the strengths in your animal's EPDs and why those numbers would help their herd. It's important

that you make your sale info relevant to the judge. For example, “This heifer has a great calving ease number, so no more waking up in the middle of the night to pull a calf.”

As you wind down the informative part of your sales talk, you may find your judges may have some questions. By the “Two Minutes Left” announcement from the officials, it’s important that you’ve moved into questions. If your judges aren’t asking you much, start by asking a question, “So do you think this heifer will fit your program?” Then it’s time to talk price. If they make the decision to buy the animal immediately, you now need to arrange delivery. If your buyers beat around the bush on the price, you may lower the price, but tell them that is the best you can do. If the judges/buyers still don’t take the offer, that’s fine. Shake hands and say, “Thank you for your time, and hope to hear from you soon.”

This is just a very basic description of what a sales talk is like for young exhibitors. Once you finish one sales talk, you’ll leave the ring thinking about how you can do better next time. My best advice: Act like you’re at your own farm and someone has come to buy an animal. Make the experience for the judges feel as real as possible. This will put you in the best position to win the contest.

Good luck this summer and come find me at the Eastern Regionals or the National Classic if you’d like to practice your sales talk!