

Judging Criteria for Corn Sheaf Exhibits:

If corn from this year's crop is to be exhibited, it can be shown in sheaves because it is not yet ripe. Bundles should include 3-6 stalks, depending upon the fair rules. Some county fairs that list sunflower stalks in this class say that the pollen capping must be removed from sunflower heads before exhibiting. Use these criteria when judging:

Leaves, Stalks, and Color: Leaves should be free of damage from pests and weather. Stalks should have good color, and be uniform in size and height.

Ear Development: The ears should be of uniform maturity. Look for ears with well-filled, straight, regular rows of yellow, dented kernels. The ears should have good tip and butt development. There should be no insect, disease, weather, or other indication of damage on the kernels or the cob.

Preparation of Sheaf: Stalks should be tied together loosely in three places in an attractive arrangement. The roots are either to be removed or cleaned, depending upon the fair. (Tell exhibitors that a high-pressure stream of water from a hose works well for cleaning roots.) The exhibitor or the fair may provide a container for the roots, such as a five-gallon pail, burlap, or plastic bag. Sometimes, county fairs say roots can be trimmed to fit into a container.

Scorecard for Judging Corn Sheaf Exhibits:

Leaves, Stalks, and Color	40
Ear Development	40
Preparation of Sheaf	20
Total	100

Judging Criteria for Ear Corn Exhibits:

Youth are generally required to enter 5-10 ears of corn from the previous year's crop. Sometimes a lot number calls for the "best single ear of corn." Use these criteria when judging:

Maturity: When corn is to be exhibited as an ear sample, ears should be mature. Kernels should be bright and plump. When kernels are loose and flexible on the cob, the ear probably was immature at harvest.

Condition: Ears should be in good condition. Look for ears with well-filled, straight, regular rows of kernels. The ears should have good tip and butt development. There should be no insect, disease, weather, or other damage on the kernels or cob. Encourage youth to husk the ears carefully by hand to prevent loss of kernels. They should harvest more than they will need for the exhibit, and pick only the best for display.

Uniformity: Ears should be as much alike as possible in size, shape, color, and kernel type. The butt, middle, and tip of the ear should all have about the same diameter.

Scorecard for Judging Ear Corn Exhibits:

Maturity	40
Condition	40
Uniformity	20
Total	100

Judging Criteria for Shelled Corn Exhibits:

Depending upon the fair, youth are required to enter 4-8 quarts (peck) of shelled corn from the past year's crop. Use these criteria when judging:

Maturity: Kernels should be dry and fully mature.

Condition: Shelled corn kernels should be bright, plump, and free from damage, mold, and rot. Samples should be free of foreign material.

Uniformity: Shelled corn samples should be uniform in color and size.

Scorecard for Judging Shelled Corn Exhibits:

Maturity	40
Condition	40
Uniformity	20
Total	100

Judging Criteria for Corn Silage Exhibits:

Corn silage must be fermented in a silo and come from last year's crop. Some county fairs require that corn silage samples be exhibited in a five-quart ice cream pail or similar container with cover on. Other fairs require a clear plastic bag that is tied tightly to exclude air and retard the fermentation process. Exhibits generally consist of 8-10 pounds of silage that represent the corn crop. Exhibitors are often asked to include a statement about hybrid maturity, date planted, population, and date cut. Use these criteria when judging:

Preservation: Corn silage should have a natural color. It should also have a very mild, clean, slightly sharp odor and taste, which indicates the correct amount of acidity for proper preservation. Silage should not have a musty, moldy, or burned odor. High moisture silages are usually the ones with strong odors. If a sample feels slimy or moisture is left in your hand when you squeeze it, the silage has too much moisture.

Crop Quality: Look for corn silage with a high grain content, which makes it a superior livestock feed.

Scorecard for Judging Corn Silage Exhibits:

Preservation	60
Crop Quality	40
Total	100

Judging Criteria for Baled Hay Exhibits:

Exhibits must be from this year's hay crop. Hay in the bale should represent the maturity of the field harvested. All hay bales must be cured, i.e., air-dried down to safe storage moisture. An exhibit represents a section of bale 2-12 inches thick, depending upon the fair. The sample should be firm, neat, and attractively packed. The exhibitor or the fair may provide clear plastic bags or some plastic bands to display the exhibit. Counties may also require the exhibitor to give the species, approximate grass percent, which crop cutting or the date cut, and the approximate stage of maturity when cut. Use these criteria when judging:

Maturity: Maturity influences both yield and composition of hay. Highest quality legume hay is cut when 1/10 of the field is in bloom. Highest quality grass hay is cut before flowering. Young plants are higher in protein, mineral, and carotene than old plants. They are also more tender and palatable, and less fibrous.

Leafiness: In legumes, percentage of leaves is the best index of feed value. Leaves of alfalfa hay contain over twice as much crude protein as stems; stems contain over twice as much crude fiber as leaves. Leafiness is not a major factor in grass hay.

Color: A high percentage of natural green color in hay indicates early cutting, good curing, pleasant aroma, high palatability, freedom from must or mold, and a relatively high carotene content. Storage of hay causes the loss of some color, especially if the hay has a high moisture content, is tightly packed, and has poor ventilation.

Foreign Matter: Bales should be free from weeds and trash.

Condition: Refers to the soundness of hay when it is well cured. Unsound hay has too much moisture, has not cured properly, and smells musty or moldy.

Scorecard for Judging Baled Hay Exhibits:

Maturity	20
Leafiness	20
Color	20
Foreign Matter	20
Condition	20
Total	100

Judging Criteria for Hay Sheaf Exhibits:

Exhibits must be from this year's crop. All hay sheaf samples should be cured out at proper stage of maturity. Sheaves are exhibited by hanging upside down. Use these criteria when judging:

Leafiness: Alfalfa sheaves should contain a high percentage of leaves, which represents an early cutting.

Condition: The hay should be dry and properly cured. Sheaves should not smell musty or moldy.

Preparation of Sheaf: Winning sheaves are built by selecting quality individual plants and carefully preserving the leaves and green color. Exhibitors should cut stems about four inches above the soil. Use the full length of the harvested plant. Place the plants in a cool, dark room to dry them to about 40% moisture. Excessive drying will cause the leaves to shatter when constructing the sheaf. Sheaves should be neatly and securely tied, usually with three bands. They should be tied tightly to measure 4-8 inches in diameter at the center band. After tying, trim the butt end of the sheaf with a fine toothed saw, knife, or shears. Sheaves which are to be exhibited should be stored in a dry, cool, dark room by hanging upside down.

Maturity: Highest quality legume hay is cut when one-tenth of the field is in bloom. Highest quality grass hay is cut before flowering.

Foreign Matter: Sheaves should be free from weeds and trash.

Scorecard for Judging Hay Sheaf Exhibits:

Leafiness	30
Condition	20
Preparation of Sheaf	20
Maturity	15
Foreign Matter	15
Total	100

Judging Criteria for Hay Silage Exhibits:

Haylage must be fermented in a silo and come from the current crop. Fresh “green chop” is not allowed. Some county fairs require that haylage samples be exhibited in a five-quart ice cream pail or similar container with cover on. Other fairs require a clear plastic bag that is tied tightly to exclude air and retard the fermentation process. Exhibits generally consist of 8-10 pounds of haylage that represent the forage crop. Exhibitors may be asked to include a statement about species, approximate grass percent, which crop or cutting, date cut, stage of maturity when cut, and preservation method used. Use these criteria when judging:

Preservation: Hay silage should have a natural color. It should also have a very mild, clean, slightly sharp odor and taste, which indicates the correct amount of acidity for proper preservation. Silage should not have a musty, moldy, or burned odor. High moisture silages are usually the ones with strong odors. If a sample feels slimy or moisture is left in your hand when you squeeze it, the silage has too much moisture.

Crop Quality: Look for top crop quality when judging hay silage. Grasses and legumes have higher digestibility and contain more protein in the early stages of growth.

Scorecard for Judging Hay Silage Exhibits:

Preservation	60
Crop Quality	40
Total	100

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.

Scorecard for Judging Small Grain Sheaf Exhibits:

Maturity	40
Condition	40
Preparation of Sheaf	20
Total	100

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.

Scorecard for Judging Threshed Small Grain Exhibits:

Condition	40
Single Seed Variety	30
Free of Weed Seeds	30
Total	100