

Stock team places tenth at Chicago

by John Russnogle

CHICAGO—While many Nebraska fans were anxiously watching the nationally televised Nebraska-Oklahoma football game on Thanksgiving Day the University of Nebraska-Lincoln livestock judging team had other competition to worry about. The team competed at the International Livestock Exposition in Chicago the Saturday of its Thanksgiving vacation.

The International features some of the best livestock used in the United States plus a menagerie of people, exhibits and displays.

The UNL team placed 10th out of 36 teams competing in the university judging competition. Big Eight teams fared as well at Chicago as they do in national football rankings. Five of the top 11 teams were from the Big Eight conference.

Teams came from as far as California, Florida and Pennsylvania to compete in the contest.

International competition includes breeding and market classes for swine, sheep and cattle. Adults compete in the open class division and 4-H and FFA members compete in the junior division.

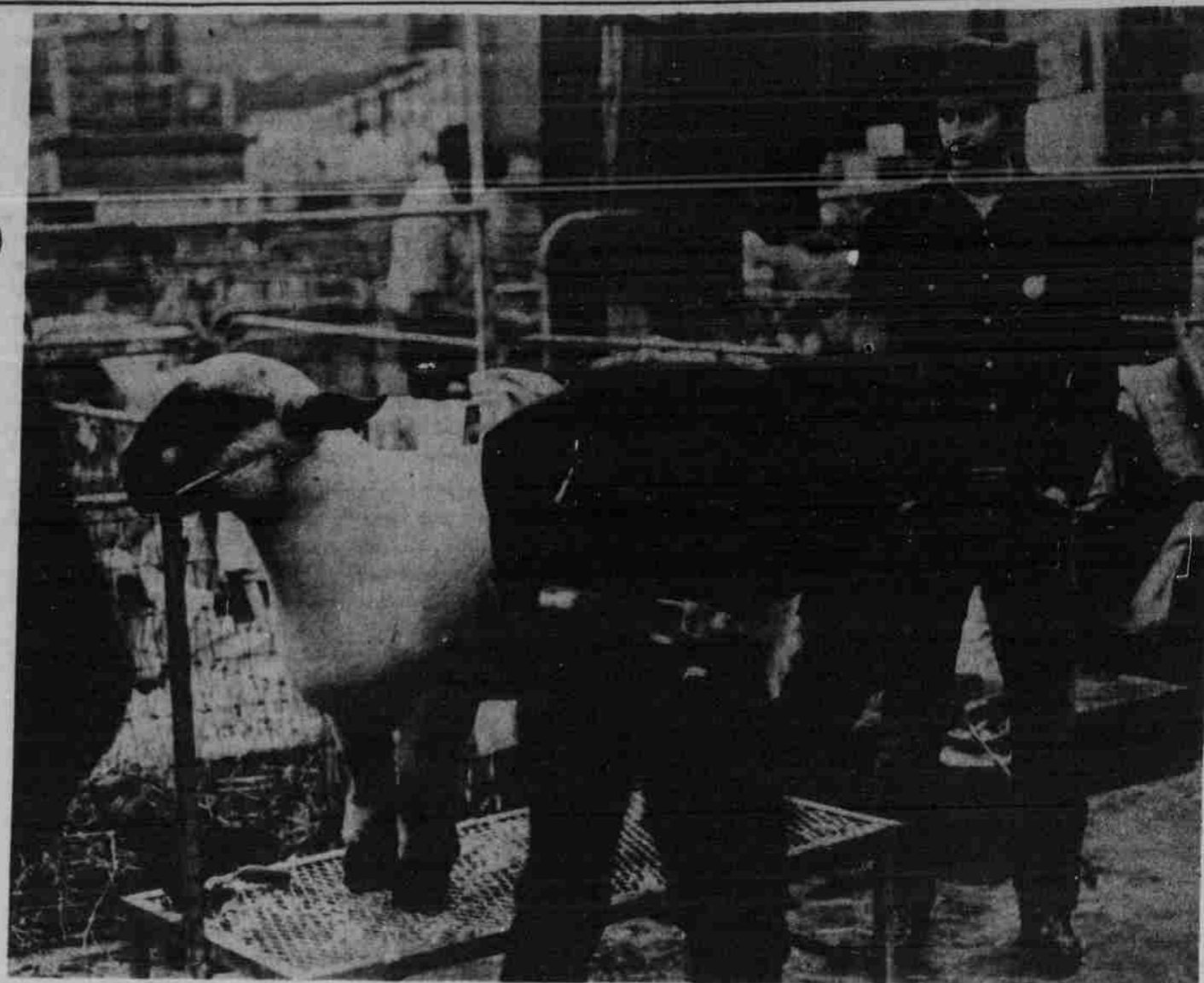
There is a marked difference between the people who come to the International to exhibit livestock and those who come to look.

Livestock producers dressed in jeans, boots and cowboy hats seem at ease in the cement pavilion which separates them from the near-by ghetto. Exhibitors busily wash and groom their animals in preparation for the livestock shows. The sheep's wool is repeatedly carded and trimmed until it has the appearance of a fine bristled brush.

Hair coats of cattle are oiled and coiffed until every hair is groomed to the owners' satisfaction. The whole process demands an outlay of equipment which competes with that used by a licensed beautician.

Chicago residents who came to the International seemed hesitant as if in a foreign country. Their main concern was watching where they walked to prevent soiling their shoes.

One little girl pointed to a pen of sheep and tugged at her father's coat while saying she wanted to stop and see the "cows." Livestock owners often are amused with the wide-eyed looks of both adults and



children when they see animals up close for the first time.

The livestock was not the only entertainment at the International. An entire section of the Exposition building was partitioned off for various pinball games and an ice hockey version of football. Many youngsters who were quickly bored with the livestock found hours of amusement with the machines.

One nationally prominent cattle producer set up a booth which featured live cattle, slides and brochures advertising the cattle.

Once exhibitors took their animals to the show ring to be judged, the atmosphere changed.

Exhibitors displayed their animals to the critical eye of the judge while family members and friends crowded around the edge of the show ring. Whoops of excitement and looks expressing "Well, maybe next year" surrounded the ring as the judges made their final placings.

Livestock team develops skills

Livestock judging team members are taught their evaluative skills in a series of three regular curriculum classes beginning their junior year.

The students develop a background knowledge of what are commonly accepted as contemporary ideals in cattle, sheep, hogs and horses, according to R.B. Warren, livestock judging team coach. Evaluations of animals in respect to fat cover, cutability and predictability of carcass merit are also studied, he said.

An average of 55 students enroll in the beginning livestock judging class. Nine to 10 students are chosen from the class to compete in national judging contests.

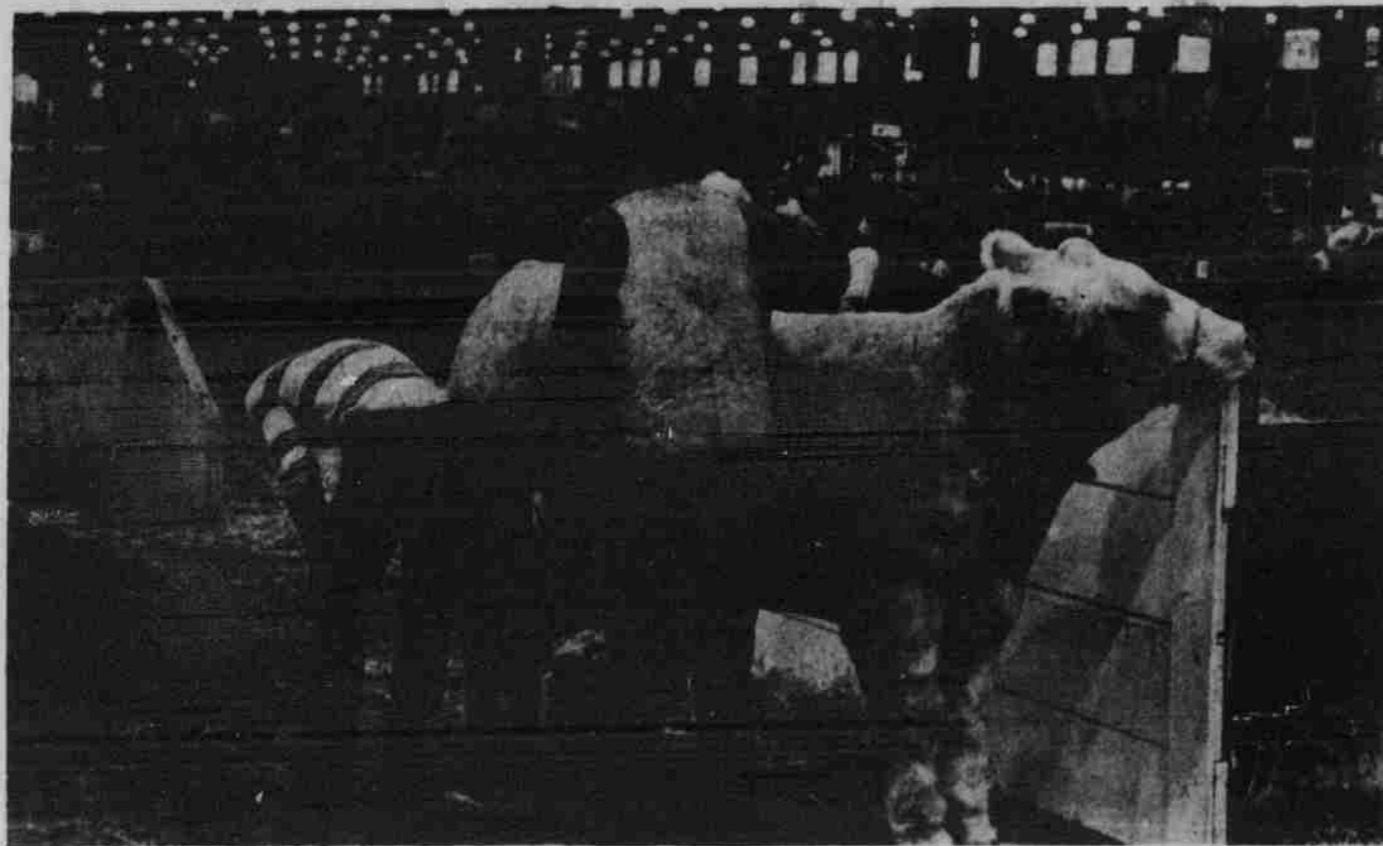
Team members travel to events in Fort Worth, Denver, Kansas City and Chicago. Their expenses are paid by an Ak-Sar-Ben grant given to the Agriculture College. Warren said the team also has off-campus workouts for which the team members must pay their own food and lodging expenses.

The judging contests are divided into two parts—the actual animal evaluation and reasons, an oral presentation explaining the evaluations.

Twelve classes of four animals each are judged. Reasons must be given on eight of the classes. The 12 classes include both market and breeding animals. Hogs, sheep and cattle are judged.

Although Warren, who has coached since 1957, has never had a team win first place in national competition, his teams have consistently placed highly. Many team members have won first place honors in single livestock divisions. The highest a UNL team has placed at Chicago was second in 1964. In other years it has ranked consistently in the top 10 teams.

Most team members remain in agriculture-related fields after graduation, Warren said. Typical jobs for graduates are county extension agents, bankers, livestock buyers, University professors and high school teachers.



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