

**\*EXCERPTS FROM THE  
DISCUSSION MEET MANUAL  
AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Contest Objectives</b>	1
<b>Background Information</b>	2
<b>Contestant Qualifications</b>	3
<b>Helpful Hints for Contestants</b>	4
<b>Contest Format</b>	5
<b>Contest Structure</b>	6
Orientations	6
Contest	6
Room Layout	7
Contest Flow	7

\*You may request the full manual from Dana Thompson at 970-454-1881 or [dthompson@colofb.com](mailto:dthompson@colofb.com)

## **Contest Objectives**

Farm Bureau's strength depends on its members' ability to analyze agricultural problems and decide on solutions that best meet their needs. The Discussion Meet is an activity designed to build these crucial skills in young, active farmers and ranchers. By participating, members build basic discussion skills, develop a keen understanding of important agricultural issues and explore how groups can pool knowledge to reach consensus and solve problems.

As a leadership training and self-improvement activity, the Discussion Meet experience will:

1. Stimulate logical thinking and a desire for accurate information.
2. Develop a concise and direct manner of speaking.
3. Improve the ability to listen.
4. Aid the participant in overcoming timidity or stage fright.
5. Assist the individual in the practice of giving and receiving criticism in a helpful manner.
6. Teach the value of compromise.
7. Develop leaders for effective problem solving through group discussion.

## **Background Information**

- The Discussion Meet is a contest promoted by the American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmer & Rancher Committee.
- The Discussion Meet is designed to simulate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation are expected from each committee member.
- The contestants discuss a pre-selected topic.
- The four fundamental bases of general discussion are
  - Constructive Criticism
  - Cooperation
  - Communication
  - Problem Solving
- The discussion should not be "conversation" or aimless talk, nor should the participant take the role of a persuasive speaker. The participant should try to cooperatively shed light on the problem and tentatively retain a flexible position.
- A successful participant is a productive thinker rather than an emotional persuader. Sometimes it's reasonable to change positions whenever new information and ideas are presented.
- This is not a panel symposium wherein each participant, in turn, makes a presentation, with the moderator ending the session with a summary. Rather, it is an exercise in cooperative problem solving, with the questions, answers and statements coming from any person at any time.

## Contestant Qualifications

1. The AFBF Discussion Meet is for winners or alternate winners of State Farm Bureau Discussion Meet contests. The contestants must come from states with a recognized YF&R program.
2. Contestants shall be voting Farm Bureau members between the ages of 18 and 35. They shall not have reached their 36th birthday by January 31<sup>st</sup> of the year in which they will compete at the AFBF Annual Meeting.
3. Individuals who have competed in a previous AFBF Discussion Meet are ineligible.
4. Past and present AFBF YF&R committee members are ineligible.
5. Contestants must be actively involved in production agriculture to be eligible.
6. States should screen contestants so that professional speakers do not compete. Professional speakers are those who have received a fee, royalty or honorarium for speaking (i.e., paid speaking appearances or speaking engagements) within 24 months prior to this annual contest. This excludes reimbursement for travel or expenses attendant to the appearance.
7. County, State and American Farm Bureau employees are not eligible.

## Helpful Hints For Contestants

- Study as much material as possible relating to the overall topic. Sources: library, newspapers, magazines, Farm Bureau policies, county, state, and American Farm Bureau publications and conversations with experts or knowledgeable people.
- The Discussion Meet should be a conflict of ideas, not personalities. **Remember this is a discussion, not a debate.**
- Be prepared to ask questions, state facts and opinions, and urge others to be specific.
- Be aware of the audience, but generally address the panel. Speak loud enough to be heard by the whole audience.
- Participate whenever your contribution will further the discussion. Do not monopolize the discussion.
- Make notes of key points as the discussion proceeds for use in summary statement.
- Use the one minute of quiet time to organize your summary statement.
- Stand and make your closing statement to the audience. Use accepted speech techniques. Stay within the time limit.

## Contest Format

1. All contest facilitators and contestants will meet in the pre-assigned contest room ten minutes prior to the start of the contest to receive last minute comments by the room chairman.
2. No contestant notes are allowed at the table prior to the moderator starting the meet.
3. The room chairman will call the meeting to order, announce the topic to be discussed, and introduce the timekeeper and moderator.
4. The moderator will introduce the contestants and re-announce the topic to be discussed. He/she will give each of the contestants, in voluntary order, the opportunity to make a 30-second opening statement directed to the audience.
5. The timekeeper may stand or otherwise indicate when 30 seconds has elapsed. Judges may subtract points at their discretion for contestants who abuse the time limit.
6. The moderator will then indicate the opportunity for open discussion, which will continue for a total of 25 minutes in the Round Robins and Sweet Sixteen contests and 35 minutes in the Final Four contest. The discussion should be directed to the fellow contestants during open discussion.
7. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator when five minutes of open discussion time remains in the Round Robins and Sweet Sixteen and ten minutes in the Final Four. The moderator will indicate to contestants the time remaining by raising a table tent. He/She will ensure each contestant has seen the table tent before it is removed.
8. If the discussion is lagging, the moderator may close the discussion at this time.
9. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator when 25 minutes in the Round Robin and Sweet Sixteen contests and 35 minutes in the Final Four contest have elapsed.
10. The moderator will call for open discussion to stop and for one minute of quiet time allowing the contestants to consider a closing statement.
11. The moderator will give each of the contestants, in voluntary order, the opportunity to make a one-minute closing statement directed to the audience.
12. The moderator will recognize the judges and request them to leave the room with the room chairman to finalize the tabulation of their score sheets. Judges are not to confer with each other until the room chairman has collected their tabulated score sheets.
13. The next round topic to be discussed will be announced.
14. The moderator will thank the panel and ask the audience to recognize their efforts. The moderator may then request the contestants to each discuss their personal farming/ranching operations for the audience.

## Contest Structure

### Orientations

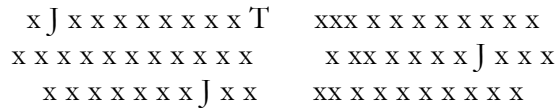
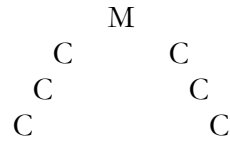
1. Discussion Meet Orientation
  - a. Held Saturday evening.
  - b. All contestants are required to attend.
  - c. Roll call of contestants.
  - d. Release of Discussion Meet topic time schedule.
    - First Round topic will be announced during Saturday evening Orientation and again in contest room by Room Chair 15 minutes prior to start of First Round
    - Each subsequent round topic announced at close of prior round
  - e. Distribute contest room locations.
2. Judges' Orientation
  - a. Held Saturday evening.
  - b. Review judge's duties in **Roles and Responsibilities of Contest Facilitators** along with any announcements.
  - c. Review timing sequences.
  - d. Allow time for questions.
  - e. Roll call of judges.
  - f. Distribute contest room locations.
3. Volunteer Orientation
  - a. Held 30 minutes before contest begins.
  - b. Roll call of timekeepers.
  - c. Distribution of time schedule.
  - d. Distribution of time cards.
  - e. Distribute contest room locations and Round Robin bracket sheets.

### Contest

1. All contestants will compete in the first two rounds of the contest, known as "Round Robins." Round Robins will have four to six contestants. The top sixteen contestants from the Round Robins will be put into a "Sweet Sixteen" round. The Sweet Sixteen rounds will have four groups of four contestants from which the winner of each group will be selected to move on to the final round. The four finalists will compete in the "Final Four" round to determine the winner.
2. Judges are not permitted to attend any rounds preceding those in which they judge.
3. The physical arrangements of the Discussion Meet rooms should provide for two tables at the front of the room facing each other and the audience. Half the participants should be seated at each table with the moderator in the center. Name cards identifying contestants should be

visible to both the moderator and audience. Cards should show only the contestant's name, not their state.

## Room Layout



M = Moderator      C = Contestant      J = Judge      T = Timer      X = Audience

## Contest Flow

Generally speaking, the discussion should follow these steps:

1. State problem or need.
2. Explore, define, understand problem or need.
3. Identify causes of problem or need.
4. Elaborate all possible alternative solutions.
5. Evaluate and compare alternatives.
6. Test and project what appears to be the best solution.
7. Arrive at ways to implement the solution.