



Guidelines for 4-H Animal Show Judges

Many people find judging 4-H shows very rewarding. As a judge you have an opportunity to contribute in a positive way to the 4-H member's total project experience. By following a few simple guidelines you can maximize both the positive impact on youth and your own pleasure, while minimizing the problems you may encounter when judging.

Before the Show:

- Confirm your willingness to judge the show as soon as you receive your invitation to judge.
- Should you be unable to judge for any reason, contact the person who hired you as soon as possible. If you can, suggest some names of judges who could possibly take your place.
- Meet the superintendent one half hour before the show for a briefing. At this time you can clarify any questions you may have regarding the rules you were sent prior to the show. If the superintendent doesn't mention any special circumstances regarding any of the exhibitors, you should ask. It's important for you to know if you are judging exhibitors with any physical or mental challenges.
- Clarify with the superintendent the time frame for the show and pace yourself accordingly.
- Let the superintendent know your travel plans and mode of transportation; be sure they understand any special needs you might have for ground transportation, lodging, etc.

During the Show:

- You, as the judge, have the responsibility of keeping current and up-to-date regarding the breed or breeds of animals you will be judging. You should also be up-to-date regarding current styles of fitting those animals. If in doubt, ask your superintendent if 4-H has any guidelines you are to follow.
- You place (rank) each class to the best of your ability. Maintain consistency throughout the judging process.
- Should you have any questions during a class regarding animal or youth eligibility for the class, it's your responsibility to discuss the question with the superintendent. The superintendent determines eligibility.
- Be alert to any evidence of animal mishandling hitting, kicking, screaming, etc.
- Regard shows as educational experiences, and yourself, the judge, as the teacher. Maintain a positive, supportive relationship with the exhibitors. Novice show persons, in particular, need a supportive, encouraging environment.

- Place emphasis on those things over which the youth have the most control; this will vary with the age of the child.
- Speak to each individual youth exhibitor one-on-one. At that time, give specific praise and constructive suggestions. You should give each youth exhibitor some positive comments during this interaction. Leave each exhibitor with at least one parting compliment.
- Speak clearly over the microphone and give oral reasons for each class you place (depending upon the policy of the show). Be sure to give positive statements for placing each animal during the reasons process. Give suggestions and constructive criticism during your private one-on-one meetings with each exhibitor.
- Place each youth according to the Danish system, which scores exhibitors individually on the basis of their performance. Participants don't compete against each other, rather they are judged as to how close they come to a perfect performance.
- A blue ribbon indicates achievement of 90 percent to 100 percent of a perfect score, a red ribbon indicates achievement of 80 percent to 89 percent of a perfect score, and a white ribbon indicates achievement of 79 percent or less. Their animal is evaluated as to how close it comes to the ideal. Every youth who meets the criteria for a blue award receives one. Every child meeting the criteria for a red award receives one and the same is true for a white award. You may have a class where every youth meets the blue award criteria; in that case each child would receive a blue ribbon.
- In a situation where no youth achieves the criteria established for a blue ribbon, no blue ribbon is awarded.
- Communicate clearly with ring clerks to help them properly record placings.
- Make yourself available to the exhibitors for a short time after the show to answer their questions.
- Above all, be friendly, talk to the exhibitors, smile and put them at ease.

Created by: Sally W. Barney, Extension Specialist, 4-H Youth Development, 2004

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer. UNH, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, and New Hampshire counties cooperating. Our programs and policies are consistent with pertinent Federal and State laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity(including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.