



Hiring a Horse Show Judge

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Hiring a judge for a horse show is one of the most important aspects of horse show management, but it may also be the most difficult. The success of the horse show is often dependant on the performance of the judge, so finding qualified individuals can put a lot of stress on you as show manager. By following these guidelines, however, you will have the confidence you need to know the right judge was hired for the job.

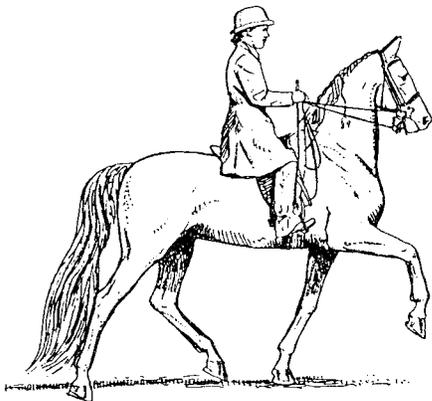
How to Choose a Judge

There are many ways to find the most appropriate judge for your horse show, including referring to approved lists and by word of mouth. Breed associations, such as the American Quarter Horse Association, put out a list of their approved judges every year. These judges must pass a rigorous series of tests that includes several rulebook examinations and live judging, and they must have plenty of experience. Most states, including Kentucky, have their own list for both open and 4-H judges. Each state has a specific set of requirements, and most include a rulebook examination, live judging, and written recommendations from those in the horse industry. Word-of-mouth recommendations can also be valuable in choosing a horse show judge, especially when they come from those you know are trustworthy sources.

Characteristics of a Good Judge

Fairness, honesty, and professionalism are all key characteristics of a good judge. A professional judge does not allow certain biases to affect his or her placing of a class. A fair and honest judge places the classes based on the best performance and according to a set of standards. He or she is not blind to mistakes made. The success of your show is dependent on a fair, honest, and professional judge.

If you have never met the judge before, these qualities may be difficult to measure. In that case, a judge's evaluations and letters of recommendation come in handy to you as a show manager. Feel free to ask for letters of recommendations from the judge to determine how other show managers describe him or her. Call the state associations and request a copy of the judge's evaluations on file. This will give you enough information to temporarily determine if this judge will match well with your horse show.



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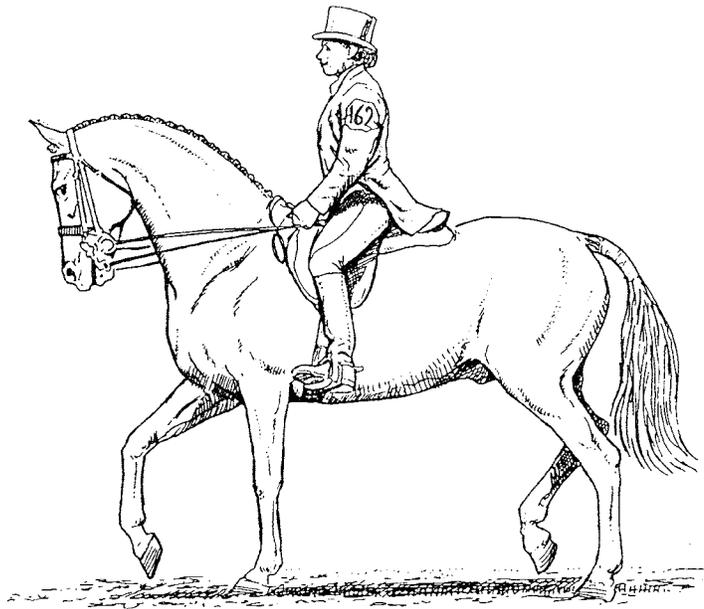
Contacting the Judge

Once you have found the judge of your choice, it is now time to call and interact with him or her on the phone or, if possible, in person. You should introduce yourself and the organization you are representing. Then you may begin discussing the details of the show: name, date, time, number of classes, level of competition, size of show, estimated length of show, age of riders, discipline(s) of riding, etc. If the judge is available for your show, begin discussing his or her fee. In most cases, the judge will charge a judging fee on a per-day basis. Make sure you ask what is included (or not included) in that fee, such as mileage, meals, tolls, or lodging. Meals and lodging can either be paid out of show funds and secured by the show committee or paid by the judge, who can turn in receipts for reimbursement.

Most people ask if judging fees are negotiable. The answer is not a simple one. Judges do realize that every horse show works on a budget, but you as show manager should also realize that the judge has incurred expenses for training and continuing education. Judges with more training and experience may charge more than judges with fewer years of experience. The average price of a well-established, breed-carded judge is \$500 a day. In contrast, the average price of a less-experienced, novice judge is \$150 a day. If you calculate the hourly wage for a 14-hour show day, the amount comes out to be \$35 an hour for the experienced judge and \$10 an hour for the novice judge. Consider your budget and make sure you hire the best judge available for the price you can afford.

Another point to discuss with the judge is when payment will be received. Most judges are paid for their expenses on the day of the show and will assume so if not told otherwise. However, in some fairs, show managers are required to turn in all of the judge's expenses in order to pay out money. Therefore, let your judge know exactly how and when he or she will be paid.

Several classes, such as games (barrels, poles, etc.), jumper classes, or fun classes (egg and spoon, etc.) are fun or timed events that may not need a judge present. You should inform the judge if they will need to be present for these types of classes.



Keeping your judge informed will relieve a lot of stress on the day of the show for both you and your judge.

What to Send the Judge

Once you have hired a judge for your show, you will need to type up a contract. The contract should outline the following:

- Date, time, and location of the show
- Judge's name and address
- Judges fees and reimbursement for lodging, mileage, etc.
- Your contact information (name, address, phone number)
- Your signature and date
- A place for the judge to sign and date

Make sure to also include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with the contract so the judge can easily sign and send it back to you.

In addition to the contract, you should also consider sending the judge the following items:

- Map and directions to the show location
- Admission and parking passes, if necessary; many large shows or even county fairs will charge admission and/or parking, and your judge should not be expected to pay these fees
- Show bill
- Rules and regulations for the show
- A list of the classes that will require patterns

Keeping your judge informed and prepared for the show will relieve a lot of stress on the day of the show for both you and your judge.

It's Show Time!

About one week prior to the show, make sure to call the judge to confirm the date and time of the show. This will also give the judge a chance to ask any last-minute questions as well. Your state may require the judge to arrive 30 minutes to 1 hour prior to the start of the show. If so, make sure to inform the judge.

When your judge arrives, make sure you are the first to greet him or her. Introduce your judge to the show announcer and ring steward. Sit down in a fairly quiet and private location to go over the show schedule with the judge and ring steward. You will need to discuss how many placings the judge will need in each class (usually three, six, or 10) and any other awards that are necessary (Champion, Reserve, Danish Ribbon System). Do not limit the judge's decisions by the number of ribbons that you have on hand. Allow each judge to make his or her own decision on placing each class, regardless of how many ribbons the show committee has available.

Plan at least a 30-minute lunch break, let the judge decide what he or she would like to eat, and assign someone to bring the judge's lunch at the appropriate time. Allow bathroom breaks when necessary, and always have an escort available to ensure your judge's privacy away from contestants. Although contestants may want to ask the judge questions during the break, this may slow down the progression of the show. Inform all contestants that the judge will speak to them after all the classes are over for the day.

Once the show is over, sit down with the judge and ask for a wrap-up of the day's classes. Then, if payment is to be received at the end of the show, it's time to hand over the check. You should ask for the mileage and any receipts for lodging and meals, if applicable, for documentation to justify the agreed-upon payment (contract plus receipts).

Using these guidelines, you should now be equipped with the correct way to hire a horse show judge. Good luck showing!

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