



# JUDGING SHOWS ON A PROFESSIONAL LEVEL

## MISSION STATEMENT:

Holstein Association USA, Inc. supports members that wish to judge shows on a professional level by maintaining a list of qualified individuals and providing continuing education and certification opportunities for them. Promoting U.S. judges around the world also supports the global market opportunities for U.S. Registered Holstein® genetics.

## JOB DESCRIPTION:

Judging shows on a professional level requires more than dairy cattle evaluation ability. Personal conduct, communication and professionalism are equally as important. Judges must be:

- **COMPETENT**
  - Fairly evaluate dairy cattle based on the Unified Scorecard.
- **CONFIDENT**
  - Be comfortable being the authority for the day, including your ring presence and reasons. Be convincing on the microphone, speaking loud and clear, using professional, descriptive terms.
- **COURAGEOUS**
  - Be willing to do the right thing. Don't let politics get in the way of placings. Do not bias decisions based on connections with breeders, owners or leadspeople of the animals or the animals themselves.
- **CONSISTENT**
  - Create placing patterns that are easy for the exhibitor and viewers to follow and understand. Give each animal a fair look and evaluation, utilizing the same pattern from class to class in the ring.
- **CREDIBLE**
  - Stay in tune with what types of cattle are winning, and what the current trends are with traits that are desirable or not. As a breeder, owner, or show spectator, build credibility through your involvement. Do not become barn-blind or show favoritism to the kind of animals you choose to breed yourself.
  - If you are involved with breeding, buying or selling show cattle, minimize conflicts of interest with animals you may be judging, but if presented with any, disclose and deal with them in a fair and transparent manner.
- **COURTEOUS**
  - Maintain a high level of professionalism in presence and word choices at all times. Recognize that judging is an honor, not an entitlement. Show appreciation, humility, and respect for the job that is to be done. Serve as an ambassador for the show world and broader dairy industry.



## PROFESSIONALISM EXPECTATIONS

### WHEN ACCEPTING A JUDGING ASSIGNMENT

- Triple-check your personal and work calendars to ensure you have the date(s) open; confirm the date, time and expected length of the show.
- Clarify exactly what show management is asking you to judge (open show, junior show, both, other breeds, etc.).
- If it is a youth event, find out if you will be expected to judge showmanship.
- Discuss with show management what your payment will be, and what expenses they plan to cover for you (airline tickets, mileage reimbursement, hotel, etc.). If the show is covering some expenses, ask for guidelines and documentation requirements for reimbursement. Understand that judging a show is most commonly a break-even experience.
- Make sure you know exactly where the show is located and confirm directions with show management. Do not just rely on a GPS or Google Maps the morning of the show.
- If flying in for a show
  - Allow ample time to arrive at the destination prior to the show. When possible, arrive the day before the show to allow for unexpected air travel delays.
  - Confirm whether you will be renting a car/cab, or if the show will arrange for someone to pick you up. Always share your flight itinerary with your show contact.
  - Allow ample time to complete judging the show and travel back to the airport. Do not put yourself in a position where you have to rush or worry about finishing judging the show because you have to catch a flight.
  - Get a main contact person's cell phone number in case questions or delays arise, and make sure they have your contact information also.
  - If you are judging other major shows, check agreements to ensure that no restrictions are presented, and conflicts of interest are avoided when possible.



## PROFESSIONALISM EXPECTATIONS

### BEFORE YOU TRAVEL TO THE SHOW

- Re-read the contract, agreement or your notes on details of the judging assignment.
- Bring contract (if applicable) or notes, show grounds address, contact name and phone number.
- Research what the parking situation will be. If you need a parking pass, bring that along. Be aware of how you get to show ring in a way that avoids going through the barn and exhibitor interaction.
- Bring printed copy of your biography you want read as your judge's introduction by the show announcer.
- Dress professionally, yet comfortable and appear well-groomed. Consider footwear, dark pants, shirts that may hide sweat in the summer. Bring a spare shirt, just in case.
- Be aware of drinking too much coffee on your way to the fairgrounds to avoid having to take untimely restroom breaks.

### THE MORNING OF THE SHOW

- Clear your mind to be fair to every animal that enters the ring. Don't study animals or previous placings ahead of time online. Don't go online and look at pictures from the show or take phone calls at the show.
- Arrive early to meet show management and your ring steward.
- Deliver your introduction to the announcer.
- Turn your cell phone off and leave it in your car or at the announcer's table.
- Make sure you have a clear understanding of the order of classes and any special classes the show might have (intermediate champion, champion bred and owned, best udder, group classes, futurity class, etc.)
- Develop a plan for show ring flow before the show begins.
  - Communicate with the ring steward on expectations and use them wisely.
  - Determine where you'll stand to evaluate animals as they circle with consistent lighting and minimal shadows or glare.
  - Consider how you'll line animals up for each class. Leave room to allow for a first (possibly second) pull without running out of space and allowing yourself room to observe them from a decent distance.
  - In final line-up, rear ends should face the audience.
  - Consider how you'll have animals exit, especially those you'll want to parade while you give reasons.
  - If utilizing an Associate Judge, communicate with them on expectations.



## PROFESSIONALISM EXPECTATIONS

### DURING THE SHOW

- Maintain good posture – professional and confident.
- Don't chew gum or tobacco while in ring.
- Work classes with a steady pace.
- If you have to switch animals in line, make it positive by moving cattle up in line, rather than down.
- Talk positively in your reasons and be careful not to criticize.
- Treat all exhibitors with respect, as it is an honor and a privilege to be placing their cattle.
- Deal with conflicts of interest that may arise with the utmost transparency. A conflict of interest is a situation in which financial or other personal considerations have the potential (real or perceived), to compromise or bias a person's judgment and objectivity.

- Avoiding conflict is the best way to deal with it. If conflict can not be avoided, notify show management immediately to develop a game plan. When appropriate, share the situation and response in your reasons so the audience is aware.
- When selling an animal, have a conversation with the new owner asking them not to show where you are judging
- Use an Associate Judge if conflicts occur.
- Remember, what is good for the show is also good for your future as a judge.
- Be objective and fair.
- Judge the animals as you see them that day.
- Don't be influenced by who is on the halter, what farm they are from, or how much money they paid for the animal.
- You can never go wrong if you are doing the right thing.

### AFTER THE SHOW

- Give closing remarks in your reasons to thank exhibitors, show management, ring steward, and volunteers. Be respectful of the amount of work that went into putting on the show. Do not use your closing remarks as a time to grandstand and put the spotlight on yourself; the focus should be the cattle, not the judge.
- Before leaving the showring at the end of the day, check with show management a final time to ensure they have everything they need from you and you have fulfilled their expectations.
- If you plan to walk the barns after the show, divide your time fairly between all exhibitors; don't spend more time with the winners.
- Act as if you are under a magnifying glass. Exhibitors are keenly aware of every move a judge makes after the show. Don't do anything you wouldn't want the whole world to know you did.
- Leave a great impression.



## GUIDELINES FOR JUDGING SHOWS

### PLACING A CLASS

1. Standing in the center of the ring, watch each animal enter the ring. Make mental note of your first impressions.
2. As the class circles, observe and compare animals while on the move.
  - a. Pay attention to:
    - i. Feet & legs (mobility, strength of pastern, cleanliness of hocks, crampiness)
    - ii. Balance
3. Move in closer to inspect the first animal that entered the ring. Observe her closely from each side, front/head and behind.
  - a. Pay attention to:
    - i. Strength/Width
    - ii. Udder quality
  - b. Ask questions:
    - i. Heifer birthdates – note any animals that are young for their class
    - ii. Cows – stage of lactation, number of lactations
4. Continue along the circle, inspecting every animal in the class. Mentally allocate the animal into desirability categories – High, Medium or Low.
5. After all animals have been inspected, move back the center of the ring to observe the entire class. At this stage, you might picture how you would line up the class (or if it's a larger class, at least the top handful).
6. Maintain a calm demeanor and a straight face.
7. Begin gesturing to leadspeople to call the animals into an initial side-by-side line up in the middle of the ring. Make assertive, strong, clear points when you gesture. If the class is large, you might have to put them in two line-ups for your top and bottom halves.
8. Review your line-up, making sure you observe the animals from the front as well as behind.
9. Step back away from your line-up for another inspection. Position yourself as if you are a spectator watching from outside the ring, so you can observe from the same angle and viewpoint.
10. If you had a bottom half line-up, give them one more evaluation to make sure you didn't overlook an animal.
11. If there are some close placings, particularly on the top few animals, you may want to do one more side-by-side line-up in a different order.
12. Maintain a good distance from the animals throughout the class, and do not be afraid to step back or away to get a clearer perspective. Sometimes being too close to the animals, you might miss some things.



## GUIDELINES FOR JUDGING SHOWS

13. If you make any switches, always make it positive. Signal an animal upward in line, and never signal an animal to move downward in line.
14. As you do one last review of your line-up, begin thinking of the main reasons for each placing as you walk down the line.
15. Starting with your winner, signal the animals in your final placing order to circle, moving into your final placing line-up.
16. When the animals are in the final line-up, you may want to give some brief reasons directly to the leadspeople about their animals.
17. Signal show management when your placing is final and you're prepared to give reasons.

### GIVING SHOWRING REASONS

- “Practice before you play” – review reasons terms and practice a couple sets before the show so you aren't rusty.
- A good way to practice is to record yourself giving reasons (either video or just audio). Listen closely when you play it back. Did you speak clearly? Did you speak too fast or slow? Did you speak with enthusiasm? Did you use the same term several times?
- Hold the microphone close and steady.
- Give comparative reasons. Explain why one animal places over the next, don't just describe the animals, and don't reference people.
- Give grants when appropriate, but don't overdo it. Giving reasons in the showing is different than presenting a set of collegiate judging reasons; you don't need to make a grant on every placing. Making too many grants may make exhibitors and spectators question your confidence in the placing.
- Sell your placings! Use reasons to convince the crowd why you placed them the way you did.
- Use “real” and accurate terms. Exhibitors and spectators should be able to see and understand what you are saying.
- Don't give reasons for the entire class on the microphone. Given the size of the show and the showing, pick a certain top number of animals you can consistently give reasons for. If you feel the need to give the rest of the class reasons, have those conversations one-on-one in the final line-up before you give reasons on the microphone.
- For smaller youth shows, you may consider giving more reasons on the microphone than you would in an open show, so the audience (and parents) ringside can hear your justification, too.



# GUIDELINES FOR JUDGING SHOWS

## DEALING WITH DIFFICULT MOMENTS

Nobody is perfect, and unfortunate things happen. Try to plan ahead a few difficult scenarios that could happen so you can handle them with grace. A few situations to think about could be:

- You pull an animal in that looked good parading on the outside of the ring, but in the line-up, you realize she needs to go down a quite a bit.
- An extremely tall heifer or an over bagged cow losing her crease enters the ring.
- You point to an animal, but the wrong person pulls in.
- A leadsperson missed their pull.
- A ring steward lined animals up differently than you intended.
- You missed an animal and have her too low, but now need to figure out how to work her up.
- A leadsperson makes audible, critical comments while in the ring towards you.
- You are taking too long to place the classes and are getting pressure from show management to speed up.

## SELECTING CHAMPIONS

The show might look to you for direction of how the champion parades will occur, or perhaps they have certain traditions they adhere to for the order of champion selections and group classes. Either way, have a plan for each champion selection that's agreed to by you and show management as they enter the ring.

- Champion line-ups usually begin with all first and second place animals in contention lining up side-by-side.
- Then you have choices...
  - Pull your top contenders around and line-up head to tail, side by side or  $\frac{3}{4}$  view?
  - Leave those not in contention in the center of the ring, ask them to step aside or leave the ring?
  - Your choices may be determined by the quality/depth of the line-up, size of the show, youth vs. open show, or certain qualities of the animals you wish to showcase spectators.
  - Determine how you will announce your champions – a handshake, high five, or over the microphone. It is not appropriate to slap animals on the rump.



# HOLSTEIN ASSOCIATION USA JUDGES LIST

## PROGRAM GOALS

- Establish high standards for judges at US National Holstein Shows.
- Provide a list of judges who are highly capable of judging all levels of Holstein shows and encourage shows to select judges from the list.
- Improve exposure for those on our Judges List by offering an enhanced profile; an optional one-page summary including the judges' name, phone number, email address, photo, bio, key shows judged, and an indicator if the judge enjoys judging youth shows and showmanship.

## TO APPLY

- Application is available at [www.holsteinusa.com](http://www.holsteinusa.com), due August 1 each year.
- Applicants must agree to adhere to the Holstein Association USA Showring Policy as defined in the National Show Program.
- Applicants must have attended and received a “satisfactory” rating at a Holstein Association USA Judges Conference within a five-year period to be considered for inclusion on the Judges List.
- Applicants must be current Holstein Association USA members.

## SELECTION

- All applicants will be reviewed with respect to:
  - Resume of experience at regional, state or local shows of varying caliber and breeds
  - Positive feedback as a judge on surveys received from show management.
  - High level of professionalism both in and out of the showing.
- The Judges List is divided into two categories – National and Qualified. Those accepted onto the National Judges List will also have:
  - Recent experience judging National-level Holstein shows, or extensive experience judging regional or large state-level Holstein shows.
  - Significant experience judging similar, high-caliber shows of other breeds.
- The Judges List will be approved by the Holstein Association USA board of directors and published on the Holstein Association USA web site by the first week in December.

## QUESTIONS?

[www.holsteinusa.com/shows/judges.html](http://www.holsteinusa.com/shows/judges.html)



Scan the QR code to learn more on judging shows on a professional level.