HORSE JUDGING CONTEST DESCRIPTION OF CUTS

CUT

1   Horses are extremely similar, no obvious reason why one should be placed over the other, or, both horses have numerous faults and none supersedes the other, placing is strictly a matter of personal preference; placing varies among official judges.

2   Horses are every close, but one horse has one or two qualitative or quantitative advantages; the majority of official judges would not switch the pair, but half of the contestants could logically switch the pair.

3   Horses are of similar quality, but there is some logical placing in favor of one horse; either one horse has several advantages or one has several faults; all official judges would agree on the placing, no more than one third of contestants would be expected to switch the pair.

4   Horses are not of similar quality, one horse has several decided advantages based on many points; all experts would quickly see the placing, no guesswork or personal preference required to make placing, no more than 10% of contestants would be expected to switch the pair.

5   Large number of extreme differences between the horses; placing is obvious to everyone on first, quick observation; careful study not required for the placing, pair consists of an inferior horse vs. a consistent winner, only very inexperienced, uninformed contestants would switch the pair.

6   Horses not even comparable; differences reflective of a champion quality horse or performance vs. a horse or performance that is not of show quality.

7   Largest cut; differences reflective of a world-class halter horse vs. an extremely poor quality or lame horse; or a world-class performance horse vs. a disqualified horse.

HORSE JUDGING CONTEST GUIDELINES FOR REASON JUDGES

Philosophy and Objectives for Giving Reasons

While major emphasis in horse judging training programs is placed on students learning to evaluate horses objectively, equal importance is placed on students learning to discuss and defend judgments rendered in the process of placing a class of horses. The combined process of placing horses, then defending those placings, teaches students to be totally objective, honest and fair in their approach to evaluating horses. Further, this process of giving reasons discourages student judges from rendering opinions which may be based on personal likes and dislikes, and encourages them to render defensible judgments in regard to current standards in the horse industry.

Another major purpose for giving reasons in judging contests is that it offers an opportunity for students to learn how to think, organize thoughts, and speak about those thoughts in a refereed environment. Students who master those skills find them useful in many ways for the rest of their lives. Many leaders in the field of Animal Science had judging team experience, and they frequently point to the reasons process as significant in developing leadership abilities.

Giving reasons should be a positive, pleasant learning experience for students. Students should be encouraged, not discouraged, when giving reasons, and they should gain confidence in themselves through practice. Performance in the reasons room by students who are prepared should be evaluated from a positive view, rather than a negative view, giving every advantage possible to students who do a good job. Reasons judges should never use a negative, penalizing "fault out" system for scoring towards students and their scoring method should reflect a positive approach

Characteristics of Good Reasons

There are at least five major characteristics to consider when scoring reasons.

1. Organization. Styles of reasons will vary with individual personalities and coaching methods, but all reasons should be well organized and systematic. The basic approach is the comparison of animals in three pairs; the top pair, the middle pair, and the bottom pair. Other additions will be included and are perfectly acceptable as long as the basic organization is followed. However, reasons should not consist of a simple description of each animal. The focus should be on why one animal in a pair was placed over the other animal in that pair.

2. Relevance. Reasons should reflect the actual differences in the pair and should consist primarily of those points of comparison that were significant in the placing of the pair. Use of comparative or descriptive reasons that are irrelevant or unimportant in the placing of the pair are discouraged and should be scored lower. Judges should be alert for the so-called "canned" reasons that may sound good, but, in fact, do not fit the particular pair of horses.

3.   Accuracy. Truth is the primary consideration in scoring reasons. Students should be credited for accurate statements regardless of how the horses may be placed. Errors of omission are to be considered when the student leaves out something important, but inaccurate statements are considered the major fault in a set of reasons. A complete and accurate set of reasons should receive a high score, even when placings differ from official placings. Official judges are cautioned to listen carefully for accuracy and should not penalize the reasons score simply because the student's placing is different from the official placing. It is entirely possible for a student to receive a high reasons score with a low placing score.

4.   Terminology. Some emphasis should be placed on use of terms commonly used to discuss horses or performances. Terminology will vary among students, but it should reflect that terminology commonly used by horsemen. Major emphasis should be placed on comparative rather than descriptive terminology. However, descriptive terminology can be used to a limited extent in the opening statements and to describe faults.

5.   Presentation. Oral reasons should be presented in a poised, confident, convincing manner, but they should never convey arrogance. Loud, boisterous, arrogant delivery is not desirable and should be penalized. Likewise, shy, timid, unconvincing presentations should not receive the highest scores. Reasons should be presented in a relaxed, conversational manner. The presentation should not contain lengthy pauses and must be delivered within 2 minutes. Speaking manner will vary, but all students should use correct English. Oral reasons should be grammatically correct with proper pronunciation and enunciation of words and syllables. While good presentation is important, reasons judges are cautioned that this is not a contest of oratory at the expense of accuracy, relevancy, organization, and terminology used in discussing a particular class of horses.

Grading and Scoring Reasons

Reasons scores are to be reflective of organization, relevancy, accuracy, terminology, and presentation of reasons, regardless of the student's placing of the class. A bad placing must not automatically result in a low reasons score. If students see the differences in the horses and reflect those differences accurately in their reasons, they must not be penalized on the reasons score because their emphasis for placing the horses was different than the official judges. Placing scores will adequately reflect incorrect emphasis in placing.

Reasons should be graded, then scored as per the following outline:

Reasons Perform	Grade	Score Range
Good to Excellent	A	46-50
Above Average to Good	B	41-45
Average	C	36-40
Below Average	D	31-35
Poor	F	30 and below

A contestant who is reasonably well prepared and gets through a complete set of reasons should never receive a score less than 25.

REASONS PENALTIES

Time	Penalty
2:01-2:10	-1
2:11-2:20	-3
2:21-2:30	-6
2:31 +	-10

SUGGESTIONS FOR GIVING ORAL REASONS

Practice oral reasons by speaking to yourself as you look in a mirror, record your reasons on a tape recorder and play them back to listen for your mistakes; or present your reasons to another person. It is important to practice giving reasons; don't wait until the last minute or try to bluff your way through a contest.

A contestant must have a vivid mental picture of the class of horses being talked about. This means a mental picture of each horse in the class. A complete vocabulary of horse terms must be developed. This is best done through study and practice.

1. Make your placings on the basis of important characteristics.

2. Your reasons need not be long. Only two minutes per class is allowed in most - contests.

3. Do not use your notes when giving reasons. Learn to visualize the horses as you saw them in the class. Notes help to organize your reasons and get them ready for presentation.

4. Give your reasons in a logical sequence, and use major reasons first.

5. Do not learn one set of reasons; you will find that no two horses, and no two classes are the same.

6. Place yourself about six to ten feet, if possible, from the person to whom you are giving your reasons.

7. When giving reasons, talk in a slightly louder than ordinary tone of voice. Be aggressive, enthusiastic, and confident.

8. Always start your reasons by giving your placement. Examples: "I placed this class of aged Appaloosa mares 2-1-3-4," or "I placed this class of Appaloosa Western Pleasure Horses 1-3-4-2." Then go on to your reasons.

9. If you make a mistake or forget a point, STOP, visualize the class in your mind again, and then continue your reasons.

10. Do not bluff or say something that is not true.

11. Do not place horses on the basis of small, relatively unimportant characteristics .

12. Do not give wordy or meaningless reasons.

13. Do not use indefinite words such as better, good, best, etc. They do not explain why one horse is superior to another.

14. Do not skip from one horse in the class to another. Give your reasons on the first place horse, second place, third, and fourth in that order.

15. Speak clearly and use appropriate terms for the class of horses. Example: leads, transitions, gaits, colts, fillies, foals.

16. Be sure to compare each horse to the one you placed below it.

17. Concede or grant good points and faults regardless of the placing of the horse.

18. End your reasons strongly, or at least as strong as you started. There is a natural tendency for beginners to end weakly.

19. Give a conclusion. Example: "For these reasons I placed this class of Western Pleasure Horses 2-3-14."

20. Do not speak to other contestants during the contest. It could result in immediate disqualification for you or your team.

21. Before you give your reasons and final placement, take sufficient notes in the ring. Indicate anything special about the animals which will help you visualize the class later, such as color, markings. It is usually best to study the entire class first before you start making notes.