



GUIDELINES ON RING ETIQUETTE

for

JUDGES & OWNERS/EXHIBITORS

As Directed by the BDS Judges Committee

Updated January 2023

1) INTRODUCTION

- a) These guidelines have three important objectives.
 - i) To give guidance and recommendations to all Judges, especially to Trainee Judges and those in their first few years as a judge. These should be read in conjunction with the Rules for the Horse of the Year Show Qualifiers etc. in the BDS Yearbook/HOYS Show Rules. It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide but to assist in the smooth running of Driving Classes.
 - ii) To provide a reference for those who will have had long experience in the showing world, but who might like to refresh their memories on various points.
 - iii) To Provide some guidance as to what should be expected of an exhibitor/owner – just as important for the smooth running of the class which is effectively a partnership between the competitor, judge, and show.

2) NOTES FOR JUDGES

- a) Judges should judge the class as seen on the day with an open mind, and whilst as individuals will have personal preferences should all have similar values as to standard of turnout. No consideration should be given to previous performances.
- b) Judges must familiarise themselves with the show schedule and be fully conversant with the rules for their classes and any qualifiers to be awarded. The schedule is the contract between the competitor and the show, and so is the document which specifies the rules by which the class is to be judged. The only exception to this is where a show has formally notified all competitors of any rule change.
- c) Judges should be polite, diplomatic and convey a pleasant disposition towards competitors without engaging in a personal conversation and not make detrimental remarks about any turnout. If Judges are approached by an exhibitor and asked for a reason for the placing of a particular turnout, this should be given. The reason is 'in the opinion' of the judge as that is what it is. Any criticism should be constructive aiming to help the competitor. Heated discussions are non-productive and should be avoided.
- d) Judges must not accept any outside influence in particular from a steward or competitor.
- e) When officiating, judges should avoid talking to people at the ringside at any time, either immediately before, during, or between classes and at no time must they enter the collecting ring area and converse with competitors.
- f) Judges should not consult a catalogue/programme until the completion of the day's judging. However, a copy of the schedule of classes should be on hand as these state the terms of judging. (If the schedule is a bulky one, tear out the pages with the relevant classes).
- g) Judges MUST NOT enquire as to the breeding of any animal, but it is OK to ask its age.

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- h) Judges SHOULD NOT judge an animal with which they have had previous connections as an owner, breeder, trainer, producer, or exhibitor. Judges SHOULD NOT accept entry into their classes of a turnout

exhibited by someone with a family or business association. It is ultimately the competitor's responsibility as they will have seen the name of the Judge in the schedule. If for some unforeseen reason there has been a change of Judge, and when there has been no time to notify entrants before the day, thereby causing this problem to arise, it is still the competitor's responsibility to withdraw.

- i) Judges should be able to give comments when asked e.g., by the press, as to their final placings, but these comments should be confined to general remarks on a class and avoid severe criticism of individuals and their turnout.
- j) It is recommended that a Judge does not accept judging appointments at more than one or two shows in the same locality in any one year or at the same show in consecutive years.
- k) Once a judging appointment is accepted, every effort should be made to fulfil that engagement as once the schedule is printed the show should notify every competitor of a change of judge. In the event that it is necessary to withdraw, a judge should immediately notify the show whose responsibility it is to find a replacement.
- l) Qualifiers Paperwork – it is the responsibility of the judge to ensure that the qualification paperwork is completed legibly and returned as requested. Failure to do so will penalise the qualified competitor as they will be unable to complete at the finals when qualification cannot be confirmed.
- m) SOCIAL MEDIA: Judges, as officials of the BDS, should not use social media to discuss the merits or otherwise of competitors including recent placings.
- n) To summarise, judging is not merely a question of equine knowledge and experience, but also diplomacy, dignity & common sense! You must also show integrity, accountability and will be seen to be an ambassador for the British Driving Society in your role as a Panel Judge.

3) STEWARDS

- a) Stewards are appointed by the show to manage the ring on its behalf. Judges judge the class. Judges should advise stewards what to instruct the competitors e.g., change the rein, line-up etc.
- b) Stewards should advise the judge on the time available for judging, any other show instructions and the judge should comply with this advice.
- c) Many stewards are voluntary, some do not have much driving knowledge, but without them the show could not run so their efforts should be respected by both judges and competitors.

4) NOTES FOR EXHIBITORS/OWNERS

- a) Whether driving equines is for pleasure or business, exhibitors should act in a manner which is acceptable to judges, stewards, the show at which they are competing, fellow competitors and spectators. This applies at all times in and out of the ring.
- b) To ensure the smooth running of the class and to make it a pleasurable experience for all those involved (competitor, judges, stewards, spectators): -
 - i) Make sure you arrive at the ring in plenty of time for the class.
 - ii) Listen to the instructions from the steward.
 - iii) Do not attempt to influence the Judge/Steward by offering any information regarding your own or others turnout.
 - iv) Respect fellow drivers e.g., when being asked to execute the change of pace. Overtaking should be avoided if possible or performed with care. Space can be found by circling and making full use of the ring.
 - v) Even if you do not agree with the judge's decision, the show ring is not the place to show dissent. The judge will be pleased to briefly explain the reasons for their decision after the class.

- c) Exhibitors/Owners are responsible for the welfare of their equines whilst at the show.

- d) A reminder – Excessive speed will be penalised by the judges.
- e) Remember to carry any paperwork that may be required e.g., qualifiers cards. This will help the smooth running of the results and show.
- f) All exhibitors should behave in a sportsmanlike manner which will ensure the enjoyment of all concerned.

5) WELFARE OF THE HORSE/PONY/DONKEY (EQUINE) IN THE SHOWRING

- a) It is the responsibility of the exhibitor/owner to ensure that his equine is fit for the class in which it is to be competing.
- b) It is suggested schooling aids e.g., draw reins are not used on the showground and definitely not in the ring.
- c) Rein attachments Single reins for a single turnout only. Artificial aids of any type are not acceptable. Tongue ties are not acceptable in Private or Trade Driving.
- d) Judges should take the weather/ground etc. conditions into account when asking competitors to execute any manoeuvres.
- e) In addition to general welfare, Judges should also consider the welfare aspects of turnouts that may be:
 - i) Over bitted.
 - ii) Ill-fitting harness or carriage that may cause rubs or sores.
 - iii) Asked to pull excessive weight ratio.
 - iv) Fit to do the job (may include show drives).
 - v) Excessive use of the whip.
 - vi) Condition and weight of shoes.
 - vii) Lameness, or in a condition appertaining to a welfare concern, unsuitable for competition. Judges have the right to ask exhibits to leave the ring in extreme cases but are advised to consult the show organizer/chief steward/ or vet if at all possible. (This should be done via the ring steward). A vet is the only official who can formally determine a lame equine in the event of a query/dispute. A Judge must not describe a horse as “lame” but possibly use the phrase, unbalanced, possible stood on something on the way to the ring, or in your opinion not happy with its work today.
- f) Irregular rhythm should be penalised in judges’ result placings.

6) RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

- a) An objection by a competitor relating to a class should be made in accordance with the rules stated in the relevant show’s schedule.
- b) A serious complaint about/from a BDS member/BDS Judge MUST be made in writing and sent to the BDS Office. The BDS will investigate in accordance with the Society’s regulations.

*Let BDS members stand for the best in sportsmanship as well as in horsemanship.
Let us compete for the enjoyment of driving and take winning or losing in our stride.*

**We hope these guidelines will assist Judges & Owners/Exhibitors
to have many happy and enjoyable driving seasons.**