

Your First Judging Assignment

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This article was originally published in ONLINE. It is provided to help the new judge of Field Trials to: 1. Become familiar with judging procedures, 2. Avoid problems with your co-judge and in the field and 3. Assemble gear.

Accepting An Assignment

When called for a judging assignment be sure you are clear on the date, the club and which stakes you will judge, who your contact will be (name and phone number) and if known, your co-judge. Ask when you are expected to arrive and where you will meet and who will pick you up. If flying ask which airport is best. These latter questions might be better asked a little closer to trial time and if so, make a note to ask them later. Immediately after hanging up the phone, write down the above info on your trialing and judging calendar.

Confirmation: You should receive confirmation in writing of the above particulars from the club. You should also acknowledge in writing . . . some clubs insist on this. For CKC trials, clubs require clubs to confirm within 30 days and judges 30 days after that. CKC also requires current CKC membership for non-foreign judges. Have your CKC membership number handy.

Travel and Expenses

If flying, book your flight economy fare early enough to take advantage of any seat-savings. If driving, keep track of your gas and travel expenses. Retain all receipts for your expense accounts. Submit these on a piece of paper at trial's end. Legitimate expenses are travel (air fare or gas bills), food, motel, waterproof judging paper. Be punctual about arriving at the designated time and place. I strongly recommend that you arrive around noon the day before your trial starts. This will give you and your co-judge 1/2 day to set up your tests, get to know each other and discuss viewpoints and philosophy.

Set-up Day

You should be met by your co-judge and a club member who knows the grounds. Ideally, the club will have a dog around so you can check visibility, waterdepth, etc. They also should have some grounds tools such as saws, grass-cutters, flagging tape in case some minor landscaping is necessary. Be very conscientious about landscaping. This can create problems with conservation agencies, club workload and your reputation when you don't use an area that the club spent hours manicuring for you. Some clubs will assign you a particular area but others will allow you to choose among several. If you are the OPEN judges you will have priority but please don't wait until 5pm to decide since that will put the Junior or Derby and Qualifying judges in a last minute bind. Be considerate.

Getting to Know Your Co-Judge

Realize that whether your co-judge is an 8-pt or National judge or relatively "new", the two of you are co-judges. There should be fairly equal exchange of "what do you think" and "what do you see" and "how do you feel about this or that." It's important to find out on set-up day how your co-judge feels about creeping, balking, barking, handling, stickiness, cheating, etc. Try to get some feeling for their philosophy so that in the event of an unexpected change in plans you will not encounter a surprise or an impasse. If your co-judge has a lot of experience, give extra careful consideration to benefitting from their advice and judgement. **The Judges Kit-Bag**

This tool can prevent your judging assignment from turning into a disaster. The components are the same whether this is your 1st or 50th trial. I can't recommend strongly enough that you consider putting together a kit bag. The Kit-bag should be a tough water-proof or water-resistant bag that is just large enough to carry all the items you'll need and still allow airplane carry-on and fit under your judges chair. This bag will get rained on, sit in the mud, and be marked by more than one dog. I prefer a couple of pockets and 2 inside compartments.

Contents: Current AKC or CKC Rulebook, 3-5 pencils (HB lead), pen, mini-pencil sharpener, judging book, stop watch or watch with second hand, weather radio, compass, rain coat and pants, hat, sunglasses, mosquito repellent, sunscreen, extra down vest or sweater, binoculars, whistle, red flagging tape, any required medication (aspirin, rolaids, gum, etc), water and/or thermos. Some of these items require elaboration. Judging Book: Consider either an 8 1/2" x 5 1/2" or 8 1/2" x 11" 3-ring binder. Ideally, the cover of your book will be white on one side and fluorescent orange on the other (for signalling purposes). White 3-ring binders with plastic covers in which orange card stock can be inserted are available. Most importantly, use WATERPROOF PAPER. You may judge 10 in a row before you hit a rainy trial but when you do it can be a disaster. I have seen judges whose notes were totally useless. Even when all forecasts are otherwise, use waterproof. Weather Forecasts: Weather changes quickly and wind forecasts can be critical. Local experts and radio stations may not be reliable. I strongly recommend one of the small weather radios. These radios (about \$26-30) only tune into the continent-wide network of 24-hr weather stations at frequencies around 162.400, 162.475, and 162.550 MHZ. Ordinary AM or FM radios cannot receive weather radio frequencies although a good quality crystal controlled receiver can. The majority of trial sites on the continent receive these stations. Some of the suppliers of radios are Radio Shack and L.L. Bean. Alternatively, phone the local airport. Small compasses are invaluable, especially when you fly into a strange area on a cloudy day. Use it to find sunrise, sunset and forecast wind direction at every site that you visit. The kit-bag will allow you to be self-sufficient and prepared for the unexpected.