

SHOW begins changes to Judging Program

The SHOW HIO held its annual training and testing on Saturday February 15, 2024 at the Embassy Suites in conjunction with the Walking Horse Trainers' Association's annual meetings and banquet. The SHOW HIO continues to look at ways to improve its licensing process as well as its training and is making several changes in 2025. Judging continues to be a critical part of the industry and its continued viability moving forward.

One of the first changes implemented at the training in 2025 was a closed book test to focus on each applicant's knowledge and understanding of the rulebook. Judges must be knowledgeable of the SHOW rulebook in order to apply it as part of their judging in the show ring. These tests will be graded and judges will have a score placed in the judging database with their name and will be given feedback on their scores and areas of additional knowledge if needed.

Secondly, SHOW will introduce a new rating web site that will allow all licensed trainers to login and rate each SHOW licensed judge. Individual trainer ratings will be kept confidential but aggregate rankings will be accumulated for each judge and placed in the judging database with each judge's name. This program will allow trainers to select N/A for those judges they have not shown in front of or watched but for those they have knowledge will allow them to place them on a scale of 1-10. The web site will be live until March 15, 2025 and will not allow judges that have not judged in the last five years to be rated.

In an effort to expand judging opportunities for SHOW HIO judges, SHOW has asked all show managers of horse shows that utilize more than one judge for at least one of their judges to be someone who has not previously judged in the last 12 months. This is not a mandate for show managers at this time but has been a popular suggestion with the number of trainers, owners and judges asked by SHOW about the recommendation.

Judging evaluations have been a part of the SHOW HIO process for a number of years however in 2025 the evaluations will be tweaked and much more readily available for completion. The evaluation will be electronic in 2025 and allow trainers, owners, exhibitors and fans alike to easily fill out an evaluation on a judge's performance at a horse show. It will not be a requirement to have shown at the show where the evaluation is completed but it will require each evaluator to give their name and if they participated in the horse show.

This year marks the first round of changes to be made to the SHOW judging program but won't be the only changes moving forward. The goal remains to revamp the rating system currently utilized and to better educate, train and evaluate judges moving forward. Many judges currently hold the highest rating in SHOW's system but haven't judged a show in the last five years or more. A new rating system is needed and these changes in 2025 mark the beginning of accumulating data to make those changes in future years.

SHOW would like to thank its current judges committee for their input in these changes as well as the input received from trainers and owners regarding best practices to help improve the overall judging at SHOW HIO affiliated horse shows.