

The Ring Steward's Duties by Frank Miller, British Lop Pig Society

I have heard many comments this year about slipping standards at pig shows, both with exhibitors (about which more at a later date) and with ring stewards, with which this article deals.

Many of the comments were about dress code, and I must say that I was forced to agree when I saw a ring steward at a premier show dressed in jeans, an open necked shirt and trainers. Perhaps I am old fashioned, but I have always been led to believe that showing was a formal occasion, on which a lounge suit, smart shirt, tie and polished shoes were the minimum standard for male judges and stewards, preferably completed by a bowler hat as tradition requires. Lady officials would take a similar pride in their appearance. I know one lady judge who, if she was judging on two consecutive days, would have a completely different outfit on the second day, and often a different hat for the afternoon session from that in the morning!



The Steward (right) at this year's Great Yorkshire Show keeps a close eye on judge, Paul Waddington

However, having judged at two shows this year and been ring steward at five others, I have noticed that many ring stewards seem not to realise what their duties are, so I thought it was time to list those that I believe are essential:

- Well before the classes are due to start, all ear numbers of pigs for which you are responsible should be checked against the catalogue and discrepancies clarified with the show office. You should also take this opportunity to ask exhibitors whether any of their pigs present have already qualified for such things as the Lop of the Year, Pig of the Year or Young Pig of the Year competitions, and indeed, whether they are prepared to travel to these events if they should qualify at your show. Also ensure that none of the pigs to appear before the judge has been bred by the judge, for, in that case, you will need to provide a referee.
- All absentee pigs should be deleted from your list, whether that is merely the catalogue or the judges book (these latter vary from show to show), so that you do not waste time later trying to get an absentee pig into the ring.
- Before the classes are due to begin you must ensure that you have the judge's book, marked with all the classes and special prizes, and that you have the correct rosettes and prize cards to cover all of these awards. Ensure that you also have a pen and a piece of chalk/marker to keep the display board marked up.
- At the appropriate time before the class locate your judge and make sure that he/she knows where to report (ie. which ring and at what time).
- Give all exhibitors in your classes at least a five minute warning of the beginning of classes so that they can pin on their numbers, brush out their pigs and similar.
- As soon as the judge appears in the ring bring the exhibitors forward, chasing-up anyone who seems to dally (some like to be last in the ring – Lord knows why). Ensure that the correct numbers are displayed on the handler as the pig comes into the ring, and advise them immediately of any wrong numbers.
- Once all pigs are forward, and only when you have checked that they are all in the ring, inform the judge of this fact and tell him/her how many prizes there are, and whether he/she has a vested interest in any pig forward. Then walk away and leave him/her to it. This is an ideal time for you to check that the results board, the rosettes and the judge's book are all ready. It is possible to talk to ringside observers at this point as long as you are watching the judge constantly.
- As soon as the judge turns to look for you it usually means that he/she has made a decision and needs you to provide the rosettes and record the results. However, it might mean that he/she has made a decision concerning all pigs present, except for those that he/she has bred, and wants you to bring the referee forward to place their pig relative to the others already chosen. It never means that your opinion is sought, nor should it be offered!
- The judge will either tell you the decision for you to record in the judge's book or else will take the rosettes, at which time you will follow to record the results as the rosettes are handed out. Once the results are recorded the judge should sign the judge's book, although some judges prefer to do it all at the end of the classes. Whenever it is done, ensure that all boxes are signed often two, sometimes three judge's signatures per class are required. Your signature should also be appended as necessary.
- Only when all prizes are awarded should the exhibitors be allowed to leave the ring, and they should be encouraged to do so as quickly as possible, to prepare for the next class. While this is happening you should record the results on the board for everyone to write them down.



Club Member, Sally Lugg, stewarding Saddlebacks at the Hatfield House Country Show 2004 while another Member, Arthur Uglow (with cap) looks on

- At this point I should add a caveat. At the end of all the male classes, for example, it is usually better to do the male championship, subject to the judge's approval, so the last first prize winner should be retained in the ring while the other first prizes are brought back in. If there was only one class for male pigs, hand the judge the Male Champion and Reserve rosettes with the other rosettes for that class. The judge will decide whether only the first prize pigs or the first and second prize pigs are to appear for the championship.

- As soon as the ring is emptied you should be in the pig lines informing exhibitors what class is on next and encouraging them out into the ring. Try not to be too bossy in this, for tempers will be stretched already and bad feeling can be created. A little humour goes a long way in this situation.

- The whole cycle is repeated until all the classes are over, but you should always be aware of any 'Specials' that are to be awarded. 'The best pig born after 1st July last' will involve July, September and January born pigs, for example. The judge may wish all of these to re-

appear in the ring for a decision or he/she may already have made a decision if pre-warned before the classes began. Ask the judge what he/she wants to do!

- Male Champion may already have been decided. Female Champion will usually require all first prize females to re-appear before the judge, and it is your duty to ensure that they all do, and that their handlers are wearing the correct number (and are bringing out the correct pigs). The judge may well ask for any one or all of the second prize females to be brought out for the championship too.
- Once the Female Champion and Reserve are chosen, bring back the Male Champion and Reserve for the Breed Championship.
- You may think that, following the Championships it is all over, but there may be pairs and groups still to come (depending upon the show) and you should also check with the catalogue, the judge's book and the rosettes that you have awarded all the prizes. In particular make sure that the judge has selected, and you have recorded, his qualifiers for the Lop of the Year, Pig of the Year and Young Pig of the Year competitions.
- Finally, make sure that you and the judge have signed all the boxes in the judge's book. Only then should you finally hand over the judge's book to the Senior Steward or Office as directed. Then you can take the judge to lunch or to join the champion's exhibitor at the bar or any other thing that you may have thought being a ring steward was all about.



Another Club Member, Melany Kiddy, stewards the Tamworths at the Royal Show 2006 for judge, Martin Snell. All photos by Richard Lutwyche

In my younger days I could do all this alone. As I get older, however, I am beginning to appreciate a younger pair of legs to do the running back and forward from the pig lines to the ring and to mark up the score board. This is an ideal training for the next generation, who should gradually be encouraged to take on more of the duties as their experience grows. The important thing is for you to know when to hand over completely. I am 70 in 2010, which will be my last year of stewarding, so, youngsters, volunteer now!

This article was first published in Lop-Sided News.

USEFUL TIPS—LOADING PIGS

When loading or unloading pigs from a trailer, always strew some straw on the tailboard—pigs generally do not like walking on a bare surface into a trailer.

If a pig refuses to load, get him/her to the bottom of the tailboard and turn the pig round so that it is facing away from the trailer. Then take an empty bucket (or dustbin for large pigs), place it gently over the pig's face so that it cannot see. Its natural tendency will be to back away and as long as you move with it and keep the bucket over the face, the pig should back itself into the trailer.

Dr Spot