



Below is the next in a series of Random Tidbits of information (from me) in regards to the AKC Obedience Regulations. Knowledge of the Regulations provides you the power for...

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## Today's Random Little Tidbit – What To Expect From an Obedience/Rally Judge?

*In reference to a recent post to the Blog (see address below):*

"Judges are often singled out for critical observation by the fancy. Therefore, always keep in mind that perfectly innocent actions or statements can be misconstrued. This includes conduct in public forums and social media. Actions that bring embarrassment to the AKC could be subject to disciplinary action to affect one's judging privileges.

"Remember, when you are judging, **judge**. During your assignment you should **refrain from** teaching, training, and assisting people to train their dogs, **you are there to judge the performances**. Regardless of intentions, this gives the impression of favoritism and has the potential of putting other judges in unnecessary awkward situations."

When one takes on the role of becoming an AKC Judge they are then viewed with a different perspective. Judges are representing the Sport and the AKC. Keep in mind, exhibitors and the general public form opinions in watching a judge. This may take place in the ring, on the show grounds, or in other public places.

### Once again, let's review the AKC Obedience Judges' Guidelines and the judge's responsibilities to the sport:

*(Judges must understand their responsibilities to the sport. Exhibitors need to also keep this in mind.)*

**Responsibility to Exhibitors.** Each exhibitor has paid an entry fee for the purpose of competing and having their dog's performance evaluated. Judges are expected to be friendly and courteous to all who enter the ring. Without exhibitors, there would be no trials. For every experienced exhibitor there are many newcomers. The future of this sport is in the hands of the novice.

**Responsibility to Spectators.** Spectators form their opinion of the sport through seeing the actions of the judge, the handler and the dog. Care must be taken to avoid any action that might reflect poorly on the sport. Judges should work to maintain spectator appeal in the sport while keeping foremost in mind the welfare and convenience of the exhibitor and the dog.

**Responsibility to the Sport.** Approval to judge carries with it the full endorsement of the AKC. Whether judging at a licensed trial or sanctioned match or engaging in any dog-related activity, judges must be cognizant of their responsibility to the sport. Judges must never ignore or condone any type of abuse of a dog at any time. All judges are expected to take appropriate action when witnessing such conduct.

#### **As a judge, you are required to meet these key criteria:**

- **Knowledge.** Through experience and continuing study, you must demonstrate sound knowledge of the dogs you evaluate and score. Good judges never stop learning about the sport of obedience.
- **Procedure.** You must demonstrate sound judging procedure and ring control, plus a thorough knowledge of the *AKC Obedience Regulations* and the *Obedience Judges' Guidelines*. Good procedure is essential. With it, a judge will inspire the confidence of exhibitors and spectators.

**Impartiality.** It is essential that exhibitors have full faith in the impartiality and competence of judges. There is no room for even the suggestion that anything other than the work of the dogs in the ring is involved in your decisions.

#### **ETHICS: HONESTY PLUS COMMON SENSE**

You must possess and project an unwavering air of integrity and ethical behavior that maintains the reputation of AKC Obedience trials as being fair and properly judged. With common sense, judges can easily avoid situations that might raise ethical questions. Judges are presumed to be honest, competent and dedicated. Nevertheless, it is all too easy to find yourself in uncomfortable or even inappropriate situations. These guidelines cannot cover every situation. They can, however, help you avoid improprieties or perceived improprieties. Some ethical rules are clear. For example:

- Never accept any payments or presents for past or future placements.
- Advise potential exhibitors not to enter under you when their presence or the presence of their dogs might give the impression of unfair advantage, such as a person with whom you own dogs, wholly or in part, dogs that have been regularly trained or instructed by you, or participated in a training session taught by you within ten (10) days prior to the date of the event, your employer, your employee, or a relative.

These are only examples. The key is to avoid situations that might give the impression of impropriety.

The AKC recognizes you cannot control who enters. This does not diminish the importance of appearances. Everything possible must be done to keep your reputation above reproach.

### **BEWARE OF THOSE GRAY AREAS**

Judges are often singled out for critical observation by exhibitors. Keep in mind that a perfectly innocent action or discussion can be misconstrued.

**Attending Shows.** If you attend shows immediately before events you are to judge, do not watch the class(es) you are scheduled to judge later.

**Training and Exhibiting.** All judges start in the sport as exhibitors and trainers. It is natural to want to continue these activities after becoming a judge. The AKC understands this. It is acceptable to exhibit or have your dogs exhibited at shows on the days that you are not officiating.

Many judges combine exhibiting and judging without causing complaints. The reason is simple. They are prudent in how and when they exhibit, and they demonstrate the utmost in decorum and sportsmanship. Judges who exhibit should expect to be subject to special scrutiny. The AKC will evaluate all complaints concerning judges who exhibit on an individual basis. Whatever steps are deemed necessary will be taken in each particular situation.

**Exhibiting.** Judges (including provisional) may not handle dogs that are not owned or co-owned by themselves or a family member at obedience and/or rally trials. It is not proper for a judge to co-own a dog solely to permit the judge to handle the dog. Tracking, agility, obedience, rally and conformation judges may enter the "A" classes, if otherwise eligible.

Judges assigned to judge non-regular class assignments only may exhibit in classes for which they are not judging on the same day they judge the non-regular classes. Members of the same household as the officiating judge may not compete in the non-regular class in which they are judging.

**Social Functions.** It is appropriate to attend an affair given by a club holding the show/trial. Judges have the option of attending club dinners and other social functions where exhibitors will be present. In such cases, take extra care in regard to any exhibitor who might appear in your ring.

As an example of those "gray areas," you might find yourself at a social function seated next to someone who mentions exhibiting in the class you will judge. The best ways to handle it include:

- Telling everyone you will be judging that class and feel it would be inappropriate to discuss anything concerning your assignment.
- Tactfully change the subject.

There will be other "gray areas" that could cause problems. Ask yourself if whatever is happening, however innocent, maintains an outward appearance of propriety. The rule of thumb is to ask yourself, "Would I be getting this treatment if I were not a judge?"

### **Judges and Exhibitors - From the Judge's Perspective:**

On the day of the show, judges are there to **judge, not to instruct or offer assistance with a training issue**, especially at ringside just before the class or classes. Judges understand the part of "being kind," but exhibitors also need to be aware of avoiding putting a judge in a difficult position to assist with a training issue. If a judge finds themselves in such a situation consider the following:

1. As an example, if asked to go over the exhibitor's dog for the Stand (or Sit) For Examination it would be best to suggest the exhibitor might ask fellow exhibitors to go over the dog away from the rings to avoid congestion (or in the warm up ring if there is one).
2. Practicing an exercise cannot be near the obedience rings per our Regulations and judges cannot leave the ring to help in this situation as they have duties there. Since there could be such an exercise in the class this could be perceived as practicing. A judge going up to a dog or petting *in this situation* is, in a sense, practicing an exercise (at ringside) that will be taking place in the ring.
3. Helping one exhibitor may be looked upon by others as favoritism, or they will want the judge to do the same for their dogs, which a judge cannot do.
4. If the exhibitor's dog has a shyness issue and if the dog did make an attempt to attack on the show grounds, an Event Committee would have to deal with disqualifying the dog since it was outside the ring. Exhibitors be aware of this for who you may be asking to do the exam on the show grounds.
5. The above is mentioned only to help in making the correct decision for the team(s).

**Blog Address:** <https://akcobedrlyjudges.wordpress.com/about/> Sign up to receive updates.

John Cox, AKC obedience judge. [dog-talk@comcast.net](mailto:dog-talk@comcast.net)