

Below is the next in a series of Random Little 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 – Stewarding --- The Little Things Can Make A Difference



A Steward is an integral part of a dog show's success. Most of these folks volunteer their time to the sport and without them the show would grind to a "Halt." In the Obedience ring a Steward CAN make a big difference in how efficiently a ring functions. Their actions can also have an effect on the performance of the dog in the ring. Stewards are mentioned in the Obedience Regulations in **Chapter 1, Section 31**, plus a **full chapter** at the end of the Obedience Regulations to review duties. Section 31 in the 1st chapter reads: "Judges are in sole charge of their rings until their assignments are completed. Stewards are provided to assist but may act only on the judge's instructions. They must not give information or instructions to owners and handlers except when the judge asks them to do so." The judge shall review with the stewards their duties and the manner in which they are to be performed. Any request from an exhibitor for special consideration must be directed to the judge.

This is all fine and dandy IF the Judge gives instructions. I have stewarded at trials where the Judge just introduces himself and THAT IS IT for the instructions. Or, the instructions are SO FEW one is still left in the dark as to what the Judge is expecting. In such a case, **ASK QUESTIONS** before the class starts. Such a Judge should be put on the spot as to what will be required of the Stewards. The exhibitors are the ones to be kept in mind, as they will benefit from a knowledgeable Steward. Let's not forget, the handlers and the dogs are the IMPORTANT ones for the day. A few things a Steward will need to know **BEFORE** the class starts are:

Novice A & B & Preferred Novice (No group exercise in Preferred Novice)

1. How does the Judge want to handle conflicts?
2. About how many dogs in each Group?
3. Where are handlers and dogs to be brought into the ring?
4. Where is the Figure Eight to be performed and how and where are the Stewards to stand?
5. Who takes the leash and where is it to be placed?
6. Does the Judge need the clipboard held during the Stand for Examination?
7. Where are the Stewards to stand during the Group exercise?
8. What instructions, if any, are to be given by the Stewards to the handlers?

Graduate Novice, Open A & B & Preferred Open

1. The above Novice items 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 again apply.
2. What is the Steward to do with the dumbbell before and after the retrieves?
3. Where are the extra boards from the High Jump and extra Broad Jump hurdles to be placed when not being used by some dogs?

Graduate Open, Utility & Preferred Utility

The above Novice items 1, 3, 5, and 8 again apply (The above Open item 3 applies in regards to the High Jump).

1. How are the scent articles to be handled when the handler brings them to the table?
2. Where are the scent articles to be placed in the ring and how does the Judge want them arranged.
3. What instructions are given in placing the gloves and picking up the remaining gloves?
4. What is the Steward to do during the Moving Stand and Examination?

The Judge is in sole charge of the way they want the ring conducted, but if this is NOT conveyed to the Stewards the first several handlers may be entering a "zoo" instead of an Obedience ring. If the Judge does not give instructions or if they are vague -- **ASK QUESTIONS BEFORE the first team enters the ring.**

A few things in mind and you will be much appreciated by the handlers and Judge:

1. Be knowledgeable of the class one is asked to steward.
2. Arrive **at least one-half hour before** the start of judging to assist in setting up the ring and receiving instructions.
3. **Pay attention to the dog in the ring.** Be ready when the Judge and handler need the Steward's assistance. For example, know the heeling pattern ends. This way one will be ready to immediately respond for the next exercise, if needed. When a dog and handler have to wait for Stewards, it breaks up their pace and can affect their performance. Being ready when needed will save a considerable amount of time during the day, plus the handlers like the opportunity to get in and out of the ring in an efficient manner. Try to give total attention to the dog and handler in the ring, and if other handlers have questions they can be answered in "off" time. **The dog and handler in the ring come first.**
4. During the Figure Eight exercise, don't stare at the dog. Some dogs may interpret this wrong and thus affect their performance. Be consistent for all dogs in how hands and arms are to be held.
5. In a class with a dumbbell, if asked to bring the dumbbell to the handler, carry the dumbbell in a way in which not to excite the dog. Many dogs love to retrieve and if a Steward swings the dumbbell around while walking out to the handler, the dog could lose control and thus be subject to a penalty.
6. In Utility, **MAKE SURE** the dog is watching **BEFORE PLACING** out and arranging the scent articles.
7. When placing the articles, just handle them enough to arrange them per the Judge's instructions. The Regulations call for the Steward or Judge to **HANDLE** each of the remaining articles -- this does NOT imply to "SCENT" the articles. Also, the Steward placing the articles should **beware of a foreign scent on their hands** such as cigarette smoke or food. The scent given when handling the articles should be consistent for all dogs.
8. Concentrate on placing the gloves correctly. Make sure they are on the Judge's mark. If no mark or instructions are given, the center glove is to be centered between dog and handler and about 3 feet from the side of the ring. The corner gloves are to be placed about 3 feet from each side of the ring in the corner. The Directed Retrieve is done in the unobstructed end of the ring, and the **gloves are only to be placed while the dog and handler are facing away.** No table or chair is to be at this end of the ring.
9. Dress appropriately, for weather outside or varying temperatures indoors.

The job of a Steward is not one to take lightly. Know what the Judge requires--think ahead and be ready when needed to save time. The Judge and, most important, the handlers will appreciate the effort.



UPDATE See Tidbit #93, Management of Dogs Attempting to Leave the Ring While Being Judged – Obedience & Rally

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