

USDAA Policies & Procedures

Statement of Policy on the Role of Supervising Judges

Effective: Immediately; last updated February 1, 2005

This policy statement sets forth basic policy and guidance for supervisors in order to assist them in effectively and efficiently carrying out their duties as part of the USDAA judging apprentice program.

Approved Supervisors

Only a judge who is fully approved at the Advanced or Masters' level is permitted to serve as a supervisor of an apprentice judge subject to the following criteria:

- An apprentice starters' judge may be supervised by a fully approved Advanced or Masters level judge.
- An apprentice advanced judge may be supervised only by a fully approved Masters judge
- An apprentice masters' judge may be supervised only by an approved, designated Masters Supervising Judge; these judges are named by the Board of Directors based upon a judge's overall performance evaluation while considering the need for additional supervising judges. These judges are each identified on the Masters Judges List as a "Masters Approved Supervisor".

In all cases, a supervising judge must be identified on the Event Application Judging Panel form that is filed with the USDAA office in advance of the event.

The Supervisor's Role

A supervisor's role is two-fold –

- To review/coach a new judge in such a manner as to foster the development of their knowledge and skills
- To serve as a resource upon which the apprentice may draw

In fulfilling their responsibilities, a supervisor should –

- observe and verify the accuracy of measuring dogs
- observe and advise on course building
- observe setting of start/finish lines, and positioning of key ring personnel
- observe, verify and advise on setting of course times and measuring distances
- observe and advise on manner in which briefings are conducted
- observe and advise on timely performance of administrative responsibilities (e.g., completing paperwork, calling ring crew to the ring, monitoring course walk-throughs, managing exceptions that may arise, etc.)
- observe and advise on judging position, signaling faults or calling points, and movement in the ring
- observe judging calls and challenge unusual situations to establish apprentice's logic for rules interpretation and their application to performance situations

While the above list may seem all encompassing, it is imperative that the supervisor shall assume that the judge already has the requisite knowledge to carry out their assignment, and that their role as supervisor is one of helping them to hone their skills and not to re-educate them. In most cases, it would be expected that a supervisor is observing a lot, and advising or challenging the judge on their knowledge only

occasionally as may be necessary to evaluate the apprentice's performance. Guidance for the supervisor is set forth herein.

With regard to advising apprentice judges, key considerations should be –

- when a matter should be discussed with the apprentice
- whether intervention in the class is necessary to assure qualitative application of the rules
- recognizing the importance of avoiding frequent or prolonged interruption of a class
- when and when not to overrule a judge's call

These considerations are discussed below:

Discuss now or later

When an observation identifies a condition that jeopardizes the judging principles of consistency (such as varied or poor judging position) or inappropriate application of the rules, intervention most likely is required, to assure that qualitative standards for competition are upheld. When an observation identifies a condition that could be improved but poses no immediate risk of degradation of standards (e.g., some erratic movement on course, posture, late signaling of faults or similar incidents), the supervisor should select an opportune moment to address the matter with the judge (e.g., jump height change, or other temporary delay in the conduct of the class, such as immediately following a round where poles are having to be reset or there is another query taking place by the scribe or scorekeeper.)

Do not intervene too often

An important step for many new judges is settling into the role and letting the stress of their first (or subsequent) engagement subside – finding the groove, if you will. So it cannot be stressed enough that the supervisor must be cognizant of the impact that frequent interruptions might have on a judge's confidence, thus risk creating a worse condition. Further, frequent interruptions may have a negative impact on the operation of the event, including coordinating of schedules between rings, making the day longer, or possibly undermining the authority of the apprentice judge in the eyes of competitors.

When and when not to overrule

A supervisor has the authority to overrule a judge in areas where departure from the rules is objectively determinable as observed or as determined through discussion with the judge, or in areas where an error has been observed and conditions have been changed such that the error will not likely recur, such as having the judge assume a different position for better viewing. Situations that are objectively determinable might include –

- determination of course times (though the overall result is the most important element, it is important that the supervisor evaluate a judge's assessment of speed on course, the dog's path, course distance and rate of speed anticipated as measured against the range of rates set forth in the regulations.
- circumstances where application of the rules are misunderstood by the judge
- matters of obstacle placement (including marking of the start and/or finish lines), or placement of scribe and timer at the start of the class
- failure to call faults, calling the wrong faults or points where there is an obvious error

A judge SHALL NOT overrule judgment calls when the judge has demonstrated an understanding of the rules, and/or the judge's position may play a role in the perspective of the possible infraction, such as missed contacts or incurrance of refusals. There can be a fine line in determining if some matters are a judgment call or if the logic supporting the judgment are sound or not. Supervisors should make sufficient (though expedient) query in such matters to make a determination.

The supervisor should consider that errors do occasionally occur, and to intervene in those that normally do occur places them in the role as judge and takes them out of their role as supervisor. A further example of when not to overrule calls is when a judge may consistently call refusals a little too slow or a little too fast; considering that consistency is an important element in the competitive elements of a class, though the supervisor should at an opportune moment communicate the need for the judge to better hone their application of the rules on refusals. Certainly if it is noted on the first few calls of a class, the supervisor may intervene and quickly try to help the judge make some adjustment to their application of the refusal rules, but as they get further along in the class, consistency of application becomes the more important factor in many cases.

In making determinations or evaluating different aspects of a judge's performance, a supervisor may need to consider whether the class is a "standards-based" class or a "competitive" class, and the impact of overruling in each circumstance. Titling is primarily about meeting pre-defined, qualitative standards, while tournament or non-titling classes have more emphasis on consistency, even if not exactly correct (i.e., it can be more important that competitors are all judged against the same standards that may not be exactly the correct standards, since head-to-head competition is about who can conquer the challenges that lay before them on a given day).

Masters and Performance Level III classes share both qualities so greater care should be considered in making such determinations (generally, titling considerations in non-tournament classes should tilt the scale with all other elements are equal; so in Masters & Level III, meeting the standard is the more important criteria for this purpose). Circumstances that might arise may be the omission of a spread hurdle on course (as a result of oversight in the course building or design phase (should be fixed in titling) or on the other hand a decision to substitute an obstacle for another, such as a collapsed tunnel in rainy conditions that may be escalating (an understandable substitution).

Further, the consistent omission of a significant hesitation call in the application of refusals (should attempt to resolve this in the class if titling, though for tournament it could continue with competitors all being treated equal in application of the refusal rules (though we hope this latter situation is caught early and is corrected while it is still an infrequent occurrence).

Preparatory Measures for A Supervisory Assignment

So that a supervisor may have a better understanding of the task before them for a given assignment, a supervisor should contact the USDAA office to review an apprentice judge's past supervisor's reports and/or clinic notations regarding a judge's strengths and weaknesses. This will aid them in working with the judge to overcome any shortcomings in a more efficient manner and help them to progress at a faster rate.

It also may be advisable for the supervisor to request a copy of the apprentice's course designs prior to the event so that they may make advance notations about key elements to watch for in course building, setting start and finish lines, ring crews, or perhaps even "nesting" of courses within the ring during the course of a day. The supervisor, however, shall not make changes in the course design to suit their personal preferences. Review of courses for design is the responsibility of the course reviewer, who is charged with determining that the course meets qualitative standards.

Should a supervisor find an error in a course or have a preference with regard to certain elements or conditions in a course, the supervisor should contact the course reviewer in advance of the event to determine whether further changes may be appropriate.

Summary Reporting of Results

During the course of an assignment, the supervisor should complete the Supervisor's Report by detailing key points on the report, which they in turn review with the judge. They should avoid waiting until the end of the event to complete this report, as it is likely that key points can be missed. The report must then be filed with the USDAA office immediately following the event, where it will become part of the apprentice judge's file. Such reports must be received in order to satisfy the requirements of the Apprentice Program.

This report serves two purposes –

- to aid the judge in summarizing points to focus on in future assignments that can help them to meet their experience requirement in the shortest possible time.
- to assure that sufficient notes are available to the USDAA office in making a more accurate determination of when a judge has met the requirements of the apprentice program and to have such comments available for future supervised assignments.

Judges or supervisors who may have questions about these roles and responsibilities should direct them to the USDAA office.

Related Policies: Statement on Qualification & Advancement of Judges, Statement on Engaging Judges