

JUDGES FEEDBACK ON MINUTES OF JUDGE TRAINING PROPOSALS

Dare I say, it sounds fairly sensible?

I have read through the information supplied and as a newly "qualified" judge on one list and about to embark on two more as a Pupil I am very supportive of the suggestions being made here.

Stewards - good idea about the BAC taking over the final five certificates to assist in knowledge and skills before applying for Pupil Judge.

Assessing Pupil Judges - good point and certainly worth progressing with BACs. Costs of application - If there are going to be joint BACs as was previously suggested it will naturally be a smaller cost as one would not be applying for breeds individually. I presume the fee will be to the BAC as a whole and not the individual breeds as before, or am I barking up the wrong tree here.

Examinations: Agreed.

Time Limits: Agreed.

Stewarding for Pupil Judge applicants from another list - I feel there has to be some proof of handling or appreciation the cats of a breed if outside of the relevant section.

Seminars: Agreed.

Tutorial forms: Agreed.

Assessments: Agree that parallel judging could replace the assessments but I think you will never entirely get rid of the "personality" issue, human beings being what they are.

Addressing current situation of lack of judges: Agree.

Many thanks for sending this. It made interesting reading! There are lots of good ideas there, and some really interesting solutions have been proposed. May I add one note from my own experience? I'm a full judge on two foreign breeds, but am not being booked for shows. For my first breed I try to show at the club shows, as we need entries more than we need judges, so at the moment I try not to judge at the club shows. For all-breed shows though I'm finding that show managers are only booking people they already know, often booking the same judge from one year to the next. I have only had 2 shows this year, one booked from the previous year, and one where I went and asked the show manager if she would use me. This situation is making it all but impossible for me to go on a new list so that I can get to the point where I can judge a Grand class (which I'm told is what show managers want). I have written to one BAC twice about going on the list for that breed but received no reply. Even if they had replied I would have almost no chance of getting the required certificates in a reasonable time as I'm not being booked for any shows, so I haven't pursued it. So the problem with getting new judges is not only the things you've identified, but the fact that show managers are not playing ball either. I've never charged any expenses (as I don't feel it's viable as a probationer judge) so it's not my price that is a problem, and as far as I know exhibitors and managers have been happy with my judging when I've had the chance to do it! Maybe there needs to be some communication with show managers pointing out that pupil judges and new judges cannot progress

if they are not booked, and they may decide not to bother continuing to judge when they are apparently not needed.

Thank you for the minutes. I appreciate the time and effort that the Working Group has put in to this exercise. I do have some further feedback if it is useful. Tutorials -New Forms, the potential is good. My concern is that the responses could end up being a 'tick-box' exercise on the part of the judge. Will the BAC have sufficient authority to request more of a PJ, e.g. expanded notes on their understanding of the breed? If it is not explicitly mentioned that a BAC may require further information the BAC may end up with its hands tied and have to vote through an unsatisfactory PJ. However, I can see that this may be addressed by the Mentor system.

Regarding Lack of Judges -The suggestion made for the promotion of judges able to judge grand classes may be useful, but I feel that again it may be promoting a top heavy advantage for existing judges and not addressing the problem of new judges who are trying to make their way toward being eligible to judge grand classes. I am such a judge so I have some perspective on the issue. Again and again I see Show managers engaging Full judges of a breed to judge the kitten classes instead of engaging Pupil Judges of that breed. I appreciate that show managers must consider the costs of the show but this is a notable area in which entry level Pupil judges (i.e, those who are trying to gain experience of more than one breed and are not yet eligible to judge a Grand class) are hampered. My records currently show 20 such judges who have/ have may their time on the PJ scheme prolonged through lack of engagements. Perhaps there should be more of a *requirement* for Show Managers to engage entry level PJs rather than full judges for kittens classes, where possible. At one time I also saw a suggestion that PJ's might judge the relevant Neuter Breed classes. I appreciate that a PJ is not immediately ready to judge such classes, but perhaps there might be an interim promotion stage when the BAC feels the PJ is sufficiently competent to judge a Neuter class, but has still to complete some tutorials or assessments before applying to be a Full judge. This would open the way for more engagements, increase the opportunity for a PJ to complete the requirements and offer more judges for the Show Managers. It would be rather like going from an 'L-Plate' to a 'P-Plate' before earning the full licence.

I especially like the new ideas for tutorials and assessments. As a new judge on the block there is an additional point I would like to raise. I am finding it very hard to get a good number of judging engagements. Some SM's (like yourself) are very helpful, others simply don't want to know, others invite you once (to help you get started) but not again. It is frowned upon to solicit SM's (once you are a full judge) and this acts as another block. Can I make the following suggestion: - SM's should actively try to give PJs kitten classes, eg at least one PJ in each single breed section, at least 3-5 PJs for the Foreign and SLH sections. Could this be a new rule? If finance is an issue then SMs could limit the amount of expenses to be made available to new judges/new PJs. Many new judges will be prepared to come partly, if not totally, at their own expense. Good luck with your initiative, there are a lot of points in your document, the key thing for me is that we must encourage more new judges to join the judge appointment scheme, we need more new blood!

I think all is good on what is listed. I do think PJ 's need access to 3 or 4 different mentors as shows are spread out all over the country, also I think they need to have bred the breed in question not judges coming from other various breeds that often ask us when doing the Olympian .Also I think they need to be asked at all breed shows to judge, at least one PJ at every bred show to gain experience. When I was a PJ (in the old days ha ha) we were giving a mixed list of 6 or 8 cats and kittens to put in order say 1 - 6 or 8 and then compare with what the judge had done

To be honest it is disappointing I think that more radical change is needed to turn things around and this is feels like tweaking a failing system. I would like to see a move away from BACs. I think I am evidence that breeder judges can be treated extremely unfairly by other breeders who are on the BAC. In theory, I like the mentoring system but when you have a successful breeder judge who has a proven show record allowing a BAC to allocate a mentor who is a breeder who shows cats that the breeder judges cats regularly beats is allowing the system to be abused, used for point scoring and used to insult the breeder judge. Breeder judges should not be allocated other breeders as mentors. I think there should be a check on competency for full judges. A test would seem the best way or other wise you have peers judging peers again. I agree that if you are judging Grand or Imperials in a section you should be able to judge CC and PC. But there needs to be a more robust way of addressing full judges where the quality of judging isn't up to standard.

Some really interesting ideas - well done! Generally, it seems sensible - I just have a couple of comments: I'm not sure about more BAC meetings - it would work for a minority breed, but, for example, the British BAC would be a nightmare if we tried to have electronic meetings, with 18 delegates. It may be possible to see if candidates' reports could be discussed by email, but I have my doubts with a big BAC. I would rather stick knitting needles in my eyes than attend more meetings I'm not convinced by the idea of pointers for PJs to note down. They have to report on the breed class kittens anyway, so full critiques would be required for that. On the other hand, the chance to cut down on BAC reading is almost irresistible! I suspect that pointers lead to homogeneous reports. I thoroughly agree that tutorials are pretty much useless - at least with some tutoring judges. Others take the time to talk PJs through what they are seeing, and to attempt to train them. Similarly, some assessing judges are unable to write any criticisms at all, which can leave the BAC in a difficult position if the candidate is at the application stage. I do think there should be a difference between tutorial and assessment, however. It's in the name - a tutorial should be an opportunity for teaching, whilst an assessment should be a final test to ensure a candidate has reached the standard required. I have known PJs who got confused by this, thinking that the assessing judge should give them pointers to how the cats should be placed. I do think that PJs should be confident enough to put their money where their mouths are; they believe that they are capable of assessing cats and distinguishing between different cats. They might not agree with the assessing judge, but should be able to look at it dispassionately and accept that they might have been wrong. That said, I do agree that PJs must be able to say why they have placed one cat above another. I suppose what I'm saying is that if you wish to judge then you must be prepared to put your head above the parapet. That means it will sometimes get shot off! Just thought - perhaps GCCF could maintain a list of judges who are trained to give tutorials and are trained and able to give honest assessment feedback? We

have all seen the PJs who carefully pick judges they know will give them an easy ride. I think we have to be very careful about accelerated schemes for judges; I fear that it could reduce the quality of judging. Having said that, we see some pretty poor judging with the current, lumbering system of judge training. (Almost) anything is going to be better than what we have.

Thank you for the minutes of the judge Training meeting. I notice that the subject of report writing was not mentioned in the input from judges, which I find surprising. In my humble opinion I think it is something which should be discussed, as many judges find it the down side of judging, and is one of the reasons new judges are not coming along. Many stewards who would make fantastic judges are not interested in taking their training further because they don't want to write reports. Would it be helpful to try to find some sort of compromise?

Page 1 – Judges Panel vs BAC. This seems to be straying into the remit of the BAC Group, so it doesn't look like we have the delineation clear. BACs currently have 2 purposes – a) managing SOP/Reg Pol/Breed Pol/Seminars/Queries for Breed and b) Judge Training. We need to decide if these should be handled jointly or separately.

- Page 1 – Stewards. What is the 'knowledge & skills' referred to in the last sentence. It sounds like this would be a test/exam to make it effective, but that isn't clear.
- Page 2 – Mentors. There are some tricky issues here. Whilst it may seem helpful to add Breeders into the mix, they are not experienced Judges, so will not be able to give the same perspective. Giving a free choice to a Pupil Judge also makes it likely they will choose a 'friend' rather than the best person. In the long run that may not be in the Pupil's interest as the Mentor needs to be able to give constructive criticism. If we are to improve the Mentor approach, GCCF needs to provide a Mentor training course as this is a tough job. I'm also concerned that a 'GCCF Mentor Role' document has been issued on the Guild FB page, giving the impression that it is an official GCCF document when it isn't. It contains lots of spelling/grammar errors and personal opinions. Please can this be taken down pending the SSRG's proposals.
- Page 2 – Time Limits. A minimum time period must surely still exist, and be tied to the frequency of BAC (Judge Training) meetings. Otherwise the first time a candidate is considered could be their application for promotion.
- Page 2 – Seminars. There isn't currently a 'requirement' for Judges to attend Seminars, just a recommendation. The only 'requirement' is on the BACs to hold them at least every 2 years. Is the suggestion that the new approach should become a requirement on Judges?
- Page 2 – Tutorials. It sounds like this is the same approach as for Seminar Tutorial forms, just with specific topics already listed – is that right?
- Page 3 – Parallel Judging. It sounds like there are 5 key differences from the existing system
 - Minimum number of cats (no max?)
 - Cats don't need to be in either Judge's book
 - Pupil Judge must be Judging at Show (currently Assessments can be done even if you aren't judging)
 - No discussion on class between Pupil and Full Judge, just submission of reports to BAC.
 - The BAC makes the 'call' on whether the Pupil has done things well, rather than the Full Judge.
- Assuming that's correct, some queries/comments : ◦Need a max number!
 - If you are expecting the Full Judge to submit full critiques on cats that may not be in their book, this is an extra requirement on the Full Judge. What if they don't do it?
 - Is there a reason for not allowing Assessments if the Pupil isn't judging? In some ways it's a good option at present, as it allows the Pupil to focus only on the Assessment.

◦May lead to issues if the BAC feels the Pupil has it 'right' and the Full Judge has it wrong!

Some generic points :

I think we are trying to do 2 things :

- Create a broader range of Judge options in the short-term, by making cross-training easier.
- For the medium-term, make the process of appointing brand new Judges more effective

So, can we get the proposed changes listed under these headings, and then a clear plan showing the steps and timescales.

I agree with the majority of the points made, yes we need more judges, young judges, but the immediate problem has to be sorted now and means having more judges judging across the board asap – however that does not mean that all are capable of this – or as you say want to for that matter. But those that have shown some ability should be encouraged – thus my points about Olympian judges. Maybe a years “L” plate is too short but it would sort out the availability of judges instantly and give some breathing space. I think it would work well, its in keeping with the final conclusion in your report but a little more radical.

I would much prefer to see the BAC's remain, I think on the whole they do a good job and I sit on four so have some knowledge of how well they work. You do have the odd person who perhaps should not be there as they have limited knowledge, but the majority in my experience are fit for purpose.

Assessing pupil judges

With regard to incorrect terminology – that's all very well, but if the terminology does not describe the cat, for example a Siamese with a “strong rounded chest and round tipped ears” is not describing what you see – it's a habit left over from judging Burmese! And I am quoting an actual instance here.... I have always tried to tell pupil judges – never mind the SOP as far as the description is concerned, describe exactly what you see and then compare to the requirements of the SOP to see if what you are seeing is correct. So perhaps the way we instruct pupil judges needs adjusting

Critiques should just give the salient points - what is good, what could be better and what is not correct. I have always found trying to please the BAC means dead boring and repetitive reports, it's the placings and the reasons for doing so that should be important. So I agree with this.

Mentors

I like the idea of mentors – all experienced judges should be happy to mentor a pupil judge. Core topics, I assume you mean, Type, Colour (eyes, coat/pattern), Coat (length and texture) development (maturity)

Exams won't work – anyone can learn SOPs etc that does not mean you can judge.

Stewarding

I don't agree with this conclusion - think this does have value, because the person stewarding should produce reports on the cats handled, this gives useful information to the BAC, and any erroneous misconceptions can be sorted out at the start.

Seminars that have value are more hands on and in a more intimate setting than a bog standard demonstration. I have been to one or two of those and I wasn't impressed. Attendance at a seminar should be a requirement before an application for Full judge. It may be expensive to hold a Seminar – but surely that's what we pay a £30 application fee for – what else do they spend the money on?

Tutorials I agree with this, but the judge should also have the opportunity to pass comment on how the P. judge is progressing and what areas need attention – before they get to the assessment/parallel judging stage.

Assessments

Parallel judging is a very good idea – I assume the Full judge will be filling out a report? although the same problem arises because some judges are not very brave, the system is still quite

incestuous in that we may need a good report in the future from the very person we are assessing! Judges do take things personally and don't quite grasp you are not wearing your "friends" hat today. I am not sure how you can around this.

General comments

Would like to see some training on basic genetics including colour genetics.

On another note: Colour perception varies so much between judges, particularly with the red series cats and silver cats. It would be helpful if judges were taught where to look for silver – its not always very obvious, and the clear differences between Red, Cream & Apricot. The latter is most important with judges coming in from sections where Apricot is not recognised. The same goes for Caramel and what constitutes Blue-based and Lilac-based - or even Fawn based for that matter - they are all very different.

In conclusion, I welcome what I have just read, it is good that concerns are been listened to and not just being swept under the rug because a few people don't like them.