



## NOTES FOR PROSPECTIVE CHAPS PANEL JUDGES

These notes are intended as a general guide and are by no means definitive or exhaustive. Individuals may have a wide range of experience, from stewarding and judging at local shows to already being experienced judges with other showing societies. The assessment process is intended to be as fair and as consistent as possible, but particular circumstances may sometimes mean that an assessment day runs in a slightly different way from the description below.

### How do I apply to become a CHAPS panel judge?

#### 1) Get some experience

Firstly you should have some sort of experience that equips you for the task. This might include some or all of the following:

- Judging for another showing society panel
- Judging at local/unaffiliated shows
- Stewarding in showing classes
- Competing in CHAPS classes.

There is no stipulation of how much experience you should have, but generally it's a case of the more, the better.

#### 2) Make an application for assessment

All prospective judges must submit an assessment application to the CHAPS Judges' Co-ordinator. Assessments are advertised in the CHAPS Journal and normally take place annually in the autumn. Application forms are published on the CHAPS website during the period preceding each assessment. The application must include:

- Details of relevant experience
- A cheque for £35 payable to CHAPS (UK) for the cost of the assessment.

Confirmation and details of the assessment day will be sent to you about a week before the event is to take place. Judges must be paid up CHAPS members. Membership for judges runs from October and at the assessment day you will normally need to pay membership for the coming year.

#### 3) Prepare for the assessment

Generally it is not enough just to turn up on the day and see how things go – you will need to do some preparation. Even candidates with a lot of experience of judging and of attending assessment days with other showing societies will need to swot up on the rule book and make sure they know exactly what is expected on the day. Candidates with little experience and who have not attended an assessment day of this sort will want to prepare more thoroughly. The notes in section 5 below give some ideas for how you can do this.

## What happens on the assessment day?

### 4) General

A full assessment takes a whole day and consists of three main elements:

- Ride judging for those who are applying to the ride panel or judging a ridden show from the ground for those who are
- Conformation judging
- An interview, which may be with Council members, senior judges or both.

Decisions are usually made on the day and candidates are told the outcome of their assessment at the end of the interview.

### Part 1

Prospective ride judges are required to ride a number of horses and give an assessment of each one and a 'ride mark' out of 50, as though judging the horses in a show class. Candidates are not permitted to watch others before they ride themselves.

Candidates should ride the horses exactly as though judging them in a show class:

- Taking control of the 'ring'
- Ensuring consistency and asking all horses to perform the same movements
- Beginning and ending each ride with appropriate courtesy
- Giving a mark to the steward at the end of each ride and retaining a mental note of each horse's attributes, both positive and negative for discussion with the assessors.

Candidates who are not riders but who wish to be able to judge the ride from the ground at shows where this is applicable are required to assess a number of horses as though judging a ridden show class, giving each horse a mark out of 50.

Candidates will normally do this as a group and are required to:

- Watch each horse perform a set show
- Mark each horse on a written mark sheet
- Discuss the performance of each horse with the assessors at the conclusion of the 'class'.

### Part 2

This session is undertaken by all candidates together as a group, including candidates for conformation only. Prospective judges are required to judge the conformation of a number of horses, giving each horse a mark out of 50, as though judging a show class. The horses' conformation is assessed at the beginning of the day by a senior judge who will compare candidates' assessments and marks for each horse with his/her own

Candidates are generally given a few minutes to assess each horse and should:

- Visually examine each horse standing
- Observe each horse and in walk and trot
- Make a written mark on the sheet provided
- Make written comments on the sheet provided to aid discussion later in the day.

Written comments may be completed in note form and do not need to be extensive.

### Part 3

The final part of the assessment is an individual interview. Each candidate is normally interviewed by two assessors together; the assessors are usually CHAPS Council members and/or current judges. In the interview candidates should be prepared to answer questions about:

- Their previous judging experience
- CHAPS classes, rules and a range of scenarios that may be encountered when judging
- The marks and order of merit given to the horses judged during the day and the rationale for these.

To assist with discussion of the horses judged during the day candidates' mark sheets and notes are available during the interview. Candidates should be prepared to substantiate the marks given to each animal with a thorough discussion of its positive and negative attributes.

## **5) Helpful Hints and Preparation**

Not only is vital to be able to distinguish between what is desirable and undesirable in a horse's attributes, but also to be able to:

- Describe those attributes clearly and confidently
- Use appropriate terminology to demonstrate knowledge
- Justify and defend your opinions and judgements.

Prospective judges are not expected to have a vast veterinary glossary of terminology at their disposal, but they do need to be able to identify and describe positive and negative points of conformation, movement, breed or type characteristics and way of going in the right way and using the right terms. It is always helpful therefore to spend some time discussing horses' attributes with knowledgeable people and current judges.

Here are some suggestions for things that you could do to help you prepare if you think you need to.

### **Session 1**

Ride as many different horses as you can in the period leading up to the assessment day. When riding each one, think of how you would mark it and how you would describe its ride. It's helpful to have someone on the ground while you do this – it can be much harder to describe a horse to someone else than it is to think about it in your own head.

Ask if you can go to a friend's yard and ride some horses. Get someone to watch you and discuss each ride with that person. These do not need to be show horses.

Ask someone to video you riding a variety of horses and then compare what you felt when you rode each horse with what you think when watching the video.

Or for judging the ride from the ground watch as many ridden show classes as you can and get into the habit of describing each horse's ride – not just in terms of 'good', 'not good' but in detail, describing for example:

- The nature of the horse's paces and way of going
- Responsiveness, engagement, lightness
- Balance, transitions, obedience
- Attitude and willingness.

### **Session 2**

There are a lot of useful books on the market that will give you the right range of terminology for describing conformational attributes, though there is no substitute for spending time discussing conformation with knowledgeable judges.

If you are able to visit a friend's yard and assess a number of horses that you've not seen before that is useful. Timing is critical in assessing conformation when judging. Start by giving yourself as much

time as you need, then work towards allowing yourself only 2-3 minutes to assess each horse. A good way to achieve this is to identify 3-4 positive attributes and 3-4 less pleasing attributes for each horse.

Assessing each horse as an individual is one thing, but do some practice in sorting them into an order of merit. Give each horse a mark in your mind and then think about whether the mark accurately reflects the positive and negative attributes you've identified and their relative order of merit.

### **Session 3**

You will be asked a number of questions from the members' handbook and judging rules. It is therefore important that you read and learn the rules and that you know where to look for clarification of any rule of which you may not be totally certain.

Ask someone to test you by asking you questions chosen at random from the rulebook.

Test yourself by jotting down all the different classes you can think of, the marks that apply to them, and what qualifications are awarded.

Make sure you understand Type and how to describe the variety of different types in any given class.

*Remember that the assessors have also been through this sort of assessment process and know how you feel. Everyone wants to help you do your best. Feel free to ask questions during the day.*