

Canary Clinic

Exhibition - Stewarding

Exhibitions cannot run efficiently without good stewards!! That is a fact!

Stewarding starts before the show opens when the show staging is erected and the classes are allocated bench space, through to the close of the show, when the hall is returned to its former, bird-free glory.

Stewards work under the direction of a show manager, who is responsible throughout the exhibition for the smooth running of the show. At CBS and mixed variety shows, it is common for section stewards to be appointed, who sit between the general stewards and the show manager, ensuring their own individual sections run like clockwork. At specialist shows this is not necessary, but a rota of stewards is needed to fulfil various tasks throughout the weekend.

Assuming the staging is erected, the first major task is the checking-in of birds.

Exhibitors will unload their birds which are checked against either an entry form or a lifting card, and signed in to the exhibition. At this point, the welfare of the exhibits transfers to the staging club, and it is the steward who will carry the cages to the show bench, and provide water for the exhibit, prior to judging.

Two points to remember:

First the health of the exhibit must be assessed immediately upon arrival by the receiving stewards, and any unfit specimens firmly refused show access.

Second, stewards must ensure any requirements placed on the show by DEFRA are observed. This may include keeping a list of attendees names and addresses or disinfecting show cages etc on arrival.

Check in

At check-in, the stewards must assemble a list of absent exhibits. This saves time looking for missing exhibits which never arrived into the show hall, when judging gets underway.

As the morning progresses, it will become apparent which exhibitors are missing or delayed, and it is a simple matter to contact any absentees by mobile phone, to ascertain their ETA. Again, simply crossing names off a list at check-in will furnish all that is necessary for the show manager to then take any appropriate steps.

Once the exhibits are benched, most section stewards will quickly walk through the classes, looking for anything out of the ordinary. A clear bird in a line up of variegated birds, or a cinnamon amongst greens, will stand out to the practiced eye. Mistakes can be rectified before judging gets underway, with the permission of the show manager.

The show manager will now present the selected teams of stewards to each judge, with two or three dedicated to each official. These stewards will bring each class in turn to the judges table, quietly assembling the next class in waiting, which the first class is adjudicated.

Staying a respectful distance away, out of direct eyeshot and certainly out of earshot, is how a good steward must operate. **Being seen and not heard!**

Follow the judging book

If the judging book calls for twenty exhibits in class three and only nineteen are benched, the steward can quickly check the list of absent birds to note whether there is one bird absent in that class.

When the judgements have been passed, the steward will call out the placements to the judge who will write them down accurately, before passing the judging slip to the show secretary, from which he can produce an award sheet and prize cards.

The stewards then retain the winning class exhibit, (and any others the judge may advise), and return the remaining exhibits to their original show bench, and water them up, as their part in the awards programme is now over.

Ultimately, the class winners are placed again onto the judging table for the judge to make his final assessments, and to compare his choices with those of his fellow judges.

Throughout judging, a good steward will keep his judge (and himself!) fed and watered, and a succession of cups of tea and coffee and the occasional bacon buttie will be much appreciated by all parties.

The reward for the steward is a close look at the judging process, and being able to see first hand how his own exhibits have fared. Most judges will talk about the awards after each class has been judged, and this education is invaluable to less experienced fanciers.

Never back away from being a steward, because it means that others recognise you as a true fancier who will benefit from the encouragement you will receive as part of your apprenticeship.

Novices must be encouraged to undertake the majority of stewarding duties working under an experienced show manager, because ultimately these fanciers will become the judges of tomorrow.

After judging, stewards share tasks of floor sweeping, door duties and a myriad of other duties until near the close of the show, when drinking waters are emptied and checking out procedures begun. Storing the staging, clearing and cleaning the show hall, and a final word with friends and competitors are enough to see the close of one show and begin looking forward to the next when it will be somebody else's turn to do all the work!