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Coordinating and Conducting a Multi-State 4-H Horse and Pony Judges' School

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Coordinating and Conducting a Multi-State 4-H Horse and Pony Judges' School

Abstract

For many of the more than 250,000 4-H Horse and Pony project members in the United States, the highlight of their 4-H Horse and Pony experience is participation in their local, county or state 4-H fairs and horse shows. Adequate training of horse show judges in working with youth as well as judging and placing horses is an important part of creating a positive learning experience for these 4-H members. Extension specialists in Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania combine efforts to create an effective judges' training seminar that meets the needs of the 4-H members, judges, and Extension staff.

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Introduction

Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky 4-H Horse and Pony programs have a history of providing annual training for the judges involved in their state's youth horse programs. These annual sessions consist of a combination of lectures on rules and regulations, the process of judging specific disciplines, and how to better work with youth and provide a positive learning experience for contestants.

In 1999, the Youth Horse Extension Specialists in these states decided to pool their resources and provide one seminar to meet the needs of all three states. The primary goals of this newly formed "Multi-State Judges' School" include:

- Provide high-quality training for judges working with 4-H youth,
- Facilitate judges' efforts to hold several judges cards,
- Provide a wider pool of judges within each state, and
- More efficiently utilize the time of Extension Staff and volunteers.

Since the Multi-State Judges' school was first conducted in 1999, it has gained support from several other surrounding states. In more recent years, this educational opportunity has expanded to six collaborative states and one breed organization. In 2002 these states included:

- Indiana,

- Illinois,
- Kentucky,
- Michigan,
- Ohio, and
- Pennsylvania.

In addition, the Pony of Americas Club (POAC) breed association requested to be present at the school, enabling their carded judges to renew their licenses by attending our educational opportunity.

Methods

The current format of the judges' school is as follows:

Friday Evening

- Registration and welcoming refreshments
- General session: Introduction of Extension staff and explanation of each state's approval process
- Panel discussion/keynote speaker, etc.
- Break out into special state sessions

Saturday

- Continental Breakfast
- Morning sessions on judging topics determined by planning committee
- Lunch
- Afternoon sessions on judging topics determined by planning committee

Sunday

- Live judging of 8-10 classes in judging contest format

Selection of the host location is vital to the success of the Multi-State Judges' School. The location has rotated among Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky to date. Special consideration has been given to location accessibility and facility quality.

In 1999, management of the school was divided among the three states participating in the project. However, we quickly learned that it was much more effective for the host state to coordinate the on-site activities and facility. Each state continues to maintain its own judges lists, conduct testing, handle state applications, and provide registration materials to the judges on their list. Currently, all registrations collected for the judges' school are handled by The Ohio State University, maintaining our self-sustaining treasury.

Survey and impact data has been collected to determine the effectiveness and future direction of this collaborative educational effort. The participants have been asked if the program meets their needs both in terms of content-based information and availability and accessibility of the seminars.

Results

Judges attending the 2001 Multi State Judges' School hosted in Kentucky were surveyed to determine event effectiveness. All attendees received a survey in their program materials and were asked to complete the survey and return it to the event coordinators.

Objective 1: Provide High-Quality Training for Judges Working with 4-H Youth

Judges were asked if the seminars presented were useful. Table 1 shows the percentage of responses indicating the sessions were either useful or very useful.

Table 1.
Percentages of Respondents Indicating Sessions Were Useful or Very Useful (n=80)

Session	Percentage
Conformation	100%
Showmanship	100%
Hunter over Fences	100%

WP/HUS	91%
Horsemanship/Equitation	98%
Reining	100%
Western Riding	94%
Walking Horse Pleasure	96%
Live Judging	100%

When asked if the seminar met their expectations, 100% of judges responding indicated that the seminar met or exceeded their expectations.

Objective 2: Facilitate Judges' Efforts to Hold Several Judges Cards and Objective 3: Provide a Wider Pool of Judges Within Each State

When asked if registration was easy, 71.6% of judges responding (n=81) indicated that registration was very easy, and 28.4 indicated registration was easy.

Judges were also asked to indicate how many states they applied to for judging cards. There were a total of 72 respondents for this question.

- 40% applied to one state
- 59% applied to more than one state
 - 25% applied to two states
 - 15% applied to three states
 - 11 % applied to four states
 - 8% applied to five states

Objective 4-More Efficiently Utilize Time of Extension Staff and Volunteers

Prior to the creation of the Multi-State Judges' School, each Extension staff and volunteer corps organized a state judges' school on an annual basis. Since the inception of the Multi-State Judges' School, each State staff and volunteer corps now has to organize the judges' school only once every 3 to 4 years. In addition, this effort has created a self-sustaining Extension program that reduces duplication of effort within each state.

Conclusion

The Multi-State Judges' School is meeting the educational and programmatic objectives identified at inception. In addition, the regional format has provided opportunities to seek outside funding that may not have been available with the single state format.

In 2001, the University of Kentucky Barnhart Grant awarded \$1,000, the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' and Exhibitors' Association sponsored our English speaker, and the Indiana Horse Council continued its \$500 sponsorship of the Multi-State Judges School. These increased sponsorship resources and increases in individual registrations, yielding more revenue, have created opportunities for the planning committee to seek speakers with stronger national reputations and exceptional qualifications in specific areas of interest.

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