

Cowboy Challenge Judging

by Florence West, Judge Co-ordinator
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Question: What are we actually looking for when judging a competition?

These are some of my thoughts that I would like to share.

I am looking for a horse and rider that look compatible and going about their tasks as a team. Good horsemanship is what we are looking for. It is not what a horse and rider can do, but how a rider deals with a situation that is important.

Partnerships are built on trust and confidence. The horse must have the utmost trust in his rider. If the rider asks the right question or asks the question right, the horse should oblige! Appropriate and gentle persuasion is okay if the horse is unsure and some reward or recognition acceptable.

The horse should carry himself in a good outline somewhere between the seat and legs of the rider and the rider's hands. The horse should stay inside the bridle, the reins should be soft or relaxed. There must be some bend or flexion throughout the body and the horse should pick up the correct leads.

As judges we must not judge on what we have seen previously. Every rider should start on an even playing field on any particular day. There should be NO FEARS, NO FAVORS, NO EXCEPTIONS.

Judging or analysing takes practice. Criticism must be constructive. Judges should study heaps of horses and their way of going and be able to recognise a lame horse.

Judging can be rewarding and enjoyable. It is all about attitude. Endeavour to look for the good in the combination. Be true to the competitors and YOURSELF. Remember all riders have to start somewhere and that also goes for the judges.

Regards
Florence