

# Show Ring Etiquette – the Judges' Point of View

By Jane Tellier, Tell Tale Farm

**When three alpaca judges get together, it doesn't take long before we're venting our frustrations to each other over the rude behavior that we encounter in the show ring from time to time. During a recent discussion with Jill MacLeod and Cathy Merkley, I discovered that they too are running into the same lack of etiquette that I have recently observed. This article provides specific examples of what we're seeing, as well as suggestions on how exhibitors can be more courteous when showing in the ring. I present these examples to you in the hope that, as exhibitors, you will endeavor to address our concerns, and show more consideration next time you're participating in an alpaca show.**

My role as a halter judge is to accurately and quickly evaluate the alpacas that are presented to me. Your role, as an exhibitor, is to present each alpaca in such a way that I can readily see its good points. With today's large alpaca shows, a judge has a very brief period of time to assess each alpaca. When inappropriate, disrespectful behavior is displayed, it interferes with the judging process and we all are affected. Sometimes it's lack of courtesy and sometimes the exhibitor is not paying attention to what's going on in the ring. I am particularly offended when I encounter poor sportsmanship in the ring. The responsibilities of a courteous exhibitor commence long before arrival at the show.

Have your alpaca well halter broke before you leave home. If your alpaca cannot lead freely on a loose rein, and stand quietly for inspection, it disrupts the other exhibitors and also upsets any

alpacas near it. By properly halter training your alpaca well in advance of show season, you show respect for show attendees, other alpacas, your fellow exhibitors, and your judge.

Before leaving home you must ensure your alpacas are fit to show. This includes verifying that they are healthy, toenails are trimmed, and bite correctly aligned. Males should have two testicles of a size appropriate for their age. Exhibitors generally understand that show-ready alpacas should be in clean paddock condition. However did you



remember to remove the tangled mess of urine, dung, straw and fiber that somehow accumulates under the tail of some youngsters? As judges, we find it revolting to reach into a stinking wet mess when checking under the tail of your alpaca. Please show respect for your judge by ensuring that your alpaca is clean back there. Of course, this is also important in the maintenance of your alpaca's overall good health.

During the Exhibitors' Meeting at the beginning of each show, the judge generally reviews show ring procedure. Please, please - listen to the instructions provided to you, and then follow them when you're in the ring. All too often we feel the details covered in the Exhibitors' Meeting are immediately forgotten.

When it's time for your class, you must be at the gate well before your class starts. It's extremely annoying to stand idly in the show ring, waiting for the next class to enter the ring for judging, only to learn it's being held up because an exhibitor hasn't yet arrived at the gate. Even if you do make it to the gate in time to enter your class, you're breathless and agitated – your alpaca will sense the excitement but won't understand why you're rushing. The serenity of the ring, and the flow of the show are both disrupted by your actions. This is all so easily avoided if exhibitors

would arrive at the gate a few minutes earlier – such a simple courtesy.

As you enter the show ring with your alpaca, please follow the instructions you are given. If you're told to walk 'Directly Toward' the judge, please do exactly that. Do not wander, weave or wobble – you must move straight toward the judge. Once your alpaca has been viewed from the front, the judge will step aside so that you can continue walking straight away. The judge will then move to see a rear view of your alpaca's movement. Many exhibitors just don't seem to listen when a judge gives instructions to 'Walk straight'. When exhibitors listen for their instructions and follow them exactly, things flow more smoothly for everyone in the ring.

As you line up for viewing of alpaca profiles, make sure to leave adequate space between your alpaca and the next one in line, so that no alpaca gets bumped or crowded in the ring. Do not step or stand in a manner which intentionally blocks the judge's view of other alpacas, in an effort to make your alpaca more noticeable.

During the hands-on evaluation of the alpacas, do not talk to other exhibitors near you when you are in the ring. This is distracting for the judge and is disrespectful to other exhibitors. Do not talk to people that are sitting in the audience, as this is equally disrespectful and distracting. Some exhibitors have not yet learned how to show their alpaca's bite. As judges, we are somewhat forgiving of first-time exhibitors who haven't yet mastered this skill. However, once your first class is over, there are no more good excuses for not being able to show the teeth of your alpaca. If you don't know how to show the bite properly, please learn, before returning to the show ring for your next class. I'm sure the exhibitor stabling next to you will demonstrate the technique, but it is your responsibility to be able to do this properly in the show ring.

As the class placings are being determined, please pay close attention to instructions from the judge and the ring steward. When the judge is ready to compare two similar alpacas, you must be ready to move your alpaca as directed. When exhibitors don't pay attention, the judge can become distracted and time is wasted.

Once placings are finalized, you must stand so your exhibitor number can be read. After the class is placed, accept your ribbon graciously, even if it's not the coveted first place award. Then stand quietly and listen to the oral reasons of the judge. When exhibitors chatter to their neighbor, yank on the

lead of their squirming alpaca, or drift towards the exit gate during oral reasons, it's both distracting and disrespectful to the judge. Stop and think about it: You paid a lot of money to come to this show and hear the Judge's opinion, so it's appropriate to pay attention to his or her comments.

As judges, of course we have a unique perspective on the showing, and what's happening in it. When exhibitors are courteous and co-operative, the show runs smoothly, and everyone has a great time.

**CQ**

