

# **So You Want to Be a Judge. Are You Ready?**

## **A Preparation Checklist**

Judging dairy goats can be exciting, rewarding, and even thrilling because it provides countless opportunities to evaluate beautiful animals from around the country, make new friends in the goat world, and interact with exhibitors and young people from various walks of life. It can also be tedious, challenging, and even overwhelming at times. If you are not prepared for the intellectual rigor and intensity of a judges training conference, you are not prepared to judge an ADGA sanctioned show. Read and consider carefully the information and questions below in order to determine if you are ready to take the leap, and go for your official ADGA judging license.

**1. Do you like dairy goats? Have you owned and raised them for at least several years?**

While there is no established rule that requires a candidate to have raised/bred dairy goats for a certain number of years before trying for a license, obviously some familiarity and affinity for these animals is necessary. Possessing a basic understanding of good dairy type, goat anatomy, plus the ability to critically evaluate your own goats provides a basic foundation on which to build a judging career. Moreover, developing friendships in the goat world, particularly with veteran dairy goat folks that might serve as mentors to you is invaluable as you consider if being a judge is a goal you'd like to attain.

**2. Are you familiar with the ADGA Guidebook? Have you carefully read it and marked up the sections pertaining to shows, reports, complaints and penalties, ethics, reasons, judging terminology, the evaluation of defects, the judging of bucks and group classes, showmanship, the parts of the dairy goat, breed standards, and the scorecard, specifically pages 87-149?**

The first step for candidates in attaining a license is taking a written test. All of the answers to that test are found in the ADGA Guidebook on the pages listed above. The ability to memorize and recall the information in the Guidebook is crucial to passing the test, and furthermore, is instrumental to your success out in the field as you serve ADGA as a judge at shows across the country.

**3. Do you attend ADGA sanctioned dairy goat shows with some regularity? Have you watched the judge closely, paying attention to elements like ring procedure, the judge's manner with exhibitors, and their presentation and accuracy of reasons? If you've done this, think critically about what stands out. What did/does that judge do well? Do you think you could do what a judge does?**

Going to shows is fun and promotes camaraderie among exhibitors and spectators, but it can also be an educational experience, especially if you have judging aspirations. In the months or year before becoming a candidate, consider attending a wide range of shows in order to watch the judging and judges. Trying “judging along” (silently) from the ringside and see if you agree with their choices. Listen to their reasons for the very elements you’ll be evaluated on as a candidate, accuracy and presentation. You can learn so much simply by observing others doing what you aspire to do.

#### **4. Are you comfortable with public speaking?**

Not all species of livestock or animal shows require oral reasons. The American Kennel Club famously does not at their shows; many types of horse shows also do not require oral reasons. But like the world of dairy cattle on which much of the dairy goat judging scorecard is based, oral reasons ARE REQUIRED of ADGA licensed judges. Thus, good skills in effective public speaking are necessary to be successful at obtaining your judging license. While confidence and flow come naturally to some folks, others have to work hard at it. If you are determined to become a judge, know that skilled public speaking and effective communication skills are necessary for your success as a judge.

#### **5. Delivery of oral reasons is a necessary and crucial component to judging dairy goats. How frequently and where have you delivered oral reasons? Are you comfortable giving reasons to a) just your goats, out in the barn? b) to a friend/mentor who is a fellow goat person but not a judge? c) at a non-sanctioned dairy goat show like a county fair where you likely have an engaged audience? d) to an ADGA licensed judge, ideally a senior, advanced judge?**

If you answered **either c or d** to question #5, you may be ready for the Judges’ Training Conference. FYI - Lack of preparation and/or lack of confidence regarding oral reasons is the most common reason first time candidates fail training conferences, and so it is imperative to practice, practice, practice giving *comparative* (not descriptive) oral reason so that you are able to demonstrate the two F’s – FLUENCY in the required judging terminology (pp. 109-113 in the ADGA Guidebook), and FLUIDITY in language, that is the confident execution and delivery of your reasons set.

If you have answered ‘**yes**’ to all of the above questions, then you are ready to attend an ADGA Judges Training Conference as a candidate! If you answered ‘**yes**’ to some questions and ‘**no**’ to others, consider attending a Training Conference as a volunteer handler, spectator, or auditor to gain more experience. Finally, remember that you must also attend a one-day Pre-Training Conference taught by a certified instructor in order to fully earn your ADGA judging license.

*The ADGA Judges Training Conference Committee is responsible for the education and certification of new judges as well as the content of this material.*