



Food for Thought

ACKNOWLEDGING THE SPONSORS AND VOLUNTEERS...

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Most weekends during the season, enthusiasts can be found competing at horse events; hours of time and energy, not to mention money, are spent preparing our animals to the nth degree in our quest for success.

How often have we returned home from a show and vocalised our frustrations: 'I can't believe they did that'; 'How come they got that idiot of a judge?'; 'Why did they put the hack ring beside the dodgem cars?'; 'The judge in my ring, took so long to judge?' and so on...

How many of us, after winning a product or cash, bother to take the time to thank the sponsors?

As part of an Australian organisation, I know how difficult it is to procure quality sponsorship in difficult financial times but, time and again, businesses whose generous support we have previously enjoyed, are reluctant to renew – and often mention that they have never received the courtesy of any form of appreciation from the winners of their event, not even a basic thank you. Often it that simple as to why they decline to sponsor again. All it takes is five minutes to ring and express appreciation.

Worse still was the company which advised me that a voucher winner had expressly demanded that her prize be hand delivered to her home by the sponsor, who lived over an hour away? Needless to say, these people no longer sponsor events. Our show societies and horse and pony breed/hack associations are often run by volunteers who spend an enormous amount of time, resources and money in their effort to ensure things run as smoothly and professionally as possible. When mistakes happen – and they do, since we are all human – the complaints come in very loudly and clearly. Most societies, on the whole, are happy to learn from their mistakes and rectify a situation for the future, if the complaint is delivered reasonably and pleasantly, so temper your approach.

Let's say you are unhappy with the number of classes assigned to your horse's hack classes, or its breed registration is not represented in the programme. Put your hand up and offer to sponsor extra classes. This may be as simple as paying for the ribbons – and if you win a broad sash and feel you have enough of these already, donate it back to the show. Thus you are not seen to be demanding, but proactive – and, if you win, you'll have a qualification for your relevant Royal or Horse of the Year Show.

Be honest: how often do we positively praise a show and its committee? How many take time to thank the organisers either at

the show, or by telephone or letter afterwards. Just one such token of appreciation can mean mountains to those who contribute so much, often for little acknowledgement.

Most shows here in Australia really struggle for stewards, and it is with great appreciation that their help is accepted. Preparation for a show is a massive exercise, with all that must be done in advance, let alone on the day; and secretaries and their teams work long, hard hours to make sure everything and everyone is in place.

Many competitors seem unaware that it really is not appropriate to telephone a show organiser or committee member – or in fact anyone else – at 11pm to demand to know who is judging, then express their extreme displeasure as to why the appointed judge does not suit them personally. A sharp reply elicits further complaint that so-and-so was so rude when they just rang with a simple enquiry!

Many judges' lists are diminishing, leaving a smaller pool of possibilities, many of whom also compete and may not be available.. Often an organiser must make numerous phone calls before one judge may agree to the job. Then there's the utter bedlam if said judge does not turn up on show day. The possible delay to the commencement of classes is then blamed on the show society.

As competitors we spend much time expressing our extreme displeasure of how the show was run, the lack of classes, the workout area, or who judged and the job they performed, negatively discussing all aspects of the show – yet how many of us bother to offer help to our show committees?

Have you ever thought, once in a while, about foregoing competing and assisting at your local show or chosen association?

Many people are great at providing fabulous suggestions to an already overloaded small committee, but hesitate to implement their ideas. It is a highly rewarding experience and a very genuine way to give back to your sport, and I can assure you, your assistance will be greatly appreciated.



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