

BARN HUNT JUDGE RING EFFICIENCY

The Barn Hunt judge can have a huge effect on the timing of an event. The faster you can get your courses built, switch your tubes around, and get teams into and out of the ring, the faster the event will run. Clubs and exhibitors alike will appreciate being able to finish the event day on time or even early, and this will have an overall positive effect on everyone's experience. The problem is: how to hit a balance between working efficiently while not appearing to hustle everyone through as fast as possible? What follows are some efficiency practices I've developed over the years.

- 1. Good, clear, maps and nesting.** First and foremost, creating quality maps will mean less time consulting with your course builders, allowing them to complete your builds without delay. And proper nesting helps a lot too – remember that although you must change floor elements from class to class, you can keep the existing tunnel, or lengthen or shorten it as appropriate. Nesting isn't as important for Novice and Open, but from Open to Master it will make a big difference.
- 2. Tunnel measurement.** Be sure to measure your tunnel widths all the way through, and your tunnel length from board start to board end prior to placing any bales on top. If there is any adjustment required, they won't have to shift the bales on top of the tunnel.
- 3. Marked hide maps.** You are only required to have marked maps for Crazy 8s, Senior, and Master, but I've found that preparing marked maps for Novice and Open as well helps things run faster. It's easy to remember where your rats are in those lower levels, but before I started preparing marked maps for them, I would regularly spend precious seconds finding the litter and empty tubes during a blind or course change.
- 4. Blind location.** Check the distance between blind and ring, and if it's not the minimum allowed, work with the club to move it closer if possible. And be sure that the contraband table is on the path between blind and ring.
- 5. Use all of your rat wranglers.** When shifting tubes for a new blind, ask an outside wrangler or two to come in and help. One or two wranglers can place tubes while the third comes along behind and covers them. Don't use more than three wranglers for this; four or more is just too many to direct. And if you don't already have a laser to point to the tube locations, get one! Finally, ask your wranglers to re-fluff the hiding place when they remove a tube, so you don't have to go back over the ring and do it before calling the next dog.
- 6. Volunteers.** Work with the club to get experienced volunteers, particularly rat wranglers, for the higher-level classes and most particularly the outside wrangler in Master. It's fine (and encouraged) to use less experienced volunteers to give them an opportunity to learn, but you'll want to have at least a core two or three who really know what they're doing at the higher levels. Blind stewards can also be a weak link in terms of efficiency. Work with the blind steward to be sure that they're calling for the next blind's dogs to prepare a couple of blinds early so that they can be ready to enter the blind when the last dog of the current blind goes to the ring.
- 7. End of run and next team.** Although you must keep the team in view from the time the run starts until they leave the ring, remember that you can use your peripheral vision to do this while confirming and initialing the scribe sheet. And if you need to have a word with the handler, keep it short – and call the next dog just as soon as the previous dog is clear of the path from blind to ring. You can continue the discussion with the handler between classes or at the end of the day.

There are likely many other things that you can come up with to improve your efficiency, but please be sure to be gentle and tactful when trying to hurry things up. A quiet word with a trial committee member or a gentle request to an experienced exhibitor to help a newbie goes a long way towards moving things along while keeping the atmosphere positive and relaxed for everybody.

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