

Chapter 8A: Judging Procedures

Bettas4all sanctioned shows are judged by Bettas4all certified judges (see **Chapter 8D**). This chapter describes which procedures to follow during benching, division of show classes and judging.

1. Benching

- a. When breeders arrive at the show location, they will have to register at the benching administration desk where they will receive the tank numbers for their fish upon payment of the entry fee.
- b. A benching officer and/or a benching assistant will provide the show tanks filled with water. Please note that the fish should be displayed in bare-bottomed tanks (with no decoration and with non-colored water). If the water for the transport is stained or polluted each breeder should take great care of changing the water to clean water before adding it to the show tank.
- c. After acclimatization of your fish the benching officer and helper(s) will pre-sort your fish into the show setup. During the pre-sorting phase, the fish will be mainly sorted based on their finnage variety and gender according to the main show classes (see **Chapter 2**) although a rough pre-sorting upon color variety can already take place (e.g. solid colored vs. AOC) (see **Chapter 5**). Please note that pre-sorting is done in order to make the division into the definitive show classes easier for the Bettas4all Judging Team when all fish are benched.
- d. Fish arriving after the benching deadline (to be determined by the hosting organization) can be refused. Please note that exceptions can be made in extreme situations in consultation with the Bettas4all judging team and the hosting organization.

2. Division of Show Classes

- a. When all fish have been benched and pre-sorted, the Bettas4all Judging Team will further divide the main show classes into the definitive show classes based on the various color and finnage variations as well as the number of fish of a certain sub-variety (see **Chapter 2**).
- b. Fish have to be included in the show class in which they fit best according to the Bettas4all Judging Team and stand most chances of winning an award. During the actual judging procedure, the Bettas4all Judging Team is allowed to move an entry to another show class if the head Judge approves that the reason(s) for the re-classification are valid.
- c. Show classes are only further subdivided when (1) the rules allow splitting (see **Chapter 2**) and (2) it creates a more interesting and challenging competition**. For this reason the final subdivision in color classes depends on the participants within each provisional class.

***The number of awards per show class will depend on the number of fish represented in this class (see **Chapter 6**). The philosophy behind this is the fact that with this system prizes carry more weight and actually say something, e.g. winning 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes in a class where only 3 fish are entered does not have to say much, but winning a 5th prize in a class with more than 12 fish entered does!*

3. General Judging procedures

- a. Although a Bettas4all Judge is allowed to judge his own entries and should be able to do this in an honest and objective way, he/she should do his/her best in order to avoid any conflict of interest. In the case of any conflict of interest, direct or indirect, the duty of a certified judge is to (1) ask a judge with no entries in that particular show class to judge that class and/or (2) step back from the judging group until his/her fish have been knocked-out from award winning positions during the judging procedure.
- b. Within the Bettas4all Judging Team discussions about the ownership of fish entered to the show should be avoided until the judging itself has finished.
- c. Judges who recognise a fish that they have seen/judged before, should not be influenced in their judgement. They should be as honest and objective as possible and treat the identified fish as any other entry in the same class by judging it on its present performance.
- d. The judgement of the Bettas4all Judging Team is based on the phenotype alone (exterior appearance and not genetic background). No consideration should be given to the (supposed) genetics of the fish entered to the show.
- e. The Bettas4all Judging Team should not hesitate to disqualify an entry based on the reasons described in the General Standard (see **Chapter 3**).

- f. Ideally, all show classes are judged in groups of at least two certified judges and one apprentice. When judging groups are bigger, the number of apprentices should be the number of judges minus one (e.g. for a group of three judges, the optimal number of apprentices is two). This general rule can be amended in case of exceptional situations. In case an apprentice is taking the final practical exam (s)he should be in a group with at least one certified judge and no other apprentices.
- g. On the day of the judging all fish have to remain carded before the judging starts and are only allowed to be uncarded by the judging team (*see paragraph 3.2b*).
- h. During the judging procedure, an area in front of the show set-up should be reserved for the Judging Team and possibly furnished with tables and judging materials.
- i. There is no time limit during the judging procedure; and, although decisions will be taken as quickly as possible, the Judging Team should be provided with all the time necessary to judge the show.
- j. The audience (including show participants) is allowed to watch the judging procedure in silence as long as they respect and not influence or disturb this process.

3.1 Head Judge

- a. When the Bettas4all Judging Board composes the Judging Team a Head Judge is designed. All Bettas4all certified judges are eligible for this position, but the judging board will consider competence and experience while determining the Head Judge.
- b. The Head Judge is responsible for the final outcome of the judging procedure, and her/his role is to make sure the Bettas4all Standard® is applied correctly and efficiently.
- c. Depending on the number of available judges, the Head Judge can either participate in one of the judging groups or supervise the judging process by assisting where necessary.
- d. The Head Judge should help to solve efficiently any dispute during the judging process. In case of doubt when the judging group(s) cannot agree on a result in a certain show class the Head Judge should take the final decision.
- e. During a show, the Head Judge should follow these general procedures:
 - **Benching day:** On the day of benching the fish, the Head Judge will perform the following tasks:
 - i. Overview benching/sorting: Keep an overview on the sorting process and check the sorting and highlight the classes that might require more precise sorting the next day.
 - ii. Planning judging approach: Draft a scheme listing all the show classes in which the judges and apprentices are showing fish. This information, supported by practical experience, will be taken into account by the Head Judge when assigning judges to a certain judging group.
 - **Judging day:** On the day of judging the fish, the Head Judge will perform the following tasks:
 - i. Introduction of Judges: At the beginning of the judging day, the Head Judge should take care of introducing all the judges in order to making sure that everybody knows each other.
 - ii. Motivational speech: The Head Judge will give a short motivational speech where (s)he explains how the judging will be approached by providing information about the judging groups (including apprentices), the timing of the lunch pause and whether (s)he will participate in one of the judging groups or supervise the judging process by assisting where necessary.
 - iii. Solve sorting issues: Before, but also during the judging procedure, the Head Judge and all the certified judges (without apprentices and guest judges) should quickly resolve common sorting issues such as determining the sex of a fish and (re)classification of certain finnage and/or color variations.
 - iv. Appointing judging groups: After all main sorting issues are resolved, the Head Judge will define the judging groups which can be re-shuffled during the judging process (*see Paragraph 3f*).
 - v. Class order: Once the initial judging groups have been determined, the Head Judge should define the order in which the classes should be judged during the show. Large and/or more complicated classes are preferred to be judged at first.
 - vi. Final review: Before voting for the special prizes, the Head Judge, together with the certified judges (but without apprentices or guest judges) should review all show classes in order to approve/confirm the results. This is an essential process that should never be skipped. In case the Head Judge wants to have more information about the result of a certain class, the responsible judging group might be asked to explain their decision(s) to the Head Judge. In case something has been overlooked or a mistake has been made, the class might be openly discussed with all judges involved, depending on the time. In any case,

- the Head Judge has the right to alter the outcome of judging by both changing the ranking of the fish, and/or awarding prizes to fish that were not previously classified.
- vii. **Voting Special Prizes:** During the vote of the special prizes, the Head Judge should make sure that the fish that wins is the one that adheres most to the standard. Once 4 or 5 fishes are left on the table, the certified judges are allowed to pick a fish of their interest and can talk about that fish objectively. It is important that both strong points and weak points about a fish are presented. After the judges have had the chance to talk, also the apprentices can say what they think, but also in this case the Head Judge should underline that both strong points and weak points about a fish should be presented. In case of a tie when voting for the special prizes such as (reserve) Best of Show Male and Female as well as the jury prize, Head Judge should take the final decision (see **Paragraph 3.3**).
 - viii. **Closing words:** At the end of the judging, the Head Judge should make another small speech, thanking all the judges and the public.

3.2 Judging show classes

- a. At the beginning of the judging for each class, it is necessary to fill the administrative information concerning the class using the Bettas4all Judging Form (see **Appendix I**) by writing: (i) the names of all Bettas4all Judges and apprentices; (ii) the name of the show class (finnage variety; color; gender) (iii) the tank numbers of the fish in the show class and (iv) the total number of fish in the show class.
- b. During the judging, all the comments about fish should be made in an objective manner, avoiding to use sentences, words or exclamations that could offend the breeders who are observing the judging.
- c. The initial placements, before being approved from the Head Judge, should be written on small stickers, instead of medals. This will avoid that, if the placements are changed during reviewing, the owner of the fish will be disappointed.
- d. The judging should be time-optimized. Discussions are of course allowed, but in general they should be aimed at taking decisions, which should be taken possibly fast and efficiently.
- e. In case of any conflict during judging, the Head Judge should be included in the discussion to help solving the situation as efficiently as possible. None of the discussion should be taken on a personal level.
- f. In order to judge all aspects described in the Bettas4all Standard®, fish should be allowed to present themselves in full flare. In order to stimulate show fish to flare two techniques are allowed: (1) Uncarding of show tanks allowing the fish to flare at the fish in an adjacent tank and (2) Presenting a small mirror allowing the fish to flare at its mirror-image. Fish should rest from flaring when the judging team is not focussing on them. Therefore, show tanks of fish that are not under observation should be carded and no mirror should be presented.
- g. Fish with disqualification faults (see **Chapter 3**) have to be excluded from the competition. The tank number of the fish will be noted down on the Bettas4all Judging Form (see **Appendix I**) and the number of disqualified fish will be subtracted from the total number of fish in the show class. The latter might influence the number of prizes to be awarded (see **Chapter 6**).
- h. Fish are compared based on their faults following a knock-out (KO) procedure. The fish with the least (serious) faults will be determined as the winner of the class. During the KO procedure the number of fish with a chance of winning a prize (that depends on the number of fish competing in a certain show class, see **Chapter 6**) will be selected and compared with great attention.
- i. No ties are allowed! Only one fish can be placed per rank according to the award system (see **Chapter 6**). In case of ties, the judging team can take advantage of the comparison form.
- j. In case a judging group cannot agree on a certain placement within a certain show class, the other judging groups and the Head Judge should be involved in the discussion and in case the comparison form should be used. In case no agreement is reached, the Head Judge should make the final decision (see **paragraph 3.1**).
- k. The Head Judge should review all show classes after they have been judged by the appointed judging groups in order to approve/confirm the results (see **paragraph 3.1e**).

3.3 Determination of the Best of Show awards and Jury prize

- a. The awards for Best of Show (BOS) and Jury prize are determined by voting. All certified Bettas4all judges are allowed to express 1 vote, apprentice or guest judges' votes are worth 0.5 whereas the vote of the Head Judge will have a double weight (2 votes).

- b. A Bettas4all Judge if strictly required is allowed to vote for his/her own entries and should be able to do this in an honest and objective way.
- c. No ties are allowed also in BOS! Only one fish can be placed per rank according to the award system (see **Chapter 6**). In case of a tie the Head Judge will decide which fish will be the winner.
- d. For both male and female, the fish to be awarded with BOS should be determined first, followed by the reserve BOS (rBOS). For more information about which fish are eligible for these awards see **Chapter 6**.
- e. After the prizes for BOS and rBOS for both male and female have been awarded, the Judging Team will decide which fish will be awarded the Jury prize. For more information about which fish are eligible for these awards see **Chapter 5**.

4. Show certificates

After the judging is completed, show certificates should be signed by the Head Judge. Additional signatures of the other certified Bettas4all Judges are optional.

5. Judging aids

In order to judge the classes properly the judging team should have access to the following judging aids:

- A copy of the Bettas4all Standard®.
- Mirror
- Flashlight (LED; non-colored/white)
- A set of straws cut at 3.0, 3.5, 4.0 and 6.0 cm in order to check minimal and ideal body size of males, females and giants.
- Bettas4all Judging Form I – Show classes (see **Appendix II**).
- Bettas4all Judging Form II – Special Prizes (see **Appendix III**).