

## American Goldfish Association, Show Best Practices

### 1. General Standards

- A. Judges should be familiar with size categories and classes of fish which will be exhibited at the show. Requirements for special prizes (e.g. most unusual fish, judge's award, best young fish, etc.) should be understood before judging begins.
- B. If the judge has any special requirements for the show, these should be communicated to the show chairperson before the start of the show (several weeks advance notice should be given). Examples of special requirements are not limited to nets, holding tanks, viewing bowls, special lighting requirements, audio/visual equipment, etc.
- C. The judge should communicate with the Show Chairman to determine rules for disqualification before judging begins (advance notification is strongly recommended). Disqualification can be merited by the following occurrences, and should be determined by the Show Chairman prior to the commencement of judging (other reasons for disqualification may be present):
  1. The fish is injured or diseased
  2. The exhibitor has not paid the entrance fee
  3. The exhibitor has not provided his/her own aquarium (if required by the show rules)
  4. The fish does not possess a characteristic which is required for a particular variety (e.g. telescope fish possessing one normal and one telescope eye).

In most cases, disqualification should be communicated to a show participant by the Show Chairman. In special circumstances, however, the judge may at his/her discretion; disqualify a fish after consulting with the Show Chairman.
- D. The judge should indicate in writing to the show chairman, prior to the start of the show, the rules by which he/she will be judging fish. If the AGA guidelines will be used, the judge shall have the latitude of judging strictly on a "points-based" system, or through a combination of "points-based" system and general knowledge of goldfish. If a "points-based" system is used, the judge is encouraged to provide the show chairman with the "point" totals, but may share the "point" totals with other parties solely at the judge's discretion.
- E. During the course of the judging, judges are encouraged to indicate the selection process which they are using. The communication should be

made to the show chairman, or any other official representative of the show. Communication among judge and show entrants is discouraged until after the judging has been finalized.

- F. The judge may, at his or her discretion, view, handle, or “bowl” fish to observe conformation with general breed guidelines. The handling of fish may be necessary to determine: proper placement and count of fins, condition and quality of special characteristics (e.g. wen growth in head fish; eyes for eye fish; color intensity for Shubunkins, etc.). Care should be exercised by the judge, so as to prevent damage during handling. In addition, some form of sterilization should be made by the judge before continuing with the judging.
- G. Judging should be conducted in such a manner that positive characteristics of the fish are noted. If the judge experiences a fish with a minor fault (such as non-paired anal fins, where the breed characteristic requires paired fins), the judge may subtract points from the fish, ignore the infraction, or in more severe cases disqualify the fish, at the judge’s discretion.
- H. After completion of judging, results should be communicated to the show chairman and prizes awarded according to the size categories and classes established for the show. Frequently, show participants will ask the judge for a description of how the fish were judged, and the selection criteria used by the judge. The AGA strongly encourages judges to provide answers to these questions in order to help promote knowledge of fish standards and judging criteria. The formality of these responses is left up to the discretion of the judge.
- I. When providing commentary at shows, judges are encouraged to use discretion when commenting on a particular fish. It is best to emphasize the positive attributes of a fish, rather than to dwell on the negative aspects of the animal. When discussing an attribute(s) of a fish that may be considered less than ideal, the judge should do so in a professional manner. Judges should always remember that the exhibited fish are a personal pet, and that people have invested time and money in the care of their fish.

## **2. Show Best Practices**

- A. The show is encouraged to provide the following items necessary to conducting a goldfish show:
  - 1. A source of fresh, clean water
  - 2. Chemicals which may be necessary to treat water for removal of chlorine, chloramines, and ammonia.

3. Chemicals which may be necessary to stabilize water conditions at the show, such as: stress coat, zeolite, Ph water buffers, etc.
  4. General medicinal agents, such as: mercurochrome, salt, methylene blue
  5. A sufficient number of aquariums (if provided by the show) or tubs, for viewing
  6. Fish nets, “bowling” tubs, vats, or final viewing aquaria (if shows want to display major category winners separate from the general fish population)
  7. Adequate lighting for proper viewing and judging of fish
  8. Adequate bracing or support which will hold the weight of aquaria on display
  9. A bagging and oxygen station for transporting fish from the show after display
  10. Adequate check-in procedures which eliminate diseased or injured fish; provide pictures of each fish entered for later identification and display; classification into the categories accepted at the show.
  11. Air stones should be provided, by the show committee, for each aquarium in use at the show.
  12. Water quality measuring kits should be provided at the show, and regular water quality measurements should be taken at pre-determined times during the show. If required, water changes should be made to ensure the health of the fish.
  13. Alternatively, the show may elect to use the “Norm Meck” system, which uses pre-determined measurements of ammonia and Ph levels prior to the show, and then compensates for changes in these parameters by adjusting the ammonia and Ph levels accordingly.
  14. The show policy on filtration should be communicated to the participants prior to the show. It is strongly recommended by the AGA that filtration be used in each tank at the show.
- B. The policy on feeding should be communicated to show participants. Feeding is not to be allowed at the show. Fish should be placed off-feed for a minimum of three days prior to the show, with five days being the preferred length of time for being off-feed.
- C. A policy addressing the number of fish permitted for each tank should be communicated to the participants prior to the show. In the case of participant-provided tanks, more latitude may be given to stocking guidelines.

- D. Required water change times and amounts, if the show does not elect to use the “Norm Meck” system, should be communicated to show participants. In the case of tanks with filtration provided, water changes of one per day should be sufficient. In the case of tanks which do not have filtration, water changes of two or more per day are encouraged.
- E. The show should provide a person to measure water quality parameters, such as: ammonia/Nitrite levels, presence of chlorine/chloramines, Ph, and optionally, dissolved oxygen. Similarly, if the “Norm Meck” system is used, then a designated person to monitor water quality is required.
- F. Proper pre-show tank cleaning methods should be followed for all shows. These methods should include cleaning aquariums with bleach or muriatic acid immediately after show tear-down or prior to tanks being set-up for the show. Clean-up in this manner will ensure owners that tanks are sterile, and will prevent the spread of disease.
- G. In addition to the proper tank disinfecting prior to the show, each club should ensure that water in the used tanks has been treated with bleach at the rate of one cup of normal household bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite) per 500 gallons of show tank water, mixed and allowed to stand for a minimum of one half hour prior to discharge into sanitary sewers. If the treated water is to be discharged onto the ground or into another water source, residual bleach should be first neutralized by dosing with sodium thiosulfate. Please see attached table for dosing guidelines.

500	8.0	16.0	48.0
300	4.8	9.6	28.8
100	1.6	3.2	9.6
50	0.8	1.6	4.8
20	0.3	0.6	1.9
10	0.2	0.3	1.0

Bleach Dosage  
 =1 cup per 500  
 gallons

- H. If comments by the judge are made after the show, adequate communications equipment such as a PA system, slides, or overhead projectors should be provided, if required by the judge.

### **3. Show Categories (to be used at the discretion of each local club)**

- A. Single tail (including common, comet & Shubunkin) over 3”
- B. Single tail under 3”
- C. Fantail/Ryukin over 3”
- D. Fantail/Ryukin under 3”
- E. Oranda Over 3”
- F. Oranda under 3”
- G. Eye fish (includes Telescope, Bubbleeye, and Celestial) over 3”
- H. Eye fish under 3”
- I. Dorsal-less Head Growth (Lionhead & Ranchu) over 3”
- J. Dorsal-less under 3”
- K. Other/Oddities (includes all varieties not listed above) over 3”
- L. Other/Oddities under 3”
- M. Baby Grand Champion – under 3”
- N. Reserve Grand Champion
- O. Grand Champion

Note: separate categories can be made for the following fish if the number of show entries is warranted: Shubunkin, Telescope, Lionhead, Ranchu, and Ryukin.

### **4. Judging Etiquette**

- A. Judges are encouraged to dress appropriately for the show. The status and authority of the judge is often influenced by visual and verbal signals which may serve to detract from a judge’s perceived knowledge. Proper attire will provide a positive visual sign of authority and knowledge.
- B. It is customary for a judge to provide a gift or trophy to the club in recognition of the honor accorded the judge. The trophy or gift may or may not include an AGA acknowledgement or sanction of the event, at the judge’s discretion.
- C. Judges are usually required to provide transportation to and from the event, at their expense. In some cases, the club or organization sponsoring the show may provide transportation or lodging. The club or organization is expected to provide meals and lodging for the judge at

the event. In many cases, the show organizations will also provide the judge with a gift or honorarium, as a means of expressing their thanks to the judge. The AGA encourages judges to acknowledge these gifts to the organization, and to write a thank-you to the show chairperson.