

How to put on a WPCSA judge's clinic

Donna Ley, 8/30/2012

Four things are necessary to putting on a successful WPCSA judge's clinic. They are :

1. a clinic manager,
2. a facility,
3. clinicians and
4. people who will attend the clinic.

These include those who want to obtain a WPCSA judge's card, judges who want to renew their information or continue their educations, and people who are attending, not as judges, but to simply further their education and knowledge about Welsh ponies, cobs and half Welsh. These clinics are a must for anyone who shows, breeds or trains any section of Welsh.

A. The clinic manager.

1. First, you need a committed clinic manager who has a vision of what he/she wants the clinic to cover and is willing and able to deliver on that vision. Contact the WPCSA to have the ladies send you a WPCSA Judge's Clinic Application. That lists the requirements for the clinic, the options and fee. Fill that out and mail it in as soon as you can.

2. Questions a CM needs to answer:

a. What is the clinic going to cover? There is a guideline provided by the WPCSA in the clinic application, but a clinic can cover a number of other areas in addition to what the application outlines. Do you want to concentrate more on breed type, conformation and movement? Or maybe your prospective clinic attendees want more focus on the different forms of driving. Different areas of the country have different interests.

Do your homework and find out what areas people want to see covered.

b. How much time will we devote to the clinic? To do a WPCSA judge's clinic justice, plan on at least a full day. A weekend would be even better. There are many areas to cover and you'll want to do it well. But, if you cannot afford to book a facility for a full weekend, you can do it in one long day. Make it worth your attendees' time and effort to get there.

c. Who do I have to help me? Depending on the size of the clinic, you're going to need a number of helpers to answer questions and keep things organized. If you're running solo, keep it to the size you can handle.

d. How much do I charge? You need to cover the cost of the clinic itself, and that cost will depend on how much your facility, clinicians and other amenities will cost. Keep in mind your area and who you believe will be coming. Price it high enough that you cover costs, but not so high that you price it out of the reach of normal folks.

B. The facility.

1. Finding a facility to hold the clinic. Here are some things to keep in mind:

a. What is my budget and which days are available? This can shoot you down right from the start. You'd probably love to use the state fairgrounds, but if you don't have the checkbook to cover that, be

prepared to look in your price range.

b. What other shows/events are in the area? You may have to work around other shows and events in your area. If people have a choice between a show and a clinic, you are going to lose. ;) Early spring and late fall are good choices because people who show or breed are less busy and equine facilities will be more available.

c. Will you have live animals? If you want to have live animals for teaching aids, you're going to need a place that offers stabling and an indoor arena. No one wants to sit in the weather. If you don't use live animals, you could use a meeting room in a hotel or school or just about any place where people can gather for the day/weekend. People need to be comfortable in order to listen. It's hard to pay attention to someone when you are cold, hot, wet, hungry, etc.

d. What kind of seating does the facility offer?

e. Can people bring their own chairs?

f. Is there handicap access?

g. Will there be classroom time? If so, make sure you have a suitable room or area available. You might want to have a projector for a power point presentation or videos of movement that everyone can see. Make sure there is plenty of light (or dark for the power point) and that it's quiet enough so that all can hear the clinician's voice easily. If you have a big space, plan on providing a loudspeaker system of some kind. A karaoke machine is a quick fix.

h. What about food and water? There needs to be food and beverages of some kind available. Is there a place onsite to have that or do you want it catered or leave time for folks to get into town? Should people bring their own lunch?

i. What about bathroom facilities? Does the facility have indoor bathrooms or outhouses or porta-potties? Maybe you need to have porta-potties brought in. Sometimes it's the mundane details that will ruin a weekend.

j. Where is the facility located? Is it close to a large metro area or town? Is there an airport nearby? Is it close to an interstate highway? Is it easy to find? You might have only local people attend, but make sure that others can come from far away.

2. Is lodging available nearby? It's also a very good idea to have lodging available nearby too. Even if your clinic is only 1 day, people may be traveling from a distance. They may want to come in the night before or leave the next morning. The closer that food and lodging are to your clinic facility, the better.

Time to hire the clinician(s).

C. Hiring the clinician. One person is fine, but if you have access to more than one, you can utilize each person's strengths and experiences. Here are some factors to think of before hiring your clinician:

1. Quality counts.

a. WPCSA. Choose a WPCSA Approved judge who has years of experience and a great reputation. In a perfect world, they'd ALL be awesome, but people are people. Ask around to see which

judges are recommended and respected. OR

b. Outside expert. There's no rule that says you can't have an outside person to cover performance areas. Naturally, this person will need to be approved by the WPCSA (as well as your WPCSA judge), but this is an opportunity to use a local expert in a particular discipline - the local hunter person or western pleasure trainer or top ADS driver. Don't be afraid to think outside the box.

2. Clinician.

a. What is your budget for the clinician? What does he or she charge?

b. Other clinician costs. Keep in mind that you will be paying for transportation, hotel and meals as well for this person. If you have a pretty small budget, look thru your short list and try the person who is closer to you to save some transportation costs. And since this isn't a show, maybe the clinician will stay with someone locally to eliminate a hotel bill. Talk to your clinician – he/she has been around and will have lots of ideas on how to help you make your budget work while still giving people as much education as possible.

3. Insurance. And here's something important that we often don't think of – insurance. Yes, a nasty necessity. What if someone slips on the floor and breaks a leg? What if you have live animals involved and someone gets unloaded wrong? You need some kind of a liability policy to cover those things. Check with the facility to see what they have. Maybe your club has insurance too. Usually, it's just a matter of putting a rider on an existing policy. Your insurance company may require everyone at the clinic to sign a "hold harmless clause." The WPCSA will require it, the same as when you enter at a show.

D. Getting Attendees. The last thing you need now to make your clinic rock is attendees. These will be persons who are looking to get a WPCSA judge's card (a clinic is one of the requirements), current WPCSA judges who want to brush up their knowledge, and "regular folks" who are, or want to be, breeders, trainers, exhibitors, etc. Maybe they are people from other breeds/disciplines who want to learn about Welsh ponies, cobs and half Welsh. Be inclusive. Bring everyone "into the Welsh family" because you never know how that person will impact lives later.

Tips and ideas about dealing with your attendees:

ADVERTISE, ADVERTISE, ADVERTISE. It doesn't matter how wonderful your clinic schedule, facility or clinicians are if people don't know about it. Advertise well and often. Start at least 2 months before the clinic – or when you have your date and place nailed down. Give people a chance to put it on their calendar. Life is so busy for everyone nowadays, so keep reminding them. Don't give up and just say "No one is coming because the date is wrong or the place is wrong or the economy sucks or blah, blah, blah." Give people a chance, right up to the last minute. How many of us change our minds or have our lives changed at the last minute? If you have done your homework well, people will come. Make it "An Event" that everyone will want to attend. Some great places to advertise are thru the WPCSA website, calendar and yahoo group, the

Welsh Review, all the Welsh chat groups, your local newspapers, craigslist, and any online forum. Most of these things are free.

FIND A WAY TO MAKE EACH PERSON FEEL SPECIAL. If you are going to charge your judge applicants more, give them something extra. A good idea is to have a folder for handouts, paper for taking notes, a couple of pens, etc. Upgrade to a tote bag to put it all in – have someone make simple bags with washable fabric that attendees can take home. (And have a few available for purchase!) Maybe let the applicants/judges sit in a “special” area so they are closer to the clinician. Give them extra time for questions. Even the “regular folks” should feel welcome and important, as indeed they are. Name tags for everyone. Plain white tags are OK, but maybe you can find some that are fun or have a friend who can add blue ribbons or some small detail to make them unique.

If a clinic manager has done their homework, found a good facility, great clinicians and brought in plenty of clinic attendees, everyone should have a good time and add to their knowledge of Welsh ponies, cobs and Half/Partbred Welsh. ☺