

SHOW RULES

LOVING CATS WORLDWIDE





Show Rules

LCWW - Loving Cats Worldwide

June 2nd, 2022

Written by Steven Meserve with the guidance of the FFAP (The Feline and Friendship Advisory Panel)

Steven Savant, Marilyne Gregg, Sue Hart-Jones, Nathan Gilbert, Kelly Makdissy, Tania Antenucci, Kathy Keeley, Emily Greene.



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Definitions

LCWW HQ: The office and also the club that produces events

FFAP: The Feline and Friendship Advisory Panel. The Panel is appointed by the Board of Directors for life. They may retire, step down or be removed by the BOD at any time. They act in the best interest of the CATS and LCWW at all times and without personal agenda.

BOD: The Board of Directors. The BOD are made up of partners and investors that are brought into consult on only financial matters with the FFAP. The BOD act in the best interests of the CATS and LCWW at all times and without personal agenda.

CAT: A cat not less than 10 calendar months of age.

KITTEN: A cat under 6 calendar months of age and over 4 calendar months

JUNIOR: A cat under 10 calendar months of age and over 6 calendar months

ALTER: A neutered male cat or spayed female cat over 10 calendar months

HOUSEHOLD PET KITTEN: A cat over 4 months of age, but not more than 8 months of age.

HOUSEHOLD PET: A cat over 8 months of age and must be neutered or spayed.

RING – Where the judging takes place and not more than 5 rings per show.

SHOW - One to FIVE rings, approved by the FFAP



ONE DAY SHOW - One or more rings, judged by one or more judges, in which each judge judges all assigned classes and completes all finals.

TWO OR MORE DAY SHOW - One or more rings, judged by one or more judges, who judge all assigned classes in any order, over a two or more-day period. No more than three days.

BREEDER - Registered owner of dam at the time of breeding.

EXHIBITOR - Owner or agent of a cat entered for competition in a show.

MASTER ALLBREED JUDGE – The highest level of judge with LCWW and has the ability to develop and train trainees. Also, they are licensed to judge all breeds. MAB's may have multiple licenses and may guest judge as an allbreed judge with any association without permission.

ALLBREED JUDGE LEVEL 4 - LV4's have the ability to develop and train trainees. Also, they are licensed to judge all breeds. LV4's may have multiple licenses and guest judge as an allbreed judge with any association without permission.

ALLBREED JUDGE LEVEL 3 – They are licensed to judge all breeds. LV3's may have multiple licenses and guest judge as an allbreed judge with any association without permission.

ALLBREED JUDGE LEVEL 2 - They are licensed to judge all breeds. LV2's may have multiple licenses and guest judge as an allbreed judge with any association without permission.

ALLBREED JUDGE LEVEL 1 - They are licensed to judge all breeds. LV1's may have multiple licenses and guest judge as an allbreed judge with any association without permission.

TRAINEE – They have satisfied all the requirements for entry into the LCWW training program and have been *unanimously* approved by the FFAP.

NON-CHAMPIONSHIP CLASS - Any cat, kitten or alter that is eligible for registration in LCWW and approved by the FFAP for competition in this class. This includes any breed on the NC list and all new traits or new colors that are not accepted by the FFAP.



CHAMPIONSHIP CLASS - A male, female, neutered or spayed cat, the age of 10 calendar months or over or on the opening day of the show, that is registered in LCWW as a recognized breed in LCWW.

NOVICE - A male, female, neutered or spayed cat that is registered or eligible for registration as a recognized breed and color in LCWW.

CHAMPION – A male, female, neutered or spayed cat that is eligible for this title as outlined in these rules and when confirmation has been verified.

GRAND CHAMPION - A male, female, neutered or spayed cat that is eligible for this title as outlined in these rules and when confirmation has been verified.

DOUBLE GRAND CHAMPION - A male, female, neutered or spayed cat that is eligible for this title as outlined in these rules and when confirmation has been verified.

TRIPLE GRAND CHAMPION - A male, female, neutered or spayed cat that is eligible for this title as outlined in these rules and when confirmation has been verified.

QUADRUPLE GRAND CHAMPION - A male, female, neutered or spayed cat that is eligible for this title as outlined in these rules and when confirmation has been verified.

SUPREME GRAND CHAMPION - A male, female, neutered or spayed cat that is eligible for this title as outlined in these rules and when confirmation has been verified.

ULTIMATE GRAND CHAMPION - A male, female, neutered or spayed cat that is eligible for this title as outlined in these rules and when confirmation has been verified.

. **DISQUALIFY** - The removal of any entry from competition for reasons set forth in these rules. This may be done by the show committee, a vet, the officiating judge or by the FFAP.

BEST OF THE BEST AWARDS - Award given to the highest scoring TOP 3 cat, kitten, junior, alter, household pet, household pet kitten and non-champion. The officiating judges will pick an overall Best of the Best at the close of the show.



MONORCHID - A male cat having only one descended testicle.

POLYDACTYL - A cat having more than five toes on the front foot or feet and more than four toes on the back foot or feet.

CRYPTORCHID - A male cat having no descended testicles.

Shows

Any chartered LCWW club in good standing may produce a show.

A show will be limited to the exhibition and/or judging of cats. A LCWW show may be held in conjunction with a pet expo, or any other organization. The FFAP should be consulted on all joint shows and will have the final say.

Show Dates: When a club desires a show date, they may request that date in writing to the FFAP. The FFAP will have the final say on approving the date. All things will be considered when approving or denying.

Format: The format shall be one, two or three days and on Friday, Saturday and Sunday only. The maximum number of rings will be four on Friday and five, each on Saturday and Sunday.

Show Season: This will run from April 1st – March 31st, each year.

If April 1st is a Saturday in any given year, all shows on any day in that same weekend, including shows held on Friday, shall be scored in the show year beginning April 1 of that year.

Entries: The maximum number of entries a club may accept is limited as follows is 200, excluding Exhibition only.

Show Licenses: All shows must have the approval of the FFAP. LCWW HQ will pay the licensed club a license fee of €20.00 per ring to a maximum of €280 per show weekend. This will be paid within the 30 days prior to the show.



Insurance: All licensed shows must provide their own insurance coverage based on the show venue requirements. LCWW is not responsible for any incidents, unless it is a LCWW HQ produced show.

Eligibility for Entry

Any cat of sound health, 4 calendar months of age or older on the opening day of the show, is eligible for competition in LCWW shows, subject to any exceptions stated in these Rules.

All cats that are entered into the show for competition or exhibition only, must be fully up to date with all vaccinations that are required by law of the hosting club's country. The vaccination records will be verified at check in. Cats that are not current, will not be permitted into the show hall.

Cats or kittens registered in LCWW or eligible for registration and eligible for competition will be entered in the appropriate class.

An altered kitten is eligible for entry in any LCWW show. An altered household pet kitten can be entered in the household pet kitten classes.

A cryptorchid is eligible for competition ONLY in the kitten and alter classes.

When an officiating judge is the breeder of a cat or kitten, that cat or kitten is not eligible in that ring for competition.

Any cat bred by an officiating judge, or any cat having been in the judge's possession within the previous 6 months' period, may be "Presented Only" in that ring. If the cat was ever used in the judge's breeding program, it will forever be a PO.

Cats registered and/or entered in an incorrect class may be transferred to the correct class and re-registered at the option of the owner.



A cat may be transferred from one color to another at any time without loss of previously earned points or awards.

Cats that pregnant are ineligible for competition and will be disqualified.

A cat not having all physical properties, such as eyes, ears, legs, tail (except as specified in breed standards), is ineligible for entry except in household pet classes.

The show committee, at its discretion, may refuse to accept any entry for the following reasons:

Maximum entries are received at the close of the show.

Any cat from a household where there has any infectious or contagious illness within 30 days prior to the opening date of the show is ineligible for entry and/or exhibition.

Exhibitor has caused a disturbance online or at a previous show. In this case the FFAP must be informed. The FFAP will have the final say.

The entry is prohibited by law.

The last entry day is past. The licensed club can close the show any time they wish but will be transparent and entries will not be allowed after ONE entry had been denied.

Household Pet adults must be altered to be registered and/or shown in LCWW.

All registered cats if shown as Household Pets must be re-registered as Household Pets. You can also re-register from HHP to Cat/Alter.

The show team may permit kittens 3 months of age (that are fully vaccinated with paperwork) or older to be entered for exhibition. No kittens or cats can be sold directly from the show hall or parking lot.



No kitten under the age of 3 calendar months is permitted in the show hall under any circumstance.

NON-DOMESTIC HYBRIDS - Cats which have a non-domestic ancestor as a parent, grandparent or great grandparent are not eligible for competition in Kitten, Junior, Adult, Alter, HHP, HHP Kitten Class or Non-Championship unless approved by the FFAP and with the Standard changed and approved.

Entry Procedures

Any person entering a cat or kitten in a LCWW sponsored show shall agree to abide by and uphold the rules or the organization.

Upon entering a cat in any LCWW show, the registered owner is responsible for furnishing the correct information, including, but not limited to, registered name, registration number (if known), birthdate, age on the opening date of the show, sire, dam, breeder, owner, lessee (if applicable), region of residence of owner/lessee, and the proper competitive classification.

All payments will be submitted within two weeks of entry or at least before the start of the show, whichever is sooner. No entry fee will be returned unless there are extenuating circumstances. The exhibitor may ask the FFAP for an exception and will be asked to provide details and possibly supporting documentation. The FFAP will have the final say.

The club must advertise the judges, venue and date. If any of these are changed, the club must notify the entered exhibitors. The exhibitors then have only FIVE days to ask for a refund. After FIVE days the entry fees stay with the club. The refund will be processed within 60 days.

The total amount of fees shall be refunded or kept as credit for another show that would be produced within SIX months of the cancelled show.

If an exhibitor fails to pay any entry fee or other show related debt or if a check in payment of said fees or debts is returned, the club shall notify the exhibitor and the FFAP.



No cat or kitten owned by an exhibitor who fails to resolve any such debt on or before April 25th of the following show year is eligible for awards. The FFAP will have the final say in the outcome.

Vetted and Non-Vetted Shows

The show committee or club has the option of sponsoring a "Vetted Show" or a "Non-Vetted Show."

Show flyers shall indicate whether a show is "Vetted" or "Non-Vetted".

Vetted Shows:

A licensed practicing veterinarian or veterinary tech acting for the club must examine each cat and exhibition prior to benching and shall remove any cat that shows evidence of fungus, fleas, ear mites, or any infectious or contagious illness.

The show veterinarian/tech has the authority to order the immediate removal of any sick cat from the show. If removed, the FFAP must be informed and this could include a total ban of shows and services for life.

In the event the veterinarian/tech is unable to officiate or does not appear at the designated time for the check in and a substitute veterinarian/tech cannot be replaced to conduct the exams, the show manager will step in.

Non-Vetted Shows:

Any judge or show committee member suspecting any cat of having fungus, fleas, ear mites or any infectious or contagious illness may report same to the show manager.

The show manager will consult two senior judges or one member of the FFAP (if present) and together they will make the final decision. All cats owned or agented from the questioned entry may be removed from the show and the benching area immediately disinfected and NOT



reused for the remainder of the show. The FFAP must be informed and this could include a total ban of shows and services for life.

Benching Procedures

The show team have the option of assigning benching spaces for all entries. All entries of a particular exhibitor shall be benched together.

No change in benching arrangements can be made without the permission of the show team.

All entries are benched in "double spaces" No more than THREE kittens or TWO juniors/adults may be benched together.

All exhibitors will keep their benching area clean at all times.

All trash and litter must be taken with the exhibitors at the end of each day.

The show team will issue small trash bags and have them available at all times.

The show team can ask and without retaliation for an exhibitor to clean their area at any time during the show.

Any exhibitor that has left a mess at the close of the day will be addressed by the show team and the FFAP will be informed.

Disabled exhibitors will always be given preference to benching areas.

Requirements for Titles

Titled can be earned by Adults, Alters and Household Pets.

Points will be awarded for places gained in finals only



Allbreed

- 1 = 300 points
- 2 = 250 points
- 3 = 240 points
- 4 = 230 points
- 5 = 220 points
- 6 = 210 points
- 7 = 200 points
- 8 = 190 points
- 9 = 180 points
- 10 =170 points

Specialty:

- 1 = 200 points
- 2 = 150 points
- 3 = 140 points
- 4 = 130 points
- 5 = 120 points
- 6 = 110 points
- 7 = 100 points
- 8 = 90 points
- 9 = 80 points
- 10 = 70 points

If the class has less than 10 in competition, the final points are less 50.



Points required for Titles

CHAMPION: 500 points

GRAND CHAMPION: 1000 points

DOUBLE GRAND CHAMPION: 2000 points

TRIPLE GRAND CHAMPION: 3000 points

QUADRUPLE GRAND CHAMPION: 4000 points

SUPREME GRAND CHAMPION: 7000 points and TWO BESTS as a QGC from TWO different

judges

ULTIMATE GRAND CHAMPION: 10000 points and 4 BESTS from THREE different judges

Regional and International Points are scored the same plus CATS DEFEATED.

The top 30 finals will count for kittens, juniors and household pet kittens

The top 75 finals will count for adults, alters and household pets

An AB BEST in a count of 70 will award the cat 369 points for Regional and International Points.

If the class has less than 10 in competition, the final points are 50 less.

Best of the Best Awards will be calculated using the above points plus cats defeated.



Regions:

North America

South America

United Kingdom

Europe

Asia

Responsibilities of Show Management

A show team should consist of at least five individuals who are thoroughly familiar with show rules and show management. Ideally, there should be one Lifetime Founding FRIEND or THREE annual FRIENDS and one judge.

The show team will take exceptional care of the cats and the exhibitors. The show management or any member of the club, or LCWW can be held liable for the loss of or accident to the cats, carriers or other personal property of any exhibitor.

The show team will provide an Approved First Aid Kit or First Aider provided by the venue.

The show team will provide the marked catalogue and copies of the judges' books within 24 hours of the close of the show.

The show management will not permit rings/benching to be dismantled during advertised show hours.

Marked Catalogues: The show committee is required to forward via email one completely marked catalogue and all judge books to LCWW HQ within 24 hours after the close of the show.

The show committee is required to forward one completely marked catalogue to each judge within 48 hours.



Clubs failing to send marked catalogues within 24 hours after the close of the show will addressed by the FFAP.

Exhibitor's List. A complete Exhibitor's List with email addresses must be sent with the Marked Catalogue to LCWW HQ.

All catalogues will be digital and sent to the exhibitors, in a printable format, no more that 48 hours prior to the show. The show team may offer to print catalogues for the exhibitors and will change a fee for that service.

The club must provide a printed catalogue for the Master Clerk, if needed.

Catalogues must have the LCWW logo as well as any HQ sponsors listed on the cover. HQ will send any adverts applicable to the club and they must be added to the catalogue.

The Master Clerk will be compensated by the club with complimentary entries or a fee mutually agreed on. They will also be provided lunch.

Ring Assistants will be compensated by the club with complimentary entries or a fee mutually agreed on. They will also be provided lunch.

There should be one Master Clerk and at least TWO Ring Assistants per show day.

The Ring Assistant will keep the pens clean and will assist the judge with calling cats and keeping the ring numbers organized.

Entries will be accepted as received by the entry clerk or system, and no class will be limited.

The entry clerk or system will acknowledge receipt of all entries within 5 days of receipt.



Judges:

A judge NOT judge more than 200 cats per day.

Judges may handle cats up to three times per 3 day show.

All judges must be licensed by LCWW.

In an emergency situation, a guest judge may be used, but they must be authorized by THREE members of the FFAP.

Judging Rings

Rings will be provided by the show management for each judge.

All pens/popups must have sides and back covered. If arranged in the corner, every effort should be made not to have cats see each other.

Judging tables should be adjustable for the height of the judge.

Cat Pens/popups in judging rings must be placed on tables or other solid support.

Junior and Adult intact males shall not be benched in adjoining cages in the judging ring.

The order of judging breeds or colors of breeds will be decided and/or changed at the discretion of the show management/judge only to allow a smooth-running show.

Final numbers will not be announced. The class final will be called, only.

If a cat is being judged in a ring, it may not be removed from that ring to be placed in a finals ring and vice versa. The cats may not be removed at any time during a final presentation.

Only materials related to LCWW may be distributed at a LCWW Show.



Responsibilities of Exhibitors

An exhibitor is expected to be well versed in the LCWW Show Rules.

If an exhibitor violates these Show Rules, they will be contacted by the FFAP.

An exhibitor will not make known to an officiating judge which entry belong to them. The exhibitors should not chat, make small talk or go behind the judge table for any reason. LCWW Judges are very focused and busy.

No collars or costumes allowed on the cats.

An exhibitor will not make it known to an officiating judge where their entry has placed in any other ring.

The exhibitor may not use a cat toy or any other distracting item while the cat is in the ring or on the table. This will call attention to the owner and the judge may disqualify at their discretion.

No exhibitor will use any liquid or aerosol substance into a judging pen except the official cage cleaning solution in use in that ring, or at the judge's specific direction.

Exhibitors will not sit in the ring holding cats prior to or during judging except with the explicit permission of the judge.

An exhibitor will not groom an entry while it is in the judging ring.

An exhibitor may alert the Master Clerk to advise that the cat is nervous or shy and extra caution may be needed. The Master Clerk will inform all judges. The exhibitors will not speak to the judge, directly.

Any cat that aggressively bites or attacks ANYONE in the show will be ineligible for competition for the remainder of the show. The FFAP will be informed and will decide if the cat can be entered to a show again.



All nails need to be clipped. A judge may disqualify the cat at their discretion for sharp nails.

Judges will authorize that photos and videos are allowed by visible sign in the ring.

An exhibitor will not take any action which would cause physical harm to come to a cat or a person, during the show.

When transporting a cat through the show hall, an exhibitor shall carry the cat in both hands or in a carrier.

If a cat requires special penning in a judging ring, the exhibitor will speak to the MASTER CLERK and they will inform the judges.

The breeding of cats in the show hall is prohibited.

Any negativity, harassment or overall bad behavior by anyone present in the show will be immediately addressed by the show manager and the FFAP informed. The Show Manager has the right to ask anyone to leave for disruptive behavior.

Catalogue

The club must publish a catalogue online no more than 48 hours prior to the show.

The inside page MUST include:

Full name of the club(s) sponsoring the show

LCWW LOGO

Names of all judges.

Names of the show committee indicating official position.

Date(s) of show(s).



Name of the master clerk.

All entries must appear in numerical sequence in the printed catalogue. The order of entries and series for catalogue numbers appears in the standing rules.

Number System:

All cats will be in numerical, alphabetical order by breed:

1-200 by hair length:

Kittens - LH

Kittens -SH

Juniors – LH

Juniors - SH

Adult - LH

Adult - SH

Alter - LH

Alter - SH

Household Pet Kitten - LH

Household Pet Kitten - SH

Household Pet - LH

Household Pet - SH

Non-Champions - LH

Non-Champions - SH

The catalogue will have the following information for each entry; entry number, name, registration number (if available), date of birth, age, parents, breeder, owner and region.



Household pet entries do not need parents listed.

In shows consisting of a series of rings, the catalogue will be printed as follows:

A column for each ring, Entry number, name and spaces for awards must appear on the same line.

A marked catalogue will include all awards in the entire show.

Best of Breed and Finals

Cats are awarded only TOP THREE in BREED. The judge will present the BREED class when there are FOUR or more in competition or announce it, if less than FOUR.

No points are awarded for breed awards.

The judge may present *up to* TOP 10 in all classes in BOTH formats, but not less than FIVE, unless the class has less than FIVE.

Non-Champions will not have points for finals but will be judged and presented as any other class.

All cats will be presented for final awards during advertised show hours, unless special permission to leave has been granted by the show manager. The judge could present without the cats present ONLY after advertised show hours and with permission of the show manager.

The judge will make every effort to present finals during show hours and also present every cat out of the pen, unless the cat in uncooperative.

Under no circumstances may a cat be REMOVED from a ring during a final presentation. Judging will take precedence IF the cat is not already in the final presentation.

An exhibitor will NEVER alert a judge during judging that a cat is needed for a final in another ring. This could result in disqualification at the discretion of the judge.



Invitations to Judges

Clubs holding sanctioned shows under the rules of LCWW shall staff judges approved by the FFAP.

The judge will be asked by email or other means. The acceptance by email or by text is considered binding.

The club will send the judges by email and no less than 5 days prior all information in regard to pick up, hotel, restaurants, etc.

Judges WILL NOT solicit judging assignments.

Judges must give every effort to follow through and if not, give the club the most notice possible.

Any judge who is bound to judge a show WILL NOT accept another agreement to judge a show on that same date unless the original show is cancelled.

Judges are required to remain ACTIVE and JUDGING for the advertised hours of the show.

Judge Expenses

Judges will be reimbursed for their time and expertise. Their expertise is defined by the FFAP.

The club shall reimburse reasonable expenses incurred, including transportation, hotels and meals. No judge will charge a club more than the lowest available airfare. The judge may wish to fly another airline but will only be reimbursed the lowest fare. The judge will also pay their own airfare, in advance, unless disclosed to the club at the time of invitation.

The judge will also inform the club of any other expenses at the time of invitation. This will include mileage, parking, taxis, transit, etc. The club will have the right to cancel the judge and/or not pay for these extras, if this is not disclosed at the time, in writing.



The club will advise the judge of club dinners or if the judge will be required to pay for their meals. The judge may not charge more than €25.00 for dinner, €15.00 for lunch or €10 for breakfast.

The judge may not charge a club for any alcohol and any alcohol **ordered by** the judge will go on a separate check and paid by the judge.

All expenses shall be paid within ONE week from the close of the show. No judge will demand cash payment.

In case of cancellation by the club or the judge, the party responsible for the cancellation with be responsible for the payment. If the show is cancelled by no fault of anyone, then the FFAP will be consulted.

Judge Expectations

Judges and/or members of their households may not enter a cat for competition in any part of a LCWW show where they are judging.

In the case of an emergency and a judge is asked to fill in, the cats entered may be shown through an agent, or the fees will be refunded.

All cats bred by a judge OR used for breeding by that judge and no longer owned by the judge are not eligible for competition in that judge's ring. They may be presented, if the owner wants for count only.

The judges will make their decisions without bias or preference.

The judge will look presentable in an attire that they are comfortable with and able to work well in and photograph well.



The judge is the ultimate authority in the ring. Their decisions for placement, disqualify and withhold wins will never be questioned by show management, exhibitors, other judges or the FFAP.

Only Licensed Judges, trainees or approved handlers may handle cats on the judging table or present them in the finals, except under emergency circumstances.

A judge will judge all cats and place their awards in accordance with the LCWW Standards, not upon his/her personal likes or dislikes.

A judge may not judge or handle more than 200 cats in 1 day.

Any cat that is difficult on the judging table should be penalized for temperament, but the cat will be counted present and competing in that ring.

At the option of the owner, a judge may transfer any kitten or cat incorrectly entered as to sex, class or breed.

When a cat lacks overall merit, the judge will withhold wins (WW) from that cat. The judge will inform the exhibitor of this, transparently. There will be no further discussion unless initiated by the judge. The judge's decision is final.

The judge will mark "WW" in the space provided for judging in their judge's book. No further notation is required.

Disqualification (DQ) will be used for those entries which are removed from competition for faults listed in their breed standard.

When an entry is disqualified, the judge will mark "DQ" in the space provided for judging in their judge's books. The judge shall state the reason for the "DQ".

A judge **WILL** DQ any cat that bites and alert show management, discretely. The FFAP will be notified by the show manager. The cat will be ineligible to be shown the rest of the day/weekend and no refund will be given.



The FFAP will decide if the cat can be shown again.

Any cat that has been surgically altered with an attempt to deceive will be disqualified and removed from competition by show management and the FFAP notified.

Male cats in the adult championship class not having two descended testicles will be disqualified.

The judge makes no effort to know the normal size of the testicles, just that there are two and palpable. A judge may not ask if a cat has been chemically implanted.

Judges may WW or DQ at their discretion without fear of retaliation.

Judges will DQ all cats when required by the breed standard.

Only Household Pets are eligible for competition that have been declawed. Kittens, Juniors, Adults, Alters and Non-Champions will be Dq'd if declawed.

Cats that are blind, deaf, severely cow-hocked, cross eyed, have the inability to breathe properly, have small nostrils, severe jaw and bite issues, are extremely small in size or have issues with the sternum, regardless of breed or standard, will be Dq'd. The show management will be informed as well as the FFAP.

The judge's books will be signed in pen and turned into the Master Clerk at the close of judging. The judge will copy and scan for their records. If the judge cannot do this, the show manager will assist.

Any changes or corrections made in the judge's book should be initialed by the judge.

Judges will record all absentees and transfers in the judge's book.

Judges are required to fill out all final awards forms.



The judge will not need to verify the count of the classes. The Master Clerk will verify the count per class and the highest count per day will be recorded for all rings.

Kittens, Juniors, Adults, Alters, Non-Champions:

Each judge will select a BEST, SECOND, THIRD of BREED of every breed and mark their book appropriately.

Non-Champions are all breeds not advanced to Championship and those with traits or colors not accepted by the FFAP approved standard.

Household Pets and Household Pet Kittens will be awarded a Merit, when applicable.