

# TIPS FOR COACHES

## Recruitment

- Connect with teachers whose courses address animal welfare topics. Ask them to share the contest brochure with students.
- Send notices to behavior and welfare groups or clubs.
- Engage your interested students as ambassadors. Word of mouth among students plays a big part in generating interest.
- Lack of travel funds can make it difficult for students to commit, besides travel grants provided through AVMA, try to think outside the box when looking for funding: does your school have other livestock judging teams that receive funding, does your state have livestock groups that might sponsor your students? Have you considered a plant sale or dog bathes? Try to make fundraising fun!
- One of the main reasons students attend this event is to have fun! When recruiting students focus on creating an enjoyable environment for them to learn about animal welfare.

## Scenario Assessment Preparation

- Parallel material is presented in the virtual scenarios to allow for comparison, but it may take various forms: images, information across multiple slides, a mix of inputs (resources) and outputs (animal response). Sometimes these deliberately do not match up!
- Use one of the common animal welfare frameworks to guide your assessment of the scenarios and how you present your findings to the judges (e.g. Five Freedoms, Three Circles Model, etc.) on welfare of the animals, while keeping in mind existing scientific research you can use to support your assessment of the impact on welfare. Affective state, physical health, and behavior are equally important.  
Example: In the 2017 racing greyhound scenario, the impact of racing was only one factor out of many that students had to consider; welfare of the animals as dogs was paramount.
- Remember that the quality of the presentation and evidence-based reasoning are as important as the choice made when determining which animal has the best quality of life. A team may give the wrong answer but still score highly with a solid presentation and supporting reasoning.

## Coaching for Success

- Try to make the experience fun and exciting for students. You may not be able to incorporate all these tips, the important thing is to try your best, do what you can, and keep it fun!
- Hold weekly, in-person meetings. Meeting length may vary (usually between 1 and 3 hours), but structure is critical to engage your team members. For instance, choose a species prior to each meeting, and assign topics to each student to present. Tailor the topics so that student commitment represents 1-2 hours of preparation for the meeting. Also consider assigning other tasks, like creating a reference list for each species to be utilized by the team.
- Promote active discussion and constructive feedback during meetings. This is a good way to increase individual team members' commitment. Active discussion of both theoretical concepts and scientific evidence also helps identify potential knowledge gaps and improves communication techniques.
- Work to get team members familiar with each other's personalities and strengths. This will help improve your team's efficiency.
- Dedicate one of the weekly meetings to a workshop where the team decides each team member's responsibility in both team preparation and during the live assessment at the contest. This also improves efficiency.
- Consider meeting with another judging team coach (e.g. livestock or horse) to learn how they prepare which may help give you new ideas on how to prepare your team for AWJAC®.
- Support your team through literature search: demonstrate how to perform a proper literature search and how to use reference lists from good sources to identify new searches, consider providing peer-reviewed journal articles, or suggesting book chapters. The level of support will vary depending on whether students are graduates, undergraduates or veterinary students.
- Use practice scenarios during the weekly meetings. Practice scenarios help students work through team dynamics and reaching consensus. Past AWJAC® scenarios are available for use at [awjac.org](http://awjac.org).
- Remind students that time is limited during the contest. Help students focus on identifying key items, reasoning and outlining their oral presentation.
- Create a team assessment practice for the live scenario, as well as the virtual ones. If possible, a tour of animal facilities may provide a good opportunity to prepare for the live scenario.
- It's not always easy to determine if your team is ready. In addition to subject matter mastery, interactions among students and their comfort presenting orally are good indicators of readiness.

