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Mari-Beth O'Neill  
Americian Kennel Club  
AVP of Special Services  
5580 Centerview Dr.  
Raleigh, NC 27606

Dear Ms. O'Neil:

We are writing to you because we want to follow-up to our email with a proposal for the AKC to consider a major change to improve the Juniors Program.

As a family, we have competed in Dog Showing both Juniors and conformation for five years. We have competed in many Juniors events and have ended up many times in the top 4 positions or not placing at all. When we first started we never knew why we lost. This is because we never knew what the set criteria for the evaluation of the Juniors were. Also we were not sure what we did wrong if we lost. Many times, when you would ask the judge the reason you lost he or she could not answer the question. This doesn't help because how can you improve if you don't know what to improve on. What makes things more frustrating is that you have to earn 10 wins in Juniors to compete in some of the top Juniors events. The Juniors that finish in the top 4 places in each class at an event are all equally good. One could argue that they all should receive something for their efforts. Juniors is not about showing the dog, but about handling a dog.

In conformation you get nothing for coming in reserve or opposite. However, in Junior Showmanship the Juniors should get something for coming in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and even going to multiple events. It is so demotivating especially to a child who is between 10 -18 when all you can do is finish in the top 4 positions and never get that first place win. We constantly over hear new parents and even parents whose child has been showing in Juniors for awhile. They say things like, "Why did my child lose? Was it her or his handling skills? Did they do the "L" improperly? Does the judge not like little dogs?" When they go up to the judge to ask why, many times the judge can't remember. The fee to enter one Junior Showmanship competitions is \$25. To go to a handling class it costs \$15 or less. In the handling class the teacher tells you what to improve on and how to win. At a dog show you pay all this money and when you lose it's like all that money went down the drain. At least you want to know why you didn't win so next time you can.

We would like to propose a **Point System** for all Juniors. The point system would reward not just the top 4 places but all juniors who attended the event. The point system would provide a set criteria to evaluate all Juniors and provide them a mechanism to at least know what they did wrong at event and where they need to improve. The point system would reward a

Junior who may not finish in the top 4 spots but who goes every weekend and is committed to the sport. Overall, the point system would reward all juniors and motivate them to continue competing even if they do not win every event. The ultimate goal of the point system would be to motivate Juniors to compete more and to help them improve and potentially attract more kids to the sport. For judges it would provide a uniform set of criteria on how to evaluate each Junior handlers skills.

### Proposed Junior Point System

Novice Juniors and Open Juniors would be evaluated slightly differently because Novice Juniors are just starting in the sport. Each judge would evaluate a Junior based on 5 specific areas. Within these areas the Judge would provide a score from 1 to 3:

1 - **Needs Improvement**

2 – **Average** – performed OK, but could still improve.

3 – **Outstanding.**

The specific criteria areas:

1. **Appearance** - how well the Junior is dressed for the event and how well their dog is groomed. Are they presentable?
2. **Presentation** - how well the Junior and the dog move around the ring during their specific evaluation. Do they act as a team?
3. **Stacking** – how well did they free stack their dog?
- 4 and 5. **Handling Patterns** - a triangle (forward or backward), an “L,” etc. A judge has the option to do one handling pattern in the novice classes vs. two in the open classes.

A judge would add up the class score. At this point the judge could have top 4 places. However, if there is a tie then the judge would make all the top handlers do one more handling pattern. The handling pattern would determine the tie break, but not be added to the final score.

The top 4 placements in a Junior class would earn additional points to their score and the best junior overall would receive additional points. There is no reward today for Best Junior Handler at an event.

**A chart of how the point system would work**

Junior Number	Appearance	Presentation	Stacking	Handling Pattern #1	Handling Pattern #2	Class Score	Handling Pattern if there is a tie related to the top 4 placements . Score will not be added to final score	Final Placement	Additional Points related to top 4 places	Final Score
Junior #1										
Junior #2										
Junior #3										
Junior #4										
Junior #5										
Junior #6										
Junior #7										

General Scoring: 3 Points - Outstanding  
 2 Points - Average  
 1 Point - Needs Improvement

Class Scores for top 4 finishers: 1<sup>st</sup> Placement – 5 points  
 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4 Points  
 3<sup>rd</sup> - 3 Points  
 4<sup>th</sup> - 2 Points

Best Overall Junior at an event: Additional 5 Points

The point system could be implemented from a system perspective no different then earning points in conformation. This isn't the only type of Juniors program that has a point system. The American Hunter-Jumper Foundation, Inc (AHJF) also has a point system for Juniors (see Attachment 1). They have a more complex point system with more specific areas. If this point system is put in place you could also have a place on the AKC website where Juniors can go and enter their Junior Handler # in the AKC Store and find out their progression on their points related to that year or an event. They could even purchase point progression reports.

We believe a point system would provide all Juniors with an opportunity to accumulate points as a result of their participation at every show. For those Juniors who win in the top places they will earn more points. Then ones that place below them will win fewer points. However, the Junior that does not place will still earn points if he or she shows every weekend. Potentially they could qualify for events where the top Juniors in the county compete. Ultimately, kids

earning points at every event would be motivated to get more points and more Juniors will want to continue competing. This will be better than getting frustrated and not continuing. Potentially, more kids would be attracted to the sport which is really the ultimate goal of Juniors to attract kids to the sport at an early age who will continue in dog events as an adult, either showing in conformation as handler, breeder, or other events like agility.

Our proposal is just a starting point and would be more than willing to participate in a committee to evaluate, investigate, and implement a point system type program. We think it is important for the AKC, whatever the decision they decide, to survey other Juniors to get input from them on what they like or do not like with today's system. Also their opinions on a proposed system like the point system we are proposing and if this system has already been proposed then we would like for the AKC to reconsider implementing a similar system.

We love the sport of dog showing. It has been one of the most exciting activities we have done as a family. We would like the sport to be more fair in terms of the judges having a criteria for evaluation and not subjective. Also to provide an opportunity for Juniors to improve their handling skills. A lot of these kids will continue competing as a hobby or as a career in dog showing and it is important to provide them a formal mechanism to do that.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Leah Tedesco - Open Senior  
Olivia Tedesco - Open Junior  
Jim Tedesco - Junior Parent  
Maria Tedesco - Junior Parent

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Cc: Dennis B. Sprung - President/CEO  
David W. Roberts - AVP Registration and Customer Services

## **Attachment 1**

WHAT IS IT? The American Hunter-Jumper Foundation Inc. (AHJF) and Dover Saddlery announce a new hunter program designed to positively impact the future of the show hunter sport in America. In this class, junior riders competing at the non-recognized level are introduced to a hunter type competition that will emphasize and reward their ability to present their horse or pony. The riders from each region (one from the East and one from the West) accumulating the most points (using the point system below) from their top three shows will be named regional Champions. Regional Champions will be invited to come, accompanied by an adult, as the guests of the AHJF and Dover Saddlery to the Capital Challenge Horse Show to meet the sport's top professionals and watch show hunters compete at a world level. (To learn about the 2005 weekend go to [http://www.ahjf.org/pr\\_2005dover-jrhtchall.shtml](http://www.ahjf.org/pr_2005dover-jrhtchall.shtml))

WHAT IS THE COMPETITION YEAR OF THE AHJF/DOVER SADDLERY JUNIOR HUNTER CHALLENGE AND HOW WILL REGIONAL WINNERS BE NOTIFIED? The JHC points begin accumulating on September 16, 2005 and close on August 31, 2006 for the 2006 competition year. The 2007 competition year will run from September 1, 2006 to August 31, 2007. Once the regional winners are identified, they will be contacted via overnight mail with an acceptance package. The regional winners are required to confirm their participation in the educational weekend by September 20. Should the winner choose not to participate in the educational weekend, the AHJF may invite the reserve champion to participate.

CLASS SPECIFICATIONS: The American Hunter-Jumper Foundation/Dover Saddlery Junior Hunter Challenge will be judged on hunter showmanship and will be run as a two-phase event. The first phase is to be shown over a course of eight hunter type fences 2'6" in height (in & outs excluded) and include two changes of direction. Open numerical scoring (using the Hunter Challenge scoring system) will be used. The top scoring six riders will be invited into the ring for Phase II. Phase II must consist of six elements or fences and each rider will be scored for the second round. The first and second round score will be added for a total class score. The rider with the highest score is the class winner.

HUNTER CHALLENGE SCORING SYSTEM: The AHJF / Dover Saddlery Junior Hunter Challenge will be judged using the open numerical scoring system (each rider will be assigned a score from 100-1 to reflect the result of their ride). The AHJF has sought the advice of many of the sport's top and respected judges in order to create a unique judges card specifically designed for this class. With this judging system, the judge will score the jumps individually (rating the horses' movement, way of going and jumping style), using mandatory deductions (for major and minor faults). Once the judge has scored the jumps, she/he will add points based on Rider Influence (the rider's decision-making skills and ability to present his/her horse) and Turnout (both horse and riders overall turnout and presentation). From this she/he will assign a score to each round. Scores from phase I and phase II will be added together to determine the class placing.

AHJF / Dover Saddlery JUNIOR HUNTER CHALLENGE SCORING SYSTEM

Rider Number: 1112

PLEASE RATE JUMPS 1 THROUGH 8 USING TRADITIONAL JUDGE MARKS THEN REDUCE THE APPROPRIATE DEDUCTIONS USING THE JUDGES' MARKS BELOW. STEP 2: PLACE IN A THE RIDER INFLUENCE COLUMN ADDING A SCORE OF 0 THROUGH 20 (20 BEING PERFECT). STEP 3: PLACE IN THE TARNISH COLUMN ADDING A SCORE OF 0 THROUGH 10 (10 BEING PERFECT). STEP 4: ADD THE JUMP SCORE, RIDER INFLUENCE AND TARNISH NUMBERS FOR THE OVERALL POINT SCORE.

**ELIMINATION POINTS:** Late entry, Fall of horse or rider, Off course.

**FAULTS:** In balance - award 20, Bad driver - award 20, Loose seat - award 10, Head in neck - award 10.

**EXCELLENCE:** Superior jump, Perfect pace change, Strong pace control in event, Working in distance, Working in leg, Striking in course of jump, Working away, Riding on in backing, Not completing an element (open 10).

**ADJUSTMENT POINTS (deduct 1-5):** First rail, Late lead change, Straddle over or high adjustment, Placing on end of ring, Jumping in corner of jump, Lead change in front of jump, Clipped lower end, High lead, Late or partial completion of an element (open 5).

**REMARKS:** (Blank)

	Jump 1	Jump 2	Jump 3	Jump 4	Jump 5	Jump 6	Jump 7	Jump 8	40		20		10		SCORE
									Jump Score	Rider Influence	Tarnish	SCORE	SCORE	SCORE	
Round 1	marks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	45	20	10	70		
Final Score	7	8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1						

  

	Jump or element						40		20		10		Total Score	Placement
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Jump Score	Rider Influence	Tarnish	SCORE Phase II	SCORE Phase I			
Round 2	marks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	48	20	10	70	70	140	1	
Final Score	8	8	1	1	1	1								

Judges Comments - Deductions: good construction.

(click above for more detailed view of judge's card)

**CLASS POINT KEEPING** Points will be awarded to sixth place in each AHJF/Dover class as follows: First place, 10 points, then 6, 4, 2, 1, 1/2. Those points will be multiplied by the number of riders in the class for an event point total. Riders can track their points at [www.ahjf.org](http://www.ahjf.org). Rider's may show in as many AHJF/Dover Saddlery Junior Hunter Challenge classes as they wish. However, only the points from their top three shows will count toward regional point totals.

**RIDER ELIGIBILITY**

- Open to Junior riders (riders under 18 years of age at December 1 of the current competition year)
- Rider must not have shown at USEF recognized shows (in the current competition year) and may not have competed over fences exceeding 2'9" in height.
- Rider's may show in as many AHJF/Dover Saddlery Junior Hunter Challenge classes as they wish. However, only the points from their top three shows will count toward regional awards.

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