

To: IBC Show Entrants

From: IBC Judging Board

Subject: Following Show Procedures and General Advice



Hi,

Thank you very much for sending your fish to shows! We very much appreciate it because we know it isn't easy and without entries there can be no shows.

While we appreciate every entry, we do want to remind you that there are basic rules around showing, and that all people involved in the show, from the chapter hosting to the participants showing, all have to follow them. The rules are fairly standard and are meant to help ensure a smooth show and a fair judging.

The first two chapters of the IBC Standards covers showing. They are a little bit out-dated, and we are working on updating them to make them more current and applicable, but in the essence of the Standards, they are still the guides we follow.

The main parts we want to re-emphasize right now are:

1. Plan your entries!

Evaluate your fish and your fishroom and your long term breeding goals. If you're thinking of showing, watch all the fish you jar and train them regularly. When sending to a show, think about what you're doing.

a. Send only what you can afford to lose.

Also known as the rule of "breed your best, send your second best." It's human nature to always want to send our best fish to the shows so they will win prizes, but keep in mind that there is always a danger. While all show committees do their utmost best to take good care of your fish, there are risks involved in showing. If you send fish by mail, the boxes could be lost or delayed, the water at a show might be contaminated, a fish in a nearby jar at a show might be sick and your fish catch it and bring it home, the tables the jars are sitting on could collapse, the fish might flare too much and blow their fins, fish might jump out of their jars (lids and all)... the list of what might happen goes on, and unfortunately the list is from things that have happened in the past. Showing is a risk. You have to **know** that it is a risk and plan your showing accordingly. Always, but ALWAYS keep your best fish for breeding if you plan on continuing that line. 95% of the time, showing goes fine and the fish go to the show, and then they come home happy and you feed them and send them out for the next show. However, you always have to plan for that other 5% and never risk your main breeding lines.

b. Train your fish

We know it sounds silly, but there really is an art to preparing a fish for showing. Think about what happens during a show – the fish have to travel long distances sometimes for days to get there, they then are dumped into new water they've never been in before, they get one night to rest, and then they have to flare, flare, and keep flaring all day long. Good healthy fish are essential, and fish that flare on command and are able to keep it up are also important. We dq

for fish with swim bladder problems, and we can't judge a fish that won't display. Advice for training bettas for shows is:

- As your show fish grow, keep putting them in larger containers. Some shows use 4 inch by 4 inch jars ("beanie baby containers") to display the fish in for shows – this is for display for a few days and it's so shows can have more fish in a row and can easily move the jars around. It's **not** a good size to raise your fish in, at least not long term. Fish need to have a good balance of body and fins. A general rule of thumb is that the smaller the jar, the longer the fins will grow but the body will stay small, while the larger the space, the body will grow large but the fins won't grow as much. (Some breeders have found ways around this – good for them, and we applaud their techniques. But overall, this rule usually holds true.) You should think about raising the fish in increasing container sizes so that both their body and fins will grow proportionately and so the betta can swim easily and is healthy. (To save room in your fish room, you can always keep reserve fish in smaller containers and move them to the bigger ones as you sell the others.)
- Card your show fish. This literally means putting opaque cards (index cards, cut pieces of cardboard, whatever works) between the jarred fish so they can't see each other. Then pull those cards out at least three times a day and let them see each other. Not being able to see each other for a long time, and then suddenly seeing each other encourages the fish to flare and display. This also mimics how it is done at shows, so it trains them to get used to the procedure. Regular flaring also develops their fins and encourages width between rays (like practicing piano playing expands the finger range). A really good halfmoon with an exact 180 degrees at show time can be born as a delta with a 165 or so range and then flare-trained out to a nice perfect 180.

Note – you don't have to card your non-show fish. It creates more work for you, and the fish will be more entertained by seeing their neighbors then seeing a flat nothing all the time. The problem with non-carded fish for showing is they get used to seeing each other and then don't bother to flare anymore.

- Move your fish around. Growing fish in barracks systems with a central filtration system sounds like heaven for those of us who have had to do too many water changes, but it also means the fish never ever move. They get in their container and then stay there most of their lives. Then suddenly they get yanked out, shipped around, put in small containers and those containers are regularly moved around and around during a show as the classes are changed and as the judges move the fish to see the best ones side by side. A fish that has never been moved in his or her life is going to be shell shocked from the experience and not as ready to flare when that card is pulled. Move the fish regularly. If they are in barracks, switch them around for different partners, and at least one week before a show, put them in jars and start moving them more often. If they're already in jars, switch them around periodically. Get them used to the handling and moving.

- Keep in mind show conditions and the judging. There was one breeder we knew who used to regularly carry a clipboard and flashlight when coming around to feed the fish. You don't have to go to that extreme, usually, but be aware of things you might inadvertently be training the fish to. One breeder kept a lot of the fish on a lower rack and regularly bent over the top to see and feed them – all those fish learned to swim vertically so that they could turn their faces up and see the breeder. Looked funny as heck in the shows and made every judge who saw them wonder if they had a swimming problem (one of the things we dq for). So watch your show fish and make sure they're developing good show traits, not odd ones. 😊
- c. Keep an eye on your fish room.
- Fish change over time. Sometimes what looked like a promising fish to start with doesn't hold that promise over time. Other times a late-bloomer will suddenly perk up and go "me! it's all about me!". Go through your fish often and check who should move up or down in the ranks. This way too, you'll be very familiar with your fish and won't have as hard a decision time when it comes to the show.
2. Prepare for the show.
- a. Scheduling.
- Keep an eye on the IBC Show Schedule and know which shows are coming up and which you want to send fish to. Remember that while there's a two week period between most shows, if you're mailing fish, that's not a lot of time to have them home between shows and if you're using the same fish, they might get tired. Some people send alternating strings of fish to shows – their A group and their B groups (with C in reserve). Watch when the holidays are, because you'll have one less day to ship if there's a Monday holiday before a show weekend.
- b. Not all shows are alike.
- Some shows have different entry fees. Some shows require pre-registration by Monday, others by Wednesday. Some shows allow entrants to bench fish the morning of a show, some require it by the night before. CHECK THE SHOW INFORMATION. All shows are required to put out information about their shows to entrants. Read through it, and don't always assume that it will be exactly the same. Make sure you have the right information for the right show.
- c. Expenses.
- Fish showing can be expensive. Plan out how many fish you can send, the weight of the box, and the shipping prices. Don't forget the show fees as well. You can offset some of the costs by auctioning fish off when they get to a show, but keep in mind that some fish may not sell, and they may not all go for more than the minimum bids. There are some breeders that keep track of how well fish sell at different shows and plan their show season accordingly – sending more fish for auction at the ones that regularly sell for decent prices, and using that money to make up for the shows that don't have as big of auction crowds.
- d. Shipping.
- Plan this **before** you send the fish out! Make sure you have a good box with good styrofoam insulation and of a size that will hold the fish you want to send. You can get boxes from local

fish stores (beg a manager for their left-overs), from online (more expensive but secure), from receiving fish yourself, from chemical or medical companies (be careful of what was previously shipped in them!), or by making them yourself (cheaper and efficient, but does leave gaps). Other people in your local fish clubs might have lots of boxes too – we tend to stockpile them. Ask around, and think about your needs.

Local chapters can also go in on shipping together to a show – get together the weekend before the show and everybody put in their fish and then have one person send it out and get it back. Be careful and plan the number of fish sending well, and also make sure the show chair knows you're doing this! You also have to make sure the bags are marked with the entrant's name if you're sending more than one entrant in a box.

If you are re-using a box for multiple shows, please do NOT ship beat up, waterstained boxes that are falling apart. Buy a new box. The Post Office may refuse to ship a box that is damaged, or if it appears to be leaking liquid they may hold it as potential hazardous material. Have some respect for your fish and the host club and spend the \$5 to use a new box. The same goes for the size of the box - either use a box that fits all of your fish without overflowing, or buy a bigger box.

Time the shipping of your fish to arrive as close to the chapter's "must receive fish by XXX" date as possible. A day or two ahead of time is okay, but after the chapter's date is generally too late (fish can't be benched after judging has already started). Do NOT send fish more than two days in advance! No chapter has resources to care for fish that arrive too soon. Fish that arrive early usually stay in their bags until it's time for the show. You want your fish in the best condition, and that means that you have to schedule the shipping.

e. Supplies!

Make sure you have enough of what you need to send fish to a show. If you're shipping in plastic bags, make sure that not only do **you** have enough to bag and send, but also that you have enough to send along with the fish! You need to send two bags for every fish going to the show – they need to be double-bagged for the fish coming back home to you, and they need to be single-bagged for fish being auctioned off. At Convention, the fish get double-bagged for auction since most people are flying home with their purchases. (Yes, the show manual says only enough bags for the fish coming back – the show manual needs updating. Pack bags for **all** fish.)

f. Don't feed your fish before a show!

At least 2-3 days before a show, stop feeding your fish. This is done for a few different reasons. Primary is that fed fish poop. If you're sending the fish in the mail, the poop is in their itty bitty small bags that they have to travel in for over a day. This contaminates the water and isn't good for the fish. Even if you're hand-carrying the fish in, the fish will then poop in their show container. Which then swirls around in the water as they swim and flare and looks disgusting, is distracting, and also isn't healthy.

The other reason is that a well-fed betta will have a full tummy. When the tummy is full, it can mask the ovipositor in females (the "egg spot") so judges can't tell if they're females or not, and in males it might make their tube stick out more, making it look like they have an egg spot when they don't. Both of those are disqualifications for a betta – females have to have egg spots, and males shouldn't have egg spots. So it's better to make sure that the judges can see them and not distort their bodies with extra full tummies.

g. Arts and Crafts.

We also have entries for arts and crafts, and it's amazing to see what people do that is betta themed! Photography, ceramics, jewelry, drawings, mosaics, even knitted bettas have appeared at shows. We highly encourage art entries and love to see your creativity.

However... don't send your crafts with your fish! Please. :) The fish bags can be punctured by artwork frames or decorative edges, or smushed by heavy objects. The art can also get damaged if one of the fish bags leaks water. It's much better to send any arts and crafts in a separate package.

Also check the show guidelines for arts and crafts – some shows have limited space and if you've got something really large like a large painting or a heavy mosaic, the show chair needs to know so they can plan for it. If it's unusually large, the show chair might also set limitations on what can come.

h. Wild Bettas.

Showing wild bettas is very much encouraged by the IBC! We love wilds. Wilds are awesome and it's incredible to see the variety of species out there and know that they're all related. Wild bettas, though, usually need some special consideration to be shown. They have to be shown in pairs (male and female), they usually need more water in shipping, they're often more delicate than splendens, and many species are much much larger. They're going to need bigger bags and also prepare for more expense on the shipping.

If you're sending wilds, also send some plants with them, in a separate bag. The plants from their tank help reassure them when they're at shows and they can hide and be comforted. (Hopefully they don't hide **too** much at the show!). It helps cut down on their stress when they have plants and Indian almond leaves in their competition tanks.

The plants need to be in a separate bag because while plants give off oxygen in daylight, they absorb it in the dark and give off carbon dioxide instead. Shipping bettas is in a dark box for over a day – the plants are starving your fish if they're in the same bag with them. They also can get tangled up with the fish, particularly moss varieties, startle the fish, and start decomposing in the bag with the fish, none of which is good for the betta.

Please also remember to send separate packing bags for wild pairs, especially the bigger ones. If they're being auctioned off, the club may not have the right size bag to pack them in.

You might also want to send flyers with the wilds describing them. These can be used to show the public what they look like when they're happy and describe a little bit about them. The

auction winner if you sell the pair will get to take them home and care for them better with more information.

3. At a Show

The primary thing to remember when fish are at a show is that you are no longer in charge. You sent the fish to the show, and it's the show committee that is now in charge of everything. They have planned out their show in great detail, and they know their resources and what they can do. As we said above NOT ALL SHOWS ARE ALIKE. Breeders should never ever, **ever** expect special treatment at a show. Show committees simply don't have **time** to do special treatments. And just because one group might have let you do something in the past, doesn't mean they will in the future. The show chair is in charge of their show, and you are not. You have certain rights and expectations of your fish being treated well and being returned to you with due consideration, but you cannot expect anything beyond that and the show rules specifically say no special treatment.

a. Show Fees.

Not all shows charge the same for entry fees. Check the show information for the show before you send money. Per IBC rules, the money **MUST** be either sent with the fish in a check or paid ahead with PayPal if the show accepts it. The fees are NOT to be taken out of auction money. There might be special exemptions by some show chairs for this, particularly if it's a group of overseas entries or something where it makes more sense to do it this way, but it's up to each show chair to make the exemption, and they are well within their rights to say no. You should never ever "expect" an exemption. Pay your money the way the show chair requires it.

b. Benching Times.

The shows are usually on tight schedules. There are certain windows of time in which the fish are brought in and "benched" or put in their containers of water for the show. Mail-in entries should arrive by a certain date that will be listed on the show information, and walk-in entries have specific hours they can be benched, also listed on the flyer. It is a show chair's right to refuse any entries that come in after the specified time. The show chair might make an exception for things beyond an entrant's control, such as the box arriving late or travel delays, but that's up to the show chair and it depends completely on their planned schedules. If you think you won't be able to make it there until after the scheduled benching time, email the show chair well in advance and request an exception. They might allow it, they might not. It depends on the show. Under no circumstance ever are fish allowed to enter a show after judging has started for their category. Plan your showing and make sure you know the times your fish have to be at the show.

c. Entrants who are Judges.

Remember – judges and apprentices cannot help with benching fish nor should they be in the fishroom while fish are being benched. If a judge or apprentice is in the fishroom during benching, the Head Judge can remove that judge or apprentice from participating in the show. Judges and apprentices cannot judge a class they have fish entered in, or that they have brought fish for friends in.

d. Display time.

Fish that are entered in the show should remain at the show for the entire time. Shows are also about the public and letting the public come in and see all the beautiful and wonderful bettas there are. We hope that the public will appreciate our lovely fish and might even be encouraged to join the hobby. All shows have a certain length of time that they are open to the public, and it is the full expectation of the show that all the fish entered will be viewable by the public for that time. Often too, show fish aren't packed until after the auction is finished – the auction fish take priority to keep a show on schedule. And auctions often can run overtime if it's a good crowd. Plan your time! If you have a need to take your fish home before the end of the show period, it must be cleared by the show chair, and the show chair is allowed to say no. Yes, they're your fish – but it's their show and you chose to enter your fish in that show. Plan out your schedule according to the time expectations of the show. If you have to leave early, you can arrange for friends to get your fish instead (expect to owe them big time for such a favor!) – make sure the show chair knows of your alternate plans if you have somebody else helping with your fish.

e. Auctions.

Every auction is different. No show ever holds their auctions exactly the same as other shows and sometimes not even the same chapter from show to show. There are certain IBC guidelines for auctions and what the expectations are, and the show committee does their best to make sure those are met and hopefully exceeded.

You can choose certain of your show fish to auction – this must be marked on the entry form ahead of time. You cannot chose after judging to remove a fish from auction if you've marked the fish for auction.

At shows, they usually also allow you to enter "auction only" fish. These fish don't pay entry fees and they don't participate in the show, but are offered at auction like the other fish. The point to entering auction-only fish might be to clear out your fish room a bit more – send some of the fish not quite large enough for showing, but still good fish, some breeder fish that have torn fins, etc – and to make a bit more money to pay for the show fish. The buyers at the show have an expectation of getting good quality fish, even for auction-only, so please don't send nasty fish – remember, people are buying these and your name is attached to them! There's usually a limit of auction-only fish you can send – check the show rules. Not all shows have auction-only either – for instance at Convention, the fish are instead entered in "silent auctions" to be held over several days. Check the show rules for details on their auctions.

Hopefully the fish you entered for auction will sell, but it always depends on the people who come to the show, and that might not always happen. The IBC standard minimum bid is \$5, but you can set a higher one if you want. Know, though, that the higher the minimum, the more reluctant people are to start bidding on it. A bidding frenzy can take the price up, but sometimes a high minimum won't even get the fish in the running. Specify on the show form what to do with unsold fish. You can have them returned to you, offered at less than minimum bid for direct sales after the auction to people milling around, or donate them to the local chapter if you don't want them returned.

Describe your fish for best sales! There's a line in the entry form for remarks – this line is often used on the auction labels for the fish and either the auctioneer or the show committee person on the computer also can read it to the audience. Don't get too long (won't fit on the label!), but be clear and promote the good things about your fish. "Carries DT." "Out of Sieg Illig lines." "Sibling won a Best of Show." "Proven breeder pair." Etc.

Check and see if the show also has a direct sales table. Some shows do, some don't – depends on the show. But this is also a very good way to sell fish and also to get your fish to a larger group of people. Not everybody who comes to a show can stay for the whole auction, particularly if there are a lot of fish in the auction. Having fish available for direct sale allows those people a chance to get some coveted good show quality fish and they will forever praise your name and be thankful for the chance. There is, though, also the chance that direct sales may not sell, so be prepared like in auction fish to say what to do with the fish if they don't sell. Like the auction-only fish, people have an expectation and your name is attached to the fish. Send nice fish, please.

4. Fish going Home

The second to last stage of a show is the fish being packed up to go home. Remember that this is after three or four grueling days of work for the show committee and helpers and they are all tired and usually behind on their schedules and they often have things they need to do either after the show or the next day – like drive home (not all show helpers live next to the show location – very few, in fact! Show location is planned for best resources.) The show committee will make every effort to take care of your fish – they are well aware that the fish are your babies and your prize winners and bettas you care about. However, this is also the time they are the most stressed out and the most over-worked. Try not to make things harder on them, please.

- a. If you're at the show, you should pack your own fish. This is both a big help to the club to have you there helping, and also you get to pack your fish the way you want to. If the show runs for multiple days, check the schedule to see when packing time is. It's not always after the auction. For instance, at Area 1 Convention, the packing time is usually right after the awards banquet on Saturday night. Plan your schedule to help with your own fish. If for some reason you can't, you can also have a friend help, but make sure the show chair knows that you've arranged it with them. If you're at the show and can't be there for the packing at all, let the show chair know so they can plan for it and have extra helpers.
- b. Remember the "no special considerations" rule.
You're allowed to have certain expectations for shipping – that all the fish will be double-bagged with enough water and air, that they all will go back in your box, and that the box will be packed carefully and checked before final shipping. You are NOT allowed to make it harder for the committee by being overly particularly with your instructions on how to bag and pack the fish.

You can ASK that the fish be packed in a certain manner with helpful guides such as lines on a bag "fill water to here, air to here" or include a small measuring cup to show how much water they should have. However, keep in mind that these are requests and the show is being nice to you if they follow those requests. Most shows will, if they're reasonable requests – those sorts

of guides often actually help speed things along when preparing boxes. If, however, your request is unreasonable or well outside IBC standards (such as providing a water line but then requesting that the amount of air be less than that), then they may not be followed. (IBC standard is 1/3 water to 2/3 air. We can go down to 1/2 and 1/2, but less air than that is not allowed under ANY circumstance.)

If your box is very very full of fish and you've crammed them in like sardines going to the show... the show committee is going to have a **much** harder time repacking the box. All the best will in the world can't replicate somebody's packing exactly, and you're pushing your luck by asking them to try. You're also pushing the chances that a bag will break from too many of them crammed in there. It's best to leave a bit of room in your box when packing and fill it with packing material like peanuts or paper so that the show committee has room to repack your fish appropriately. If you have such exacting dimensions for your packing that the fish barely fit... that really falls under 'special considerations' and a show chair might decide instead to use a different box or two boxes to send them back. The show chair, should, though, call you to let you know the problem if such an issue occurs. Please don't make it hard for the show committee, though, and be reasonable in your packing in the first place. Give the show committee and the fish consideration by making the box packing logical and with enough space.

c. Friends with Fish.

The show circuit is often a small world, and you might be tempted to do things like arrange to send some extra fish for a person who will be at the show and/or ask local people to send you fish back in your show box. You might also have friends who buy fish at auction and want to send them home in your box. Keep in mind that all these sorts of things all fall under "special consideration" and makes more work for the show committee and the show chair. **ASK** before planning on any of this. Most show chairs will generally be okay with it, as long as it's not extreme. However, show chairs are also perfectly within their rights to say "no" to such special requests. It depends on the show, it depends on the schedule, and it depends on how much of a special request it is and how much extra work it's going to be. You might think it's a simple thing... but a lot of simple things add up when a committee is dealing with a whole show with lots and lots of entrants and fish everywhere and a tight schedule to run on. (On the other hand, it also doesn't **hurt** to ask – check first!)

d. After Show Quarantine.

When you get your fish back, remember that they've just been to a place outside your careful fish room conditions, and they've been exposed to a lot of stress. They've travelled, they've been put in little boxes, moved around, asked to flare often, and not eaten for several days. Stressed fish are more susceptible to diseases, and they've also just been at a show with a lot of other fish. The show works hard not to cross-contaminate the water and make sure any obviously sick fish are well-isolated from others, but there are still risks. Some diseases, like velvet, are air-borne and not easily seen in the early stages. When you get your fish back, **QUARANTINE THEM!** Keep them away from your other fish, particularly your breeders and your other show fish. Take very good care of them and watch them well for at least one week after the show to make sure they haven't brought anything back. Don't expose your other fish until

after you're sure the returning fish are okay. Keep this separate area prepared for them and make it a regular thing after every show.

5. Show Results.

After the show, we all want to know how our fish did. We're very eager to know how they did. We want the results, darn it! Let us know! Please try and keep the enthusiasm down long enough for the show to be **finished** first. And that's not just finished with judging, but finished with the whole darn thing. There's not usually a big long break of down time after judging where the show chair has absolutely nothing to do but work on show results. Right after judging, the people and fish have to start getting ready for the next stage of the show (the public viewing time), then the auction, then the bagging, then the going home. And after all that, show chairs are **exhausted**. Literally with bags under their eyes and tired and hungry and still having questions after questions to answer from everybody on the committee and working themselves like a dog to try and make sure everything is done properly. Give them some time to get the results in, please.

IBC regulations say that the results must be posted by the Monday after a weekend show. Some show chairs have attempted to make everybody really happy by getting the show results out early. The Judging Board has so often received faulty show results from the early rush to get them out that they've had to be redone two or three times, and we're seriously thinking about making it a rule that the show results CANNOT be posted until Monday. We want good results, accurate results, and so do you. There's nothing more disheartening in the world to see that your fish won awesomely... and then to have it taken back the next day and find out it was just a typo and it was somebody else's fish.

Yes, show chairs tabulate results during a show. They also take all the paperwork home with them including all the original judging sheets and after they've had a good night's sleep, they go back through them one by one and make sure they're perfectly right and that they have the right entry numbers matched up to the right wins and the right entrants. This takes time. Yelling at people isn't going to make it go any faster, it's instead only going to make people flustered and make more mistakes.

We want the results, but we want them accurate and right. Please be aware of this and while you can be excited about a show and happy and eager for your fish, try not to be obnoxious and overly pestering about it. The results will come when they come, and then we'll all know at the same time.

6. Awards and Auction Money.

Awards are generally shipped out after the fish. Fish shipping back are the priority, your auction money is second priority, and the awards come after that. Auction money sometimes is sent directly in the box with the fish, but it can also be sent separately by check or PayPal depending on the show – some show chairs might need an extra day to reconcile all the funds and make sure the calculations are correct. Check is the normal method, but a Show Chair might also ask you if you will take PayPal as that's quicker and easier sometimes for both of you. PayPal may not always be an option for shows either, though, so don't expect that always. The awards usually have to be printed out or written on – either with certificates or ribbons for 1st through 3rd and more for the BOV and BOS. Some shows are really efficient and get the ribbons out with the fish, or even at an awards ceremony during the show. Some shows take a bit longer. It depends on their resources and how many people they have working

on things and if all the awards came from the printer correctly and in the right numbers. Things like that. Be understanding with a show. There are IBC rules about the timing – fish should be back within six days, money within 10, and show awards within 10. Some of the more elaborate awards like the BOS might take longer for engraving so expect 20-30 days for them. Check with the show chair if you haven't received your fish, money, or awards in a timely fashion.

7. Questions and Disputes.

After a show, there can be things you're wondering about, or have problems with. It happens. While show committees try their darn best and can plan everything out like crazy, there's absolutely no such thing in this world as a perfect show. We want there to be... but it doesn't always happen.

You might have questions about the show results, something about the auction, or something about your fish.

Your first line of inquiry about a show should always be to the show chair directly, either by email or phone call. Give them time to respond – they've often worked themselves to the bone and might also be driving home.

While you can ask basic questions about the show on the internet, such as to the IBC Better Bettas mailing list or the chapter's Facebook, it's not really an appropriate venue for any major topics that you need urgent answers to, such as about missing fish, or any disputes you're trying to resolve. One of the reasons is that while you can expect a timely reply from a direct email or a phone call, you can't expect a show chair to respond to a post on the internet like that. After a show, they're probably not even reading the BB or the facebook. Making their own brief posts about the show, sure, but monitoring it? They're usually busy on the next stages of the show and other things. Direct contact is much much better, and is the approved IBC way of handling things. The IBC also has specific rules against members causing and promoting antagonistic situations on the IBC internet areas. You can do things like posting to let people know you had a problem and that you're working with the show chair to resolve it, but calling people names and being aggressive and rude about something is forbidden on the IBC sites. Come to the show chair and the judging board for major issues, not the public sites. (Basic questions that you don't need urgent answers to, such as why a show decided to change something, or why the numbers don't add up, or things like that are usually fine – other people might be curious about those things too.)

If the issue is about missing fish or fish hurt in transit, and if you're asking the show chair about it by email, please also cc the Judging Board Chair, just so the Judging Board can monitor the situation. The show chair will handle everything directly, and the JB won't step in unless the problem escalates, but we do like to be aware of these things. For one thing, it helps us in writing up future guides like these. For another, too many times in the past people have had repeated problems that they then say "why didn't you do anything?" and the JB can only blink and say "we didn't know because nobody told us." As long as the show chair is handling it, the JB won't generally step in. We'll just be a quiet observer on the side.

If you as the entrant don't think that you're getting appropriate or timely answers from the show chair, then you should most definitely come to the Judging Board. Talk to us directly and frankly about what

happened and what issues you're having. You have the option of asking us informally – just a general "for your information" so we're aware of it and so we can ask the show chair to speed up responding to you. Or you can also submit a formal complaint. A formal complaint is just what it sounds like and you'll be on record for it and the JB will investigate. We will potentially interview multiple people and try and find witnesses and independent observations. Then we'll make a formal resolution. Depending on what we find in the investigation, this could go many different ways. There could be no action, especially if we can't find any collaborating evidence, there could be sanctions against a chapter, or there could be reprimands against a person. The Judging Board also has the option of getting involved in a situation even if nobody has brought a complaint to us. We do keep an eye out on IBC Shows, and sometimes actions have to be taken. We try and keep our involvement to a minimum, though, and we'd really prefer people to work things out between themselves.

8. Remember the good things!

While there are many reasons why people show, in the end it comes down to the incredible beauty and grace of these wonderful fish we know as bettas, and their cousins the wild-type bettas. Sometimes a show can be frustrating and nail-biting, particularly when you're waiting for results or for your fish to come home. But you look at them there in your fish room, and you see the ribbons and awards you might have won, and you think... this was fun! All the rushing around, all the worries... and also all the joy, the sharing with other betta people, and the fierce delight in the competition. And the sharing of your fish with other people – knowing crowds of people from all over went to the show and looked at your fish and gasped and said "That's so beautiful! I'd love to have a betta like him!" That. That's the real joy of a show. Take delight in your fish, pride in your showing, and the thanks of the show committees and the Judging Board. We couldn't do it without you! :)

If you have any questions, please contact the Judging Board Chair at jbchair@ibcbettas.org