

Managing Difficult Clients

Tools to help event organisers manage difficult situations and clients.

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Why it's so hard to deal with difficult people?

- We feel attacked and upset
- We take what they say personally
- Their attitude makes us not want to help them
- We often respond to them the way they responded to us

When Dealing with difficult situations it is good to remember

- Difficult people are out there and are a fact of life.
- They can have a negative effect on our job/position if we let them.
- Statistics say, one upset person will tell seven people about their experience

How do we manage difficult situations effectively?

- Pick the right person for the job
- Decide on the message you want to give and or the information you want to collect
- Prepare for the worst case scenario
- Remember what you want to achieve

Control yourself

- Never argue with people when they are angry or upset
- If you allow a client to push your buttons and lose control of yourself, you've lost control of the situation
- You should provide the same level of service to everyone equally, and not play favourites

Things to consider when dealing with difficult people.

- Do not take their comments personally
- Do not respond to them with the same negative attitude
- You cannot choose what happens **BUT** you can choose your reaction



How can I stop people from reacting poorly?

People react in many ways – Anger, Cry, Yell, laughter, ignore you or just be evasive.

What can you do to assist?

- Be truthful.
- Know what you want to achieve – i.e Filling in horse decs before entry – No horse dec no ride policy?
- Give people the facts of why you are doing what you do

-”in case of a biosecurity outbreak, we need to know how to contact you.”

Have the right attitude

- Assume the information you are being given is the truth.
- Do not try to pick holes in their story
- A difficult person is a problem solving challenge – it is not a battle between you and them
- Remember – you want the same outcome, you are not enemies.

Allow your client to vent

- Allow the person to talk and vent their frustrations – talking will not only drain their energy levels but will defuse any emotion.
- Listen without comment or interruption.
- Use your body language to demonstrate you are listening.
- Bring them back to your original issue – paperwork, exclusion areas or no go zones

Use positive body language

- Don't cross your arms
- Pay attention using eye contact
- Use your head movements to acknowledge you are taking on board what they are saying or reinforcing what you are saying
- Stand appropriately (no negatives) and
- **NEVER** use the parental finger



Voice volume and pitch

You can help keep people calm by:

- Keeping the volume of your voice normal
- Slowing your speech down a little bit
- Bringing down your pitch
- Don't YELL! It just draws attention to the situation and fuels the fire.



Use empathy

- Show empathy for your clients situation/issue.
- Empathise but DON'T agree e.g.
“I can see how you feel that way” or “Yes, I can see that ‘this/that’ situation is frustrating”.
- Accept responsibility to record the issue discussed and pass this information on to your Biosecurity Officer on the day.

Useful phrases (Verbal Judo)

- Thank you for your cooperation
- Thank you for your time
- For your safety and mine.....
- Could you help me please by....

OR...

- am sorry but I am unable to assist you if you speak to me in that tone
- You and your horse's safety is important to us

Bad phrases

- Come here!
- Because these are the rules!
- Calm down!
- What's your problem???
- Look, I am not going to say this again.
- I'm doing this for your own good!
- Why don't you be reasonable?
- And naturally, don't use any inappropriate language



Remember....

- Pick the right person for the job
- Stay calm
- Don't argue or react
- We are all wanting the same outcome
- You catch more flies with sugar than you do with.....

