

South East Koi Club
英國錦鯉愛好會東南俱樂部

BENCHING MODEL

(an introduction to the concepts of Benching)

設營序言

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BENCHING.
by Bernie Woollands.

This article contains information previously published in the January 1994 issue of the BKKS Magazine. Some of this info has been superceeded by the detailed instructions within the specific modules contained in the document-suite. However, this article still stands the test of time for introducing the subject and it's terminology.

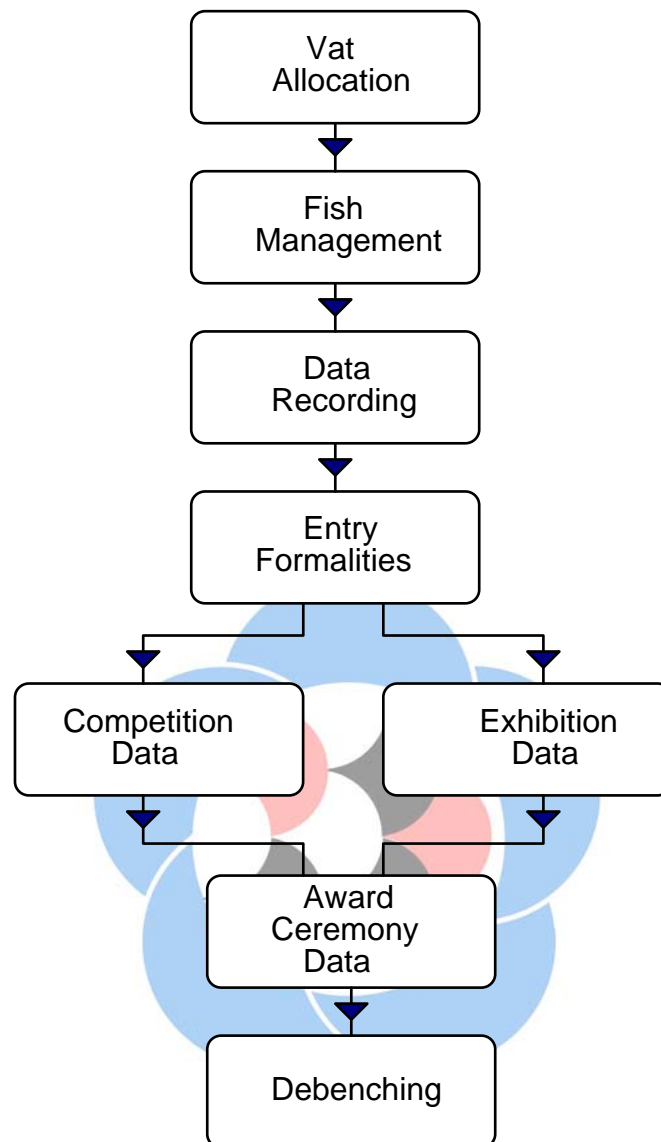
The incentive to repeat much of this article came from various comments still made in magazines or in public by people who should know better. Those remarks go like this, "Fred Bloggs did the benching", "Thanks to the ladies in the benching tent" etc etc. While these remarks are meant in the nicest possible way, they can cause offence because they exclude any number of people that participate in this '**process**'.

The word 'process' is the key here, because that's what benching is. It's not a job, it's a process - a series of inter-related progressive tasks designed to manage the fish entered into a Koi show. This process starts when the exhibitor arrives at the show and concludes when the fish are returned to their owner. This process requires several people with a variety of skills to work with each other, sometimes in isolation, but with one aim in mind.

The process I am about to describe is the tried and tested model utilised by this section for many years. It was originally designed for a two-day show with approx. 450 fish spread over 50 vats. As most of you will know our show is slightly smaller these days, i.e. 40 vats, with the number of fish reduced (average 350) but with a significant increase in their individual size.

This process does not include 'Vat Bookings' this job is done by the Show Chairman in the months running up to the show. Vat Booking is a process in itself involving several paper exchanges (including a cheque) between the prospective exhibitor and our Show Chairman. The end result of this is a pile of 'Benching Forms' containing the name, address and contact details of the exhibitor. These forms are in carbonless triplicate (comprising of a white, pink and blue copy) and contain terms & conditions of entry that require the signature of the exhibitor. The white copy is retained by the exhibitor as proof of ownership (see Debenching), the pink and blue copies are used by the Benching Admin.

Fig 1 – The South East's benching model.



The Benching Process begins when the exhibitor arrives at the show. A member of the benching team will book him/her in (i.e. note the time) and allocate them a vat. We refer to this as the **Vat Allocation** function. This person will then obtain the appropriate Benching Form and place it on the bottom of the pile awaiting the next function. Depending on the difference in temperature between the exhibitor's ponds and our vats the Vat Allocation Officer will advise the exhibitor to float his bags for a specified amount of time.

The next process in the chain is the **Fish Management Function**. This team are responsible for the physical examination of the fish and their classification and measurement. During this phase the fish will be released from their bags and preferably handed* into the Benching Bowl where they will be subjected to a quick but thorough examination to ensure that they comply with the BKKS Show Rules & Guidelines regarding health matters. Next, they are categorised into one of the 13 Show classifications and measured for size. A team of two minimum, three optimum is required

for this function. One to remove fish from the bags, another to assist, and the third to carry out the examination and classification. Obviously people involved in this part of the process need to be efficient at handling fish and fully conversant with the show rules and show classifications. Furthermore they need to be diplomatic and circumspect when dealing with members of the public. Their behaviour reflects heavily on our public relations and reputation.

* Occasionally it is necessary to release fish from the bags, e.g. they show signs of stress, the bag is leaking, or there is a long delay in the benching process. When this occurs the 'bagman' becomes a 'netman' and a net is used to guide the fish into the bowl.

The next function, carried out in unison with the Fish Management, is the **Data Recording Function**. Here the information provided by the Fish Management team is entered onto the benching form and a (Polaroid) photograph is taken of every fish. The details on the benching form, Class, Size and Photo Number are replicated onto each Polaroid photo. Normally this team consists of two people, the Recorder and the Photographer. The Recorder is often the first link in the cross-checking activity that goes on throughout this process. Their role is to ensure the accuracy of the data, clear handwriting, correct spelling of the Koi nomenclature and if possible double checking the classification provided by the Fish manager. Often considered one of the more boring jobs in the process, it is in fact one of the most critical. One of the next functions requires the data collected here to be fed into a computer program. Computers are governed by the 'SISO' factor, (i.e. Shit In – Shit Out). Mistakes made at this stage are unlikely to be noticed until the judging takes place. This means that this function is responsible for the Section's reputation within the JSC/BKKS environment more than any other. On completion of the Data Recording for each vat, the Recorder ensures that the paperwork (incl photos) is returned to the Benching Tent and advises the exhibitor to proceed to the tent to complete the entry formalities.

Vat Allocation, Fish Management and Data Recording are functions carried out inside the centre ring. Come rain or come shine the show must go on, so anybody entertaining ideas of joining this team must arrive prepared, Wellies, Umbrellas, and Sunscreen etc.

The **Entry Formalities** are the official stage where the fish become the responsibility (but not the liability) of the section. The exhibitor is required to sign his Benching Form and is then given the top copy (White) as proof of ownership. The two other copies are separated and passed to the next two functions that operate in parallel.

Exhibition Data.

At our show every entry is recorded on an Exhibition Card that is eventually given to the exhibitor as a memento of the show. The first task of this function is to transfer the details on the Benching Form onto the appropriate number of cards, e.g. Owner, Vat number, Classification of fish and size. All the cards belonging to one owner are then paperclipped together and filed. The photographs that accompany the Benching form are checked against the form before being placed in a polythene bag. This bag will then be taken outside and secured to the corresponding vat. When the judging begins and the results start to arrive, the Exhibition Cards will be updated with the relevant awards.

1st, 2nd and 3rd awards are represented by a numbered sticker in the appropriate box on the card. Higher awards, e.g. Baby Champion etc result in a much larger 'banner' style sticker giving a grander impression.

Whereas the earlier functions (Vat Allocation through to Entry Formalities) stop as soon as the last fish has been 'benched' by the Fish Managers, e.g. at a given time on the Sunday, the Data Handling functions continue until the judges close the competition.

Competition Data.

This function utilises a computer program that is part electronic filing system and part paperwork provider. Just like the Exhibition Data function, information is transferred from the Benching Form into a computerised record. There is one record per fish exactly like the Exhibition card. However, the computer can cross reference every piece of data stored on every record so that when a list of every Kohaku in size 1 is required it can be accessed and processed with a couple of key strokes. It is this aspect of the program that is utilised to produce the lists for the judges. With 13 Classifications in 6 sizes this team has to produce 78 lists to accompany the judges on the first round. This can be done in 21 minutes.

Once this is done both the Data Handling teams can take a well earned break while the judges deliberate. When the results appear both teams have to return to work and continue until the final results are provided. At this stage both 'Data' teams work in unison, one entering the information onto the cards, the other entering it into the computer. Several paper check-lists are maintained during this time to keep a track of progress and to provide cross-checking information at a later stage. At the end of the judging the computer can produce two reports. One listing all the awards and their winners in priority order, the other by exhibitor name in vat order. These are used for further cross checking and of course, the award ceremony. Here all the paperwork is collated and reconciled against the computer print outs and the Exhibition Cards, every award on the printout has to match that on the cards. If in doubt, it is checked against the forms returned by the judges. Any mistake made during the process should be picked up here and corrected before any results are released to the public. Prior to leaving the site on Sunday all the photographs have to be retrieved from the vats and glued onto their cards in readiness for display on their corresponding vats the following day. In addition a copy of the results will be displayed in a prominent place.

Clearly this function requires people who can pay attention to detail and a great deal of concentration. Distractions during this phase can result in errors, and/or errors going undetected. This is one of the reasons why I always advocate that the benching tent should be left in peace and not interrupted. Anybody contemplating a job in this area should have an aptitude for clerical work and a good understanding of the mechanics of the show and the awards.

Award Ceremony Data.

The only change to this process from that published in the original article occurs here. Last year our results were published on the internet on the Sunday night. This year our results will appear on our own website. But in all other aspects this function remains the same.

At sometime in the early afternoon on the day of the prizegiving, preparations have to be made for the award ceremony. Dave Brown likes to thank everybody for showing their fish, regardless of whether they actually win anything. The Benching Team have to check who's won what and advise Dave of any non-winners as well as any other unusual event. A good example of this was when a visiting Belgian Judge awarded a prize and Dave had to be told of the correct pronunciation for the "de Vlaamse Koi-en Vijvervrienden" trophy.*

Once all the extraordinary stuff is out of the way it's back to basics. Sorting out the exhibition cards in the order Dave will present them and matching them to their appropriate awards. The winners of 1st rounds cards will have been turned into a certificate by the addition of the awards. The winners in the next rounds will receive trophies in addition to the certificate.

* It will be interesting this year. For a start there will be the Nishikigoi Vereniging Nederland award. So he'd better start practising now.

Debenching.

The final task in the process is where we ensure the fish are returned to their rightful owners. Here we call on as many people as possible to assist in the debenching. Basically all we do is assist people in catching and rebagging their fish. The section supplies oxygen and loans nets which we need to keep an eye on. Ray Baker will insist that we remove our in-vat Zeolite filters as they have been taken as souvenirs in the past. Before anybody is allowed to remove fish they must first prove that they are the actual owner. This is where the white Benching Form comes in. If the exhibitor has lost it, then their identity needs to be corroborated by something (a Drivers License) or somebody. Generally the Fish Management team can do this. If not we resort to reputable dealers known to us and them.

Conclusion.

I hope this article finally lays to rest the notion of Benching being a one man or two lady game. Benching is a team game with a variety of different players with complementary skill-sets. The early function occur on Saturday and Sunday morning. The latter functions occur throughout the show.