Revised July 27, 2026

JUDGE SELECTION POLICY

This policy outlines how the Havanese Club of America (HCA) will select judges for its National Specialty and any associated Regional Specialties, as well as any Companion Events held in conjunction with the National Specialty.

First Step – Initiate A Members Poll to Nominate Conformation and Sweepstakes Judges

The first step should occur as soon as the National Specialty site is selected and no later than 18 months prior to the National Specialty for which the judges are being hired. A poll will be initiated for HCA voting members in good standing to select National Specialty and Sweepstakes judges. The National Chairperson will contact AKC for a list of all eligible Havanese judges. This list will be provided to the membership, along with a call for solicitation of nominees. Each member will be allowed to nominate up to 2 (two) names for Conformation judges and 2 (two) names for Sweepstakes judges.

Note 1: Judges who have judged an HCA National or a National-affiliated Regional Specialty during the past five years will not be eligible for consideration.

Note 2: Sweepstakes Judges for consideration may be a Havanese breeder, an AKC-approved or provisional judge, a professional handler or an individual planning to apply for the breed and must be in good standing with AKC and HCA. Priority should be given to people who have judged Havanese before at an AKC show or match. Anyone considered who is not a licensed or provisional AKC judge must have attended an HCA JE seminar within the past two years (also available online through the AKC Webinar Series) or be willing to attend one no more than six months prior to their assignment. Nominees must not have judged Sweepstakes in the past five years. Members must contact persons they would like to nominate as Sweepstakes Judge and obtain their acceptance before submitting their names for consideration.

Second Step – First Ballot to Narrow Nominations

If more than ten Conformation judges are nominated in the initial polling, an electronic ballot will be sent out to narrow the final voting ballot to ten names. If more than five Sweepstakes judges are nominated in the initial polling, they will be included on the electronic ballot to narrow the number to five. Each voting member will be allowed to vote for two Conformation Judge nominees and two Sweepstakes judge nominees.

Third Step - Final Ballot to Select Judges

An electronic ballot will be emailed to all HCA Members in good standing who are eligible to vote and who have opted for electronic voting. Those who have not opted for electronic voting will have a paper ballot mailed to the address on file with HCA. Paper ballots will be returned to either the HCA Recording Secretary (RS) whose address will be located on the ballot, or to an independent firm chosen by the HCA Board. (The HCA Board will decide which method of tallying of the votes will be used.)

The Final Ballot will list the names of the top ten (10) Conformation judge nominees and the top five (5) Sweepstakes judge nominees. If there are fewer than 10 judges and/or 5 sweepstakes judges nominated, that is all that will be on the ballot. If there is a tie for placement, there may be more than 10 judges and/or 5 sweepstakes judges on the ballot. Each member may vote for three National Specialty judges and one Sweepstakes judge. A deadline will be clearly stated for the end of voting. All paper ballots must be in the hands of the HCA Recording Secretary (or the chosen firm) by that date. Any ballot received after the deadline date will not be counted. Note on Paper Ballots: The paper ballots must be in a sealed envelope with a return address on the outside so the RS or Independent firm can verify member eligibility. The RS or Independent firm will report to the Board the total number of ballots received by the due date, prior to opening any of the ballots. If the ballots are sent to the RS, the RS will identify at least one other HCA member to assist with the ballot counting. They will check the member names against a current HCA membership list and open the ballots. The votes will be counted, and results provided to the HCA Board.

Step Four – Contacting and Contracting Judges

Within two weeks of the Final Ballot count, the National Specialty Show Chair will contact the judges in the order of ranking by most votes received to determine their availability for the National Specialty. If no National Chairperson has been appointed, the HCA Board will determine, based on current policy, who should contact the Judges. The top vote winner will be invited to judge our National Specialty, and the next two top vote getters will be invited to judge the two Regional Specialties. If one of these should decline the invitation, the person contacting the nominees will continue down the list, according to the number of votes received. In the event of a tie vote for the final selection, consideration should be given to the financial costs of both judges. This information will be shared with the HCA Board, as it will be their responsibility to vote to break the tie after reviewing this information.

The same selection method will be used for Sweepstakes judges.

The National Specialty Show Chair is responsible for signing the HCA Board-approved judging contracts sent to the confirmed judges. The contract may include all regular and non-regular conformation classes, 4–6-month beginner puppy and junior showmanship. A copy of the contracts for all judges must be forwarded to the HCA President, Recording Secretary and Treasurer. In addition, copies of the judge's contracts will be available at the show site.

Judges who accept the National Specialty assignment must agree to refrain from accepting Havanese breed assignments for the six months prior to the National Specialty date. Judges who accept the National Specialty Regional assignments must agree to refrain from accepting Havanese breed assignments for the three months prior to the National Specialty date.

Step Five - Announcement of Conformation Judging Panel
Only the Judges' names selected for the National events and Sweepstakes will be announced to the membership. The announcement will not be made until signed contracts have been received from all judges.

General Rules for the Selection of National and Regional Conformation and Sweeps Judges
1. Names of Judges on the Ballots must be listed in alphabetical order by last name.
2. Only HCA voting members in good standing may submit ballots. The Recording Secretary will ascertain voting eligibility. If an Independent firm is used, the Recording Secretary will send them an up-to-date membership list. The Independent firm will notify the RS of the results, which are then to be shared with the HCA board immediately. Note: Foreign and Junior Members are not eligible to vote.
3. Questions that may arise or any situations not covered in these procedures should be submitted to the HCA Board for resolution.
4. The HCA should keep ballots submitted on file for one year following the National Specialty.
5. The HCA Board should be kept updated on the progress of the procedures.
6. Those nominated for Sweepstakes will be contacted to verify their interest in participating prior to having their names placed on the ballots.

Policy for the Selection of Companion Events Judges
Companion events held in conjunction with the National Specialty shall have their judges selected under the direction of the National Specialty Show Chair. Companion Event Chairs will submit proposed judge names to the National Specialty Show Chair for consideration. Once selections are approved, the National Specialty Show Chair will issue the HCA Board-approved contracts to the designated judges.
A copy of the contracts for all judges must be forwarded to the HCA President, Recording Secretary and Treasurer, as well as the Companion Events Chairs. In addition, copies of the judge's contracts will be available at the show site.

Alternate National Specialty Judges
The National Specialty Show Chair will immediately notify the HCA President in the event one of the selected judges is unable to complete their assignment. In selecting a replacement judge, priority will be given to Judges in the order of ranking by most votes received by the members, and/or a Judge's geographic location in relationship to the show. A minimum of three Board officers (excluding the show chairman) must agree on the judge selected.

Note about AKC Judges, Foreign Judges and Judging Limits
Judges approved by an AKC recognized registry may judge all breeds and groups for which they are approved by their home kennel club to award championship points and recognized by the American Kennel Club. Foreign Judges are not eligible to judge Junior Showmanship at AKC events. Foreign Judges invited to judge AKC events must abide by all Bylaws, Rules, Policies and Guidelines governing the sport of purebred dogs put forth by The American Kennel

Club including the requirement to judge in accordance with AKC approved breed standards. In judging in the United States, Foreign Judges must comply with applicable U.S. laws (federal, state and local). Additional information on eligibility to judge at AKC events can be found on the AKC website under the Foreign Judge section of AKC's Judging Approval Process.

Note on the Use of Non-Approved Judges
A parent club may request a non-approved individual to judge a specialty show in its breed. That request may be for a parent club national or on behalf of a local breed club for its specialty. The person must have success in that breed as an exhibitor and/or breeder. The parent club submits a form to Judging Operations. Judging Operations reviews and if the request is approved, the individual must pass a procedure exam, anatomy exam and pay a $35 fee. If applicable, they will also be required to meet with a Field Rep for a wicket and/or scales test. Once all have been satisfactorily completed, they receive final approval and can be submitted to the panel. This is a one-time one-event approval. If a non-approved individual is selected, they must receive their final approval from the AKC Judging Operations and provide the information to the HCA Board at least 6 months prior to the event.

FINAL BALLOT EXAMPLE:

JUDGE SELECTION FOR 20xx NATIONAL SPECIALTY

The names listed below represent the results of your nominations. Please select three names from the Conformation Judge list and one name from the Sweepstakes list. Household Member types should indicate their selections separately.

CONFORMATION	SWEEPSTAKES
Judge 1	Sweeps 1
Judge 2	Sweeps 2
Judge 3	Sweeps 3
Judge 4	Sweeps 4
Judge 5	Sweeps 5
Judge 6	
Judge 7	
Judge 8	
Judge 9	
Judge 10	

IMPORTANT: BALLOTS MUST BE RECEIVED ON OR BEFORE the due date (month, day, year) TO BE COUNTED. PLEASE RETURN TO: Name, HCA Recording Secretary, Street, City, State, Zip (or Independent Firm selected)