



David D. Johnson

Horse Industry Expert

By Dan Baldwin

David D. Johnson is an expert witness in the horse industry. His expertise covers such diverse subjects as horse breeds, horse law, horse appraisals and the various types of competitive horse activities where accidents may occur.

Johnson is disturbed by experts who accept every case presented to them without the faintest notion of the facts. According to Johnson, “Juries are very adept at figuring out who wins in the courtroom battles of ‘dueling experts.’”

“One of the most challenging areas is to explain the equine-related facts of the case to the attorneys so that they understand the ramifications and how they impact the case. Many attorneys have a basic knowledge of the facts; but, when I can bring specific information that makes their client look good, it certainly makes them happy,” he says.

According to Johnson, an expert witness in horse-related matters should be well-versed in as many facets of the horse business as possible and not just someone who has always loved horses. The expert must be able to recognize instantly why the case warrants the expert’s help.

Johnson says, “If one testifies on a subject as an expert when inadequately prepared, it generally backfires, causing the attorney to lose the case.” Such failures do not help in building a reputation as a great expert.

Johnson began riding and showing horses when he was 5 years old and teaching and working as an instructor at a Chicago area YMCA summer camp when he was 11 years old. During college, he worked as an instructor at several stables close to the Champaign, Illinois campus.

Johnson’s lifelong experience with all facets of the horse industry and his commitment to continuing education has helped him build a solid reputation in the equine and the

legal communities. He also started judging in 1969 and continues to officiate at several shows each year.

He entered the legal arena around 1990 when several attorneys, insurance companies, the IRS and other elements of the U.S. Justice Department began asking for help in horse-related cases. “It became apparent to me that an expert was sorely needed who could honestly present the facts of a case,” Johnson says.

In addition, he spent much of his time advising interested parties about the many facets of the horse business, which included the accurate review of professional standards to which horsemen must adhere.

Johnson provides assistance to lawyers by impartially reviewing their information to determine if they have a bona fide case so that they know from the beginning if they have a case worth pursuing. If the case comes from an insurance company, he advises if their client has done things that are proper or improper.

He has been deposed more than 90 times and has appeared at trial more than 14 times as an expert witness. Most cases are settled after the deposition. He enjoys helping attorneys understand the winning facts which provide them with the peace of mind that he will be an aid during trial.

Johnson says, “I do not ever wish to be known as a hired gun, but rather as a teacher, who can aid the jury, and the court in general, in accurately determining who must win at trial. Having said that, it is never my job as the expert to win the case, but rather present my expert observations in such a manner that the jury and the rest of the court totally sees where and why the case must be decided in favor of my client.”