



THE KENNEL CLUB

Making a difference for dogs

Fit for Function: Fit for Life Briefing Note for Judges at Kennel Club Dog Shows

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Introduction

Without doubt, judges at Kennel Club licensed Shows and particularly at Championship Dog Shows, strongly influence the future development of the breeds that they judge. It is essential that judges take into account the well-being of those exhibits that they judge and by implication the stock that will be bred from these dogs. One of the most significant functions of a dog show is to identify stock from which to breed.

Introductory Paragraph to All Breed Standards

"A Breed Standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function. Breeders and judges should at all times be careful to avoid obvious conditions or exaggerations which would be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed. From time to time certain conditions or exaggerations may be considered to have the potential to affect dogs in some breeds adversely, and judges and breeders are requested to refer to the Kennel Club website for details of any such current issues – Breed Watch. If a feature or quality is desirable it should only be present in the right measure."

No matter how outstanding an exhibit appears in relation to the breed standard in other ways, care must always be taken to consider it in more general terms prizes should never be awarded to dogs which are visibly suffering from any condition which would adversely affect their health or welfare eg:

- Lameness – including 'hopping'
- Inappropriate temperament – refusal to be handled, timidity or aggression
- A discharge from one or both eyes or any signs of discomfort in either eye
- Obvious breathing difficulty
- Obvious skin disorder or ear irritation
- Exaggerations that would make the dog unsuited to the breed's original purpose
- Significantly over or under weight

(Extract from Code of best practice for Judges paragraph 2.6)

Below is a summary of relevant Kennel Club Regulations, Breed Standard clauses and declarations relevant to your judging appointment;

1. Regulation F.9

In assessing dogs, judges must penalise any features or exaggerations which they consider would be detrimental to the soundness, health or well being of the dog.

All dogs must be able to see, breathe, walk and be free from pain, irritation or discomfort.

2. Regulation F(1)7.b. Best of Breed.

Where a breed is separately classified a Best of Breed may be declared but only from those dogs which have received a first prize in a breed class at the show. Where separate classes are provided for each sex of a breed a Best of each Sex must be declared.

NOTE: The Best of Breed/Best Any Variety Not Separately Classified award relevant to a High Profile Breed will not be confirmed until the dog has passed an examination by the General and Group Championship Show Veterinary Surgeon.

3. Regulation F(1)15b. Exclusion of Dogs

(Applicable to General & Group Championship Shows)

If the show executive receives a report from a show official or Kennel Club official of an apparently visibly unhealthy and/or

unsound dog, the dog will be referred to the show veterinary surgeon and if the allegation is upheld the dog will be excluded from subsequent competition at the show. For example if the dog in question had been awarded Best of Breed, it would be excluded from the Group competition.

4. Regulation F(1)21n. Judges and Judging

Judges may exclude any dog from the ring if it is considered not in a fit state for exhibition owing to savage disposition or suffering from any visible condition which adversely affects its health or welfare – and the exclusion must be reported immediately by the judge/steward to the Show Secretary. The judge's decision is final and the dog shall be excluded from all subsequent competition at the Show. The judge must make a report to the Show Secretary at the first opportunity after he/she has finished judging

5. Regulation F(1)21o Withdrawal (Health and Welfare)

Where a dog has been withdrawn at the request or suggestion of the judge, the judge must make a report to the Show Secretary at the first opportunity at the Show. The Secretary must forward these details to the Kennel Club within 7 days of the close of the show.

6. Withholding of awards

You may withhold awards if in your opinion an exhibit lacks sufficient merit. **Remember; if you withhold third in a class, you must withhold all subsequent awards in that class.**

7. Regulation F(1) 22e. (High Profile Breeds)

When requested to do so, judges must submit a completed breed health monitoring report form and a copy of their critique to the Kennel Club within 21 days of the close of the show.

8. Judge's Declaration on Challenge Certificate *(Applicable to Championship Shows)*

Having assessed the dogs and penalised any features or exaggerations which I consider detrimental to their soundness, health or welfare, I am clearly of the opinion that... is of such outstanding merit as to be worthy of the title of Champion

9. Universal Fault Clause in every Breed Standard

... the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.

Summary – Judges have a number of regulations at their disposal to support their decisions;

- Penalising (not award prizes) to dogs which are visibly suffering
- Best of Breed – declared at the judge's discretion
- Withdrawal – at a judge's request or suggestion to be reported to show secretary
- Withholding awards due to lack of sufficient merit – mark judging slips. To be included on the health report form for high profile breeds
- Excluding due to temperament, soundness, health and welfare issues – report to show secretary

Conclusion

Having said all of that, the duty of care that the Kennel Club expects of judges is that of the experienced dog breeder who would be aware of deviation from normal conditions in their own stock. We do not expect judges to make a veterinary diagnosis but rather to exercise their informed commonsense, based on their extensive experience.