

A friendly guide to the show ring

So you have decided to give showing your dog a go and it seems like a daunting and overwhelming prospect. Don't worry as it appears that way to all 'newbies'. The hype of the show ring can be extremely confusing and you will come across many different types of people, some nice, some not so nice and it is possible to inadvertently put others offside without realising why.

In my opinion, the first rule of dog showing, is have a thick skin and always remember you are taking home the best dog. You may not be a winner but you love your dog and it is really the only opinion that really counts.

This article assumes that you have already spent some time finding your dog and you have done a little training. Your breeder or mentor can help you with how to prepare your dog for the show ring.

You have finally entered your first show but you are extremely confused about how it is going to run and how it affects you. I would recommend you arrive at the show venue early, say 1 hour before the scheduled start time. This allows you and your dog plenty of time to set up, take a walk and relax while taking in the atmosphere of the show. I also recommend that until you develop a real feel for the show you also buy a catalogue. A catalogue will help you to follow the running order of the show.

The show is judged in groups and your Tenterfield belongs to the Terrier Group and all Breed judging occurs in alphabetical order. What this means for you as a Tenterfield owner is that you will be judged at the very end of the Terrier Group and you are judged immediately following the Staffordshire Bull Terriers.

There is also the quagmire of breed classes to negotiate. Though some of the classes below overlap in age category, it is advisable to only enter one class.

1 – Baby Puppy Dog (3-6mths)

2 – Minor Puppy Dog (6-9mths)

3 – Puppy Dog (6 – 12mths)

4 – Junior Dog (9 – 18mths)

5 – Intermediate Dog (18mths – 3yrs)

10 – Australian Bred Dog (6mths & over, bred in Australia)

11 – Open Dog (6mths & over)

18 – Neuter Dog

The Bitch classes are denoted by 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A, 10A, 11A & 18A

The order of judging commences with Baby Puppy Dog through the age classes until all male dogs except for neuter have been judged and placed. After the judging of Open Dog all first place dogs (except Baby Puppy Dog) are then judged for what is called the "Challenge" line up. The dogs competing for the Dog Challenge enter the ring in reverse order following the stewards direction. Note that if your dog received a 2nd place in their class, you need to be on hand to enter the ring if

the dog that took the 1st place in your class is awarded the challenge so that you can now compete for the Reserve Challenge award.

The end of the judging of the dogs marks the start of the judging for the bitches which proceeds in the same order as the dogs. After the Bitch Challenge and Reserve Bitch Challenge has been awarded the judging of Best of Breed (BOB) and Runner Up Best of Breed (RUBOB) is done. Both Dog Challenge and Bitch Challenge are then run off together (Dog is always run in front of the bitch). BOB will then be awarded by the judge. Best of Breed is then excused from the ring and the Reserve Challenge Dog/Bitch is then called into the ring to compete for RUBOB.

The remaining 1st place winners both Dog and Bitch are then able to compete for their respective class in Breed which gives the winner the opportunity to compete for their class in group. Note that the BOB & RUBOB are automatic class winners – ie if you won the Puppy Dog then he will be shown against the Puppy bitch for the Best Puppy of Breed (assuming neither of them won BOB or RUBOB)

After the completion of the Tenterfield judging there may or may not be other breeds judged. The Judge and Steward may take a short break before the judging of the Group Specials where all the respective BOB winners in the Terrier Group are marshalled into the ring (in alphabetical order) for the judging of Best in Group and Runner Up Best in Group. Once these have been awarded the judging of the class in group will proceed starting with Baby Puppy. So you need to be on your toes and ready to enter the ring for your class if called.

If you can get your head around the running order of judging for the breed then the In Group and In Show judging follows the same order just on a bigger scale.

OK so now your head is spinning, but don't worry there are plenty of people that will guide you in your first few shows. It doesn't hurt to just quietly mention to the steward that you are a new exhibitor and to ask the steward if you are a little confused. Although you should avoid telling the judge you are new as it could be easily misconstrued by others as an attempt to sway your judge's decision in your favour. If you are confused with anything the judge asks you to do, just simply ask for clarification. Judges are people too and most will offer some guidance to a new exhibitor and it is usually obvious to the judge that you are unsure of what is required so there is no need to tell the judge that you are new to showing.

Now for a few things that people don't tell you about.

It is the steward who controls the ring not the judge and you should follow the steward's directions when entering the ring. A steward who calls you 3 times without a response will mark you absent from the ring so your day at the show will be over. Always make sure you are near the ring assembly area when the Staffy judging is nearing completion.

While other breeds are being judged it is bad form to bring your dog into the assembly area. Only bring your dog into the assembly area once the steward has called the Tenties to get ready. It is also advisable not to hang around in the official assembly area after the Tenties have been judged. By all means stay close by if you are required to re-enter the ring but give those entering the ring for group specials the room to move around while you are waiting for your call.

When entering the ring behind others it is appropriate to leave an approximate gap of 2 meters. If the person in front of you is moving too slowly you can always move behind and around them (never

in front) so that your dog's gait is not interrupted but remember when setting up you need to return to your correct place in the line-up.

When baiting your dog in the ring, be mindful of other dogs. Your competitors will not appreciate you waving food in front of their dogs even if inadvertently. The same goes for using toys or squeakers. Some dogs don't like squeaky toys so if the dog near you is getting too distracted cease using the toy until you have the judges' sole attention.

Always aim to set your dog up in line with the other dogs, not forward or behind the line set by the lead dog. It makes the judges' job easier when all dogs are set up in a straight line.

Don't expect your dog to hold a perfect stack for the entire time it takes the judge to make it to your end of the line. Take the opportunity to practice setting your dog up and then relaxing. Your dog will appreciate the break and stand better when the judge does make his/her way down to the end of the line. Always keep an eye on where the judge is so that you are ready when he/she makes it to you.

Remember your manners and treat your judge with courtesy. A simple thankyou goes a long way, even if you didn't win or disagree with their choices. Remember you have paid for their opinion and have received it whether you like it or not.

It is considered bad form by other competitors to engage in a detailed conversation with your judge whilst in the ring. Any conversations with your judge should be to answer their questions or to discuss your dog. You should do all you can to avoid conversations relating to others or about any personal issues. Although you may consider polite conversation with your judge to be innocuous it is often the perception of others that can cause problems. It is also not a good idea to draw your judges' attention away from your dog, after all it is your dog on show not you.

If you would like to chat with the judge it is best to do this after the completion of the group judging. This way you can't be accused of trying to influence the judge's opinion, which may result in a formal complaint for a breach of ethics by others at the show.

Never use the judges' first name whilst in the ring. You should always refer to your judge in a formal manner such as using Sir/Mam even if the judge is an associate of yours.

Smoking is not permitted in the ring or assembly area and it is inappropriate for mobile phones to be turned on.

If you are lucky enough to be awarded a class in group you are generally required to remain at the show to compete in general specials. Failure to attend general specials may result in losing any challenge points you have been awarded. Take the time to watch other rings when you can. It's amazing how much you can learn about dogs and handling by watching other breeds. The good handlers always stand out and you can learn a great deal by watching them. Watching the junior handlers can also be very educational.