

Revisiting Realignment

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In the fall of 2008, the AKC proposed realigning its existing seven Variety Groups into 10. One of the chief reasons for doing so was because some of the existing Groups were getting large and unwieldy, and there were more breeds coming up through the ranks of the Miscellaneous Class and the Foundation Stock Class (FSS).

However, while the prospect of a Northern Group that would incorporate the spitz breeds from the current Hound, Working, Non-Sporting and Herding Groups has met with a largely favorable response, splitting the Sporting and Hound Groups from the current two to four has generated significant resistance.

We've been hearing for years the hue and outcry of too many shows, and that was before the bleak economic situation we are facing right now.

A prestigious all-breed show on the East Coast held in mid-May mustered the following Hound breeds at its Friday event: the Afghan Hound, the 13" and 15" Beagles, the Smooth, Longhaired and Wirehaired Dachshunds, the Rhodesian Ridgeback and Whippet. If we apply the proposed Hound Group split, that breaks down into three sighthound breeds (the Ridgeback would be classified here), with the Beagle and Dachshund varieties accounting for five scenthounds in all.

At this particular East Coast show, all the sighthounds competing would have won a piece of their Group (with no fourth-place award to be presented). As for the scenthounds, all but one Best of Variety would have left the ring with a rosette. To have lone entries in their breeds emerging as Group winners and Group placers at the end of that day seems an unacceptable lowering of the bar. How will such reorganization improve the quality of our purebreds?

We're also looking at longer show days and very likely increased costs to show-giving clubs that may need to potentially hire three more Group judges.

While the current system of seven Variety Groups may not be perfect, the fancy is speaking out vociferously, clearly not sold on the proposed 10-Group realignment.

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