

## Showing in Canada

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I recently spent a very soggy but most enjoyable weekend attending the Lower Mainland Dog Fanciers show in Abbotsford, British Columbia, just outside Vancouver – the largest dog show in Canada. I flew up to Portland, Oregon, to collect my friend Dan; we packed four Tibetan Mastiffs in the van and off we drove. With just one potty break for the dogs and a burger break for us, we made record time, and arrived around 1 pm, thereby avoiding afternoon rush hour in Seattle and a long wait at the Canadian border.

Although the Canadian Kennel Club uses the same seven group designations that the AKC does – Sporting through Herding – the CKC recognizes many unusual breeds that the AKC does not, and many of our better-known breeds are also classified differently. For instance, the Shih Tzu is shown in the Toy Group in the U.S. but in the Non-Sporting Group in Canada. The Finnish Spitz, shown in the Non-Sporting Group down here, is exhibited in the Hound Group in Canada.

What fun to see Swedish Drevlers (they look like a cross between a Basset and a Beagle), Japanese Shikoku, Karelian Bear Dogs, Cesky Terriers, and Xoloitzcuintli compete with us, and to show under a panel of Brazilian, Spanish, and New Zealand judges to get their cosmopolitan points of view on our dogs.

Between the pounding rain and having one bitch in season wearing men's briefs (with her bushy tail pushed through the fly), we started each morning using the communal dog tubs, which are greatly appreciated.

I showed a rather rambunctious 9-month-old, 120-pound TM puppy and, at 5 feet 6 inches, wished I had longer arms to keep him on all fours when he got bored and decided to sit in the ring. He still managed to win Best Puppy in Breed over his smaller, more coordinated but otherwise lookalike gold sister on the first day, but then she turned on the heat and won Best Puppy each of the remaining days. And speaking of Best Puppy, this is a wonderful addition to the Canadian shows. For each breed, there is a Best Puppy chosen after Best of Breed, and those puppies compete for Best Puppy in Group (only one placement chosen here), and then those seven Puppy Group winners compete for Best Puppy in Show. While there are no points attached to these puppy wins, it is a wonderful way to showcase a promising youngster to the enthusiastic crowds.

It was very gratifying to see the interest shown in the rare breeds. In fact, there was a noon-hour rare-breed parade one day in the big center ring where CKC-recognized rarer breeds such as the Dutch Sheepdog, Finnish Lapphund, and Tibetan Mastiff were walked before the crowds while a brief history of the breeds was read.

On Saturday evening, TSN (the Canadian equivalent of ESPN) was there shooting the show to air later in the year, which added to the excitement.

Unlike AKC shows where 15 points and two majors are required to earn a champion title, the CKC requires 10 points earned under three judges to complete a dog's title. A much-appreciated Group 4 in a tough Working Group gave our girl the extra two points needed to gain her Canadian championship. It made all the bathing, rebathing, and effort to keep a long-haired gold dog dry and clean worthwhile.

As a native Canadian, I knew how much fun the Canadian shows can be, but my American friends appreciated the laidback atmosphere, great sportsmanship, good coffee and excellent vendor food (mouthwatering paninis, great salads and awesome desserts instead of the usual burgers).

If you ever find yourselves with the opportunity to attend a Canadian dog show, I urge you to go. You will find the sportsmanship and easygoing attitude a breath of fresh air.

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