

Differences in Dog Show Leads

Chain, nylon, leather, and fabric options abound for showings dogs in the ring.

By Allan Reznik

Q. I watched Cavalier King Charles Spaniels at a dog show recently. Some of the dogs were shown on a fine chain while others wore fabric and still others had nylon collar-and-leash combinations. Why the variety of neckwear?

A. Different dogs, even those of the same breed, respond to different show leashes (or “show leads,” as they are referred to in the conformation world).

Rather than attaching a leash to a leather or nylon collar, as an owner would do when walking the dog at home, show leads typically consist of a length of thin leather or nylon with two loops, one for the dog’s neck and one for your hand. There is a bead or a clip that slides up and down to adjust to the dog’s neck size.

Experienced handlers use the thinnest show lead possible and bunch up the excess length in their hand so there is no slack leash to distract the judge’s eye.

In most breeds, you want your dog to move around the ring with his head held high, which gives an elegant appearance. Some dogs show better on a thin chain while others perform equally well on a leather or nylon show lead.

Most handling classes sell show leads made of various materials so you can try different types and see which one works best for you and your dog.