

Dogs Trimmed Coat Should Be Disqualified

Even if a trimmed coat is not in the breed standard, judges may choose a scissored dog.

By Allan Reznik

Q. In my breed, trimming of any kind is considered a major fault. A dog in my area, shown by a professional handler, is doing some big winning despite the fact that he clearly has been scissored. Are the judges not excusing this dog because he is well advertised and his handler is a big shot?

A. It would appear there is a double standard – no pun intended – and I can understand your frustration. There are many breed standards that take a tough stand on trimming. Unfortunately, judges are hired to find the best dog and few will put up a mediocre, untrimmed dog over one of overall better quality that has been trimmed.

Dog shows were created as a venue to evaluate breeding stock and hair, of course, grows back. An exceptional dog that's been scissored isn't going to pass on that scissoring to his or her offspring, whereas the untrimmed animal with a poor head, straight shoulders, a lumpy topline and cow hocks may produce puppies with all those faults.

A lot of handlers and experienced owner-exhibitors push the envelope when it comes to excessive trimming but they try to be subtle about it, blending the coat so it isn't outrageously obvious.

There are judges who have a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to inappropriate trimming but you may not have encountered them yet. Look for breeder-judges who judge fewer breeds and have a reputation for being less tolerant of overgroomed dogs than the multi-group and all-breed judges are.