

Showing a Timid Dog

Try handling classes and mingling with other dogs to build your show dog's confidence.

By Allan Reznik

Q. I am a Junior Handler who is interested in showing my dog, a longhaired Miniature Dachshund, in the Junior Class. Unfortunately, even though the breed standard states that Dachshunds are not supposed to be shy, my dog is timid around large dogs. I take her to agility class every week, and it breaks my heart to see that she is so scared of other dogs, because it constantly halts her performance (she doesn't go nearly as fast as she does at home because she is so frightened). I have other Dachshunds in agility as well, and they don't seem to mind the large dogs nearly as much as she does. I am too afraid to bring her to a ringcraft class and later on a show, because I know that she will be too scared to trot around the ring and stack for the judge if she thinks her surroundings are dangerous. I don't baby her during class at all, and at home she is an energetic, playful Dachsie. Do you know what I can do to cure this habit of hers?

A. You didn't mention how old your shy longhaired Miniature Dachshund is, or if she came to you with this shy streak or developed it later, after an unhappy incident with a large dog.

It is possible to take a puppy – or even an adult dog – to handling classes (or ringcraft, as these classes are known in Great Britain), keep her with you, mingle with the other dogs and owners as her comfort level permits and, with any luck, eventually get her sufficiently socialized to go through the show routine of an examination on the table and her individual gaiting. However, it will take patience and time. Even then, she may never come to enjoy these activities. The sight of any dog shivering and shaking in the show ring or on an agility course is a sad one.

Obedience classes might also build her confidence, and you might even find one just for small dogs.

Since you do agility with your other Dachsies, you clearly enjoy the competition and camaraderie offered by this sport. Thankfully, you have some outgoing, confident dogs with which to pursue agility. Your Mini may simply prefer to stay home with another dog and your parents for company. Many lovely dogs of all breeds with show potential would rather be homebodies.

Since junior handling evaluates the skill of the handler rather than the conformation of the dog, you might want to try one of your other, more outgoing Dachsies in the show ring, or perhaps look for a confident, well-socialized puppy that has both good structure and an extroverted attitude.