

## The Reluctant Show Dog

**Take a break from show ring or try a professional handler to bring out the champion in a dog who hates to show.**

*By Allan Reznik*

Q. I have a gorgeous Papillon that I am showing. My problem is that he hates showing. At home he is a great "backyard champion." In the ring, he reeks of, "I don't want to be here." He was abused as a puppy before I got him. I have played with him in the ring at classes I take, but can't translate his joy into the show ring. I tried the clicker, too, with some success. Any clues on what else I can do?

A. We've all had them: beautiful, typey dogs that are great representatives of their breeds but all sharing one not-so-little problem: They hate to show.

You've tried handling classes, bait and clicker training, and your Papillon's behavior and body language give you a clear message: "I don't want to be here."

There is nothing more frustrating – or expensive! – than dragging a dog to shows that would rather be somewhere else.

In the belief that absence can make the heart grow fonder, some people give the dog a rest from the show ring, exploring agility or flyball or some other activity the dog does enjoy. Then try entering a show again in six months or a year, and see if he is any more enthusiastic. Sometimes the answer is yes.

You could also try giving the dog to a professional handler for a couple of weeks and seeing what happens. The handler won't be anticipating a struggle as you do, and your Pap may respond to that lack of stress by acting less stressed himself. Successful handlers have a lot of tricks up their sleeves.

I hope some of these suggestions work. However, if they don't, please enjoy the "backyard champion" you rescued, don't demand that he be a show dog, and find another Pap – extroverted and confident – for conformation.