

Why Can't Fixed Dogs Be Shown?

Altered dogs can be shown in several American Kennel Club classes.

By Allan Reznik

Q. Why can't spayed or neutered dogs be exhibited for championship points in the AKC show ring?

A. Because the original purpose of dog shows was to evaluate breeding stock, one wonders what purpose would be served by allowing dogs that cannot reproduce and "breed on" to be shown and gain their championship titles. Altered animals may be shown in the Veterans class (generally non-competitive) as well as the Brood Bitch and Stud Dog classes (also non-competitive), where the judge assesses how successfully sires and dams have stamped their quality and type on their offspring.

I would have no issue with parallel classes being offered for altered puppies and adults. My concern with showing altered dogs in the same classes as intact dogs is that it creates an uneven playing field.

When bitches are spayed, their coat changes texture – a silky coat becomes wooly, for example – and hair grows in appropriate places. Cavalier King Charles Spaniels and Afghan Hounds, for instance, start sprouting facial hair and Afghans have their saddles (the short, slick, darker-colored hair on their backs) fuzz in. If owners don't want their dogs looking like a bush in the ring, they typically strip out the facial fuzz and grown-in saddles, trim an outline on their dogs, and use whatever tools necessary to achieve a more tailored look.

However, the Cavalier and Afghan breed standards take a strong stand against stripping and trimming. It wouldn't be fair to have some exhibitors showing their dogs in adherence to the standard and others, in the same class, showing their altered dogs who have been groomed in violation of the standard.

How could a judge who uses a single breed standard to evaluate his entry penalize the intact dogs for being trimmed while overlooking the flagrant trimming of the altered dogs?