

Opening Space

A Goodwill Ambassador for Dogs

Every time I take a dog into town for a walk I have the same experience. On a conservative count, just about every fourth person I meet responds to the dog in some distinctly positive way: anything from just a smile or a quick word (“Cute dog” or “Hi, sweetie!”) to stopping to ask questions, pet the dog and tell me about their own dog experiences.

I don’t think our town is more dog-friendly than most. My dogs are Whippets, the best dogs in the universe but not necessarily more instantly appealing or cuddly than any other breed. (The only negative remarks I get are “Hey, don’t you feed that dog?” or “Isn’t she freezing?” — and there are many fewer of those comments than in the bad old days before people knew as much about purebred dogs as they do now.)

The conclusion I draw from the above is that most people really like dogs. They provide a little warmth, a link to a kinder and more uncomplicated world than the one we usually live in. So how come we don’t utilize the best weapon we have — the dogs themselves — more than we do in our fight against anti-dog legislation and animal extremists? The smartest thing we could do is stop hiding our purebred, healthy, happy, well-behaved show dogs in kennels and kitchens and bring them out to meet people more often.

There’s nothing like showing an anxious but eager kid how to pet your dog, talking to some parents and informing them that, yes, this is a show dog and that’s one reason it’s so well socialized and happy; no, show dogs are actually healthier than most because we spend a lot of money on testing our dogs for every possible disease; yes, it comes from a hobby breeder, and those are the people who usually create the best environment for puppies; and no, we don’t hate mutts and we are not snobs, we just happen to love the kind of dog we have, and we like the predictability that comes with each breed... and a whole lot of other questions which you will learn to answer, patiently and in a positive manner.

If you and your dogs are willing to go out and meet the public more, consider the following:

Pick the right location: busy city streets are out, areas where people eat as well; city parks or walkways are ideal.

Take only one or two dogs, not a whole kennel; make sure they do their business beforehand but bring plastic bags just in case (you do anyway, of course).

Bring only dogs that really like people and won’t scare anyone; age is less important than attitude.

If anyone argues (show dogs are bad, breeders are worse), don’t argue back; just smile and say that your first-hand experience is different.

You and your dogs could provide invaluable service as good-will ambassadors for our sport — your dogs will enjoy it, and you might even make some new friends in the process...

RECOGNIZING NON-AKC ‘BREEDS’

In the last issue of *Dogs in Review* we mentioned that some FCI member countries now approve “Longhaired Whippets” as a breed, eligible to be registered, compete at shows, etc. FCI Executive Director Yves DeClercq has confirmed that FCI allows member countries to recognize “any breeds” they want, regardless of whether these are approved by FCI itself or any other organization. Those breeds may take part in national and international FCI events and are eligible to be awarded national (but not international) champion titles.

The breeds involved include several which are of American origin but not recognized by AKC: the American Bulldog, Louisiana Catahoula, Patterdale Terrier, American Hairless Terrier, etc.

Although AKC has long had a reciprocal agreement with FCI concerning registrations, stud books, etc., AKC Executive Secretary James Crowley writes: “Neither Ron [Menaker, AKC Chairman] nor I were aware of the registration of non-AKC American breeds by FCI registries. Part of AKC’s informal and unwritten agreement with FCI registries in the various countries involves exclusivity” [...] “We cannot guarantee that some registry is not accepting non-AKC American breeds for registration, based on pedigrees issued by some organization in the U.S., other than AKC. However, this would be counter to FCI policy, and such dogs would not be eligible to compete in FCI events or to receive FCI titles.” This obviously conflicts with the information provided by the FCI above.

AKC has recently agreed to provide registration services for a kennel club in China, a country where the FCI already has



an agreement with a nationally recognized kennel club. Are we going to see discord between AKC and FCI in the future?

Meanwhile, have fun with your dogs — and be a good “dog ambassador”...

Bo Bengtson, Editor-at-Large