

Dog Men and Dog Women

Do You Have What It Takes to Earn This Illustrious Title?

Kerrin Winter-Churchill

In the days of old when dog showing was a gentleman's sport, the expression "dog man" was coined, probably by some ardent student of dogs trying to describe a person he or she greatly admired. The word was eventually expanded to also include women. Today you will still hear long-time dog people using this term but its definition is being lost on a newer generation of enthusiasts who seem only interested in their singular aspect of the sport.

What is a true "dog man"? It is a person who is deeply involved in the sport of purebred dogs with a very well-rounded education as it applies to dogs, both intellectually and tactically. A true dog man or dog woman is absorbed by dogs and happily reads about them to learn more. These special people never really feel they know it all and will spend quality time talking to anyone who can fill a gap in their knowledge. Dog men mentor novices out of passion, hoping to ensure the survival of dogs as an intellectual pursuit and as a sport. Even though they may have full-time jobs that are not dog related, dog men and dog women spend the lion's share of their spare time grooming, training, conditioning, whelping litters and watching pups grow up. They have a sense of history for their breed and can discuss bloodlines of the past and present. At the shows, when not in the ring or their set-up, they can be found studying ringside, watching other breeds as they are judged and talking dogs with others.

Some of the greatest dog men and dog women of our past were Alva Rosenberg, Percy Roberts, Hayes Blake Hoyt, Sunny Shay, Julia Gasow, Nigel Aubrey-Jones and Anne Rogers Clark. Today we still have some very well-rounded dog men and women among us but sadly their numbers are waning — giving way to a myopic or narrow-sighted approach to dogs, where fanciers have little reverence for the sages of our sport, past or present, and know little or nothing of breeds other than their own.

Want to read the full story? Order your November 2007 issue of DOGS IN REVIEW today, or subscribe to receive the best show dog articles and dog news every month!