

In the Ring: Ready, Set, Show!

All you need to know about entering your first conformation show.

By Anne H. Bowes

If you've been following the suggestions detailed in this column, your dog is beautiful, well-trained and conditioned for the show ring, and you are familiar with the show routine and what is expected of you and your dog. Now comes the fun part: It's time to enter your dog in a show.

Researching judges

When deciding which show to enter, first find out who is judging your breed in your area. Dog-show novices should seek judges who are not only experts in their breeds but are also patient and encouraging to handlers who are just starting out. Your breeder or mentor will be a good source for this type of information.

As you gain more experience, look for judges who like the type of dog you are showing. For example, if your dog is on the small side for your breed, look for judges who consistently select smaller dogs; avoid judges who tend to prefer larger dogs.

You can learn about judges' preferences in several ways. Some websites, such as Infodog.com, have profiles of American Kennel Club judges. Read about the judges' experience in the sport and the breeds they have raised and shown. Infodog.com posts results for shows so you can see which dogs of your breed certain judges have put up.

To learn about United Kennel Club judges, visit www.ukcdogs.com and click on "Conformation Events" for a list of UKC judges, as well as a list of UKC officials you can contact for judge information.

Try contacting an exhibitor in your breed who lives in the same area of the country as the judge, and ask his opinion about that judge's experience and preferences. The more questions you ask, the more information you'll learn, which will help you decide if you should enter under a certain judge.

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