

## Judges Perspective

### **Novice judges**

*Jeffrey G. Pepper*

Just as with exhibitors, every judge has experienced a first show, and things do not always go as well as one might hope. As you know, judges are not novices when it comes to dog knowledge. The mere fact that they are judges stipulates a minimal level of experience. All started out as breeders or, in some cases, professional handlers. Each has many years of direct experience and knowledge in his own breed and all have exhibited at conformation shows for many years. Each has completed the championship title on a number of dogs, in most cases on dogs that they actually bred themselves.

The American Kennel Club sets extensive requirements for all who wish to become a judge. This includes at least 12 years of experience in the dog fancy as well as the breeding of several litters which produced several champions. Those who want to become a judge must pass tests in canine anatomy, knowledge of AKC rules, ring procedure and, of course, breed-specific knowledge based on the breed standard.

So, after passing muster and given all the prior experience required, the newly approved judge is an expert from the very first time he enters the ring, right? Well, not really. As with most things that have value, it might look easy, but it takes time to learn all the ins and outs of judging. The process of actually judging dogs at a dog show is really quite different than evaluating your own breeding stock or potential show dog.

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