

## Willy Wins Best in Show at Crufts Dog Show

**The four-day event hosted over 22,000 purebred show dogs in Birmingham, England.**

*Dawne Deeley*

Posted: March 14, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

Best in Show: Ch. Akari Fabulous Willy Westminster may be the fanciest, and the World Championships the most colorful, but there is no doubt that Crufts has earned its place in the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest – and arguably greatest – dog show in the world. From humble beginnings in 1891, this event has grown to annually host over 20,000 purebred dogs, with this year's entries totaling 22,320 – the second highest ever.

Best in Show: Ch. Akari Fabulous Willy The event is named for Charles Cruft, a jeweler's son who in 1876 turned his back on the family business in order to sell dog food for one James Spratt. An exceptional salesman, Cruft's entrepreneurial talents were quickly noted by his employer, who sent him to France in hope of further endorsements. So impressed were French breeders that in 1878 Cruft was approached to organize the canine section of the Paris National Exhibition. Cruft had found his niche – by 1930, he was referred to as "the Napoleon of the dog world." Charles Cruft passed away in 1938; four years later his widow passed the reins over to the Kennel Club of Great Britain, with the understanding the Cruft name would remain.

The National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, England, hosts the Crufts show this year, as it has since 1991. This year's event saw 951 overseas exhibitors from 32 different countries competing in over 2,000 various classes spread over a four-day period.

Second to the Wire Fox Terrier in Group, Ch. Hobergay's Finneus Fogg, a.k.a "Harry" One hundred eighty-two breeds were represented, four having gained official Kennel Club acceptance in 2007; the Coton De Tulear, German Longhaired Pointer, Pyrenean Sheepdog and Japanese Akita Inu. Others acknowledged here but not commonly seen in North America include the Lancashire Heeler, Finnish Lapphund, Canadian Eskimo Dog and Sloughi, just to name a few!

140,000-plus visitors came to watch these competitive canines vie for the ultimate title of Best in Show, with more than 5,000 of them coming from abroad just to witness the Crufts spectacular. And for those who couldn't make it, TV broadcast went to a whopping 49 countries.

The Crufts experience doesn't end in the show ring, though. International competitions are held in obedience, agility and heelwork, while close to 500 trade and display stands provide everything from apparel to zinc supplements. Of particular interest is Discover Dogs, where owners of more than 190 canine varieties may be found at their respective breed booths, introducing themselves to the public. There is a tremendous amount of ground to cover, but over 25 acres of halls and pavilions ensures room for everyone.

Reserve Best in Show winner, Wire Fox Terrier, Ch. Travella's Show Stopper Few would argue the pinnacle of excitement is reached on the last day, with the judging of Best in Show. This brings together victors of the Kennel Club's seven recognized Groups – Utility, Gundog, Pastoral, Terrier, Working, Toy and Hound. Last year's winner was the Canadian-bred Australian Shepherd, Ch. Caitland Isle's Take A Chance; this year the torch was passed to Ch. Araki Fabulous Willy, a Tibetan Terrier bred and owned in the United Kingdom. "Willie" had recently returned home after a tremendously successful campaign in the United States, and fans roared their approval when judge Zena Thorn-Andrews made her selection.

The title of Reserve Best in Show was bestowed upon the Wire Fox Terrier, Ch. Travella's Show Stopper, also from



England. Other Group winners were the Flatcoated Retriever, Ch. Almanza's Far And Flyg (Gundog), the Bloodhound, Ch. Marksbury Wistful (Hound), Toy Group winner Maltese, Ch. Divines Marc Of Friendship At Delcost, Standard Poodle Ch. Huffish On Every Street (Utility) and top dog in the Working Group, the Alaskan Malamute Ch. Giving A New Royal Star De Jungla Negra.