

Dog Show Judging in Canada, Eh?

An experienced dog show judge tells you what to expect from your first assignment over the border.

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Preparations for this article about judging in Canada have brought back so many good memories of my judging in the U.S., starting with my first invitation in 1983 from that great gentleman in dogs, the late Maxwell Riddle. Who could ask for a better mentor? I have had much pleasure in meeting many fine dog people and fine dogs...

But we are about to discuss judging in Canada. Though many American judges are familiar with our similarities and differences, there will be questions and possibly misconceptions from those who are about to venture over the border.

We should start with the weather. Canadians have this fixation about discussing weather conditions before any other topic, and while it certainly often needs to be mentioned, a new visitor from the United States may have some erroneous impressions. (We do make jokes about visitors arriving with skis in July.) It is possible in some parts of the country to have a snowfall in June, and we also can have almost Texas heat and humidity. U.S. judges will appreciate the great regional differences in our shared continent and the invaluable weather information on the Internet. I always check my destination for a few days ahead and plan accordingly.

Venues would be another physical situation. I have so often enjoyed the glorious fair buildings in the United States with wonderful space and protection from the elements. These great high-ceilinged structures are national treasures, in my opinion. In Canada hockey arenas and sports complexes are often used, especially in smaller communities. Exhibition halls are available in larger cities, similar to the U.S. Outdoor summer shows are usually provided with large tenting at the rings, again like the U.S., but on a smaller scale.

Indeed, our whole way of managing shows is dictated by our population of not much more than 40 million. When you consider our U.S. neighbor of approximately 300 million, the differences between us may be better explained.

Even at best, our largest shows will not approach the larger events in the U.S. A newly arrived U.S. judge may well wonder initially about the quality and professionalism of his destination! There will be no Canadian Kennel Club (CKC) rep to ask pertinent questions of, and no licensed superintendent managing the scene. A CKC director might make an appearance, most likely with a social greeting. The judge will have been greeted and transported by a club member and will be taken to the judges' area at the show. The judge will report to the show secretary at least 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time of the assignment. Hospitality is usually very caring, a matter of club pride. The club president, the show chairman and the treasurer are all close by, easy to find for any questions and business. The show superintendent in Canada is in charge of the show, having to do with the smooth progress of the show and with any complaints.