

Reality' Dog Shows on TV

A judge feels that media attention influences decisions in the ring.

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Of course its influence is something that couldn't be proven beyond a certainty, but certainly it would have the appearance of influence, and therein lies the problem.

I think we in the American Kennel Club's sport of purebred dogs need to take a second look at what we allow the television industry to do at our shows and what we won't allow. If it were up to me I'd say no to this new doggie version of a reality show.

Do I think that television exposure to our purebred dog world is good for the sport in general? Yes, I do. The taping of the groups and Best in Show at the Kennel Club of Philadelphia in early November was broadcast a few weeks later on Thanksgiving Day on NBC, right after the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. The American public loves dogs and has embraced our sport when shows are telecast. They probably don't know much about what we're doing out there, but over and over again I have people tell me they saw my breed on TV and how cute it is. More than one puppy inquiry has come from someone who fell in love with the breed on television, and thought they'd like to own one. For my very rare breed this is good. We can dearly use more supporters.

Animal Planet has done lots for our sport, and over and over again I hear from friends and acquaintances that they saw a kennel club show and looked for me on it, and how much they enjoyed seeing all the dogs. The live broadcasts of the Westminster Kennel Club over many years have increased interest in purebred dogs, and I think the live broadcast of the American Kennel Club's own dog show in mid-January will enhance the sport as well. But I think we need to rethink whether we allow individual dogs and owners the privilege of special attention at the dog show. My vote is no on this one.