

An Exhibitor's First Westminster

Seeing the dogs in the ring at their best is the exhibitor's reward.

Jackie Franza

It's always exciting for owners and handlers to compete with a dog at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in New York City, but it's even more thrilling when it's your first time.

The Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, held every February in New York City, is the second-oldest, continuous sporting event in the United States (the Kentucky Derby is the oldest). The two-day event, held at Madison Square Garden, can draw up to 2,500 dogs.

Entering a dog for the first time in 2006 are owners David and Michele Smith of Smywyre Wire Fox Terriers in Chesterfield, Missouri. Their Wire Fox Terrier, Ch. Smywyre Cheviot Enzo Ferrari (Zoe), nearly 3 years old, will be handled by Santiago Pinto.

The Smiths have owned Wire Fox Terriers for 31 years. They became involved in conformation showing in 2000, and a focused breeding program soon followed. It takes an exceptional dog to make it to Westminster. All dogs competing at the show have already received the American Kennel Club title of Champion (Ch.).

"We are pleased that Zoe was ranked a top-5 Wire in 2005 and received an invitation to the Garden," the Smiths say. "We hope luck is on her side when the judges select their winners."

In conformation showing, individual dogs display physical and temperamental characteristics that make them shine. "Zoe is a beautifully balanced bitch," the Smiths say. "Balance is the cornerstone of the breed. A Wire Fox Terrier should be built like a well-made hunter, both standing still and moving. Zoe also has a gorgeous head, awesome coat, outstanding shoulders, short back, and correct terrier temperament." According to the Smiths, Zoe also appears to enjoy showing, which is an added bonus.

Breeders choose to focus on a particular breed of dog because they truly appreciate all the qualities that make that breed unique. "We love everything about this breed," the Smiths say. "Wire Fox Terriers are smart, independent, and full of fun, while at the same time affectionate and cuddly. They are small enough to travel inside the cabin of an airplane, so they can go anywhere you want to take them. Groomed for the show ring, they are a magnificent work of art. Underneath the formal attire, Wire Fox Terriers have a zest for life that makes each day a thrill a minute."

The Smiths say they're not nervous about the outcome of the show, but are extremely excited. "Seeing the dogs in the ring at their best is the exhibitor's reward for the hours of work spent planning a litter, breeding, caring for pups, socializing pups, training pups and grooming," the Smiths say.

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