

Preparing for the Breed Show

By Lynn S. Whiteley

The purpose of the Breed Show (Zuchtshau) is for evaluating conformation, coat, and temperament for the purpose of breed certification, and possible entry into the Zuchregister. The Breed Show is where most dogs will be certified for breeding. Most handlers spend a lot of time and effort preparing their dogs for the various breed and performance tests, but all too often little if any preparation is given for the Breed Show. Below are a few things you can do to help your dog be the best he/she can be at the Breed Show.

- **Free from parasites** A dog with parasites cannot grow its best hair, or be in its best physical condition. Before you do anything, have the dog checked, and if necessary treated so that you can be sure that it is free from parasites.
- **Quality food** Start feeding a high quality diet. We are building muscle tone through exercise, and growing a new coat from the inside out. Bargain feed will usually give you bargain results.
- **Conditioning** Get the dog into top physical condition through regular exercise. Conformation is mostly genetic, but a poorly conditioned dog usually looks worse than it really is.
- **Bad hair out - Good hair in** At least six weeks prior to the breed show, strip all the dead hair from the dog's coat using a stripping comb. A good quality comb such as the Mars Coat-King in any of the 16-23 tooth models will make the job much easier. It is also useful to have one of the regular stripping combs. Remove everything that comes out easily. From this point on, once the dead hair has all been removed, don't continue to strip the coat because these combs are very efficient at removing undercoat. You want the dog to have a complete coat at the Breed Show. Brush the dog daily to stimulate natural oils in the hair. Clipping doesn't stimulate new hair growth, and it could get your dog disqualified at the breed show.
- **Breed show training** It doesn't occur to most handlers that any special training is required for the breed show. While the dog is being judged, it will be in motion most of the time, mostly at a walk, but also at a trot and gallop. It is very helpful and to the dog's advantage if it has been taught how to heel on a loose lead. The judges will likely ask you to walk straight away from them, turn around and walk straight back towards them, possibly several times. A dog walking at heel with a loose lead makes it much easier for them to see what they need to see in this situation. Most handlers don't move fast enough to get their dog into a full gallop while on the lead. The judges will likely ask you to leave your dog in one spot and then walk away for 50 yards or so before calling him. When you call the dog, turn and run in the opposite direction so the dog will run as hard as possible. A little practice at this would be a good idea. Make sure that your dog is well conditioned to being around strange people and dogs. At the Breed Show there will be strange people measuring the dog with some sort of measuring stick, looking in its mouth to check teeth, checking testicles on the males, and other general poking and prodding. Most dogs don't mind this attention, but on occasion we see dogs that aren't comfortable with it. It's best if you make sure there are no surprises for your dog at the Breed Show.

The judges at the Breed Show are going to do their best to make a fair judgment of your dog. You might as well show him in his best condition and make the experience as pleasant as possible for all involved.