

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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The New Mouth Exam Letters

As we gradually return to normalcy in the dog show world, there are some new twists related to the pandemic, such as, a separate entrance and exit for each ring and other changes which may or may not become part of the new normal. However, one small addition is not pandemic related. No doubt you have noticed by now the letter at the top of your judges book indicating the proper mouth exam for the breed to be judged. The letters and the corresponding types of exams required are: "F" for front, "S" for sides, "O" for open and "T" for thumb.

This simple reminder to assist judges in the ring came out of the ADSJ/AKC Liaison Committee work. It is an excellent example how our organization seeks to represent the best interests of the judging community and dog shows.

The idea was proposed to the ADSJ Board by a single individual ADSJ member. The Board agreed that it would be a worthwhile addition to the judges book, just as the indication of "Ground," "Table," "Ramp" etc. have been quite helpful when switching from breed to breed.

Now the initial reaction from AKC Staff was a rebuff stating, "you should know that," and of course this is true, just as we should know that a Bassett Hound should be examined on a ramp. At this point an individual may well have been dissuaded from pressing the case further in the face of this initial reaction. However, through our organization, we have a way to explore and weigh the pros and cons of such proposals with both AKC Board and Staff in a cooperative manner. Reasonable conclusions have a better chance of being reached when all sides have a better understanding of the issue.

We have many other contacts, both formal and informal, with the AKC regarding policy and practices. Nonetheless, the ADSJ/AKC Liaison Committee is the single most important avenue we have for impacting policy and practices. It typifies the central nature of our organization as an advocacy group representing the interests of judges and the advancement of purebred dogs.

While on this topic, I would like to express our appreciation to the AKC for exhibiting an openness to our suggestions over the years. Their willingness to listen is the reason the Liaison Committee work has resulted in many improvements for the judging community. Perhaps at some point we should list all of the positive outcomes of this

Committee's work. For the sake of some of the newer judges among us, I will offer one example which is emblematic of our organization's efforts on behalf of American dog show judges.

At one time, while working through one's provisional assignments (now referred to as permit assignments) a judge would be observed by an AKC Field Rep. The judge would not know when or where such observations took place. When the judge applied for permanent status there would be a conference call among the Field Reps and the judge's performance would be critiqued resulting in approval or denial of some or all of the provisional breeds.

I don't need to explain the many problems with such an evaluation system. In every form of contact and most importantly through the ADSJ/AKC Liaison Committee, the ADSJ argued against this process. It is to the AKC's credit that they were open and fair minded enough to radically alter their policy so that judges now know when they are being observed, have an opportunity to sit down with the Field Rep after the observation to discuss the judging and record their thoughts on the matter.

As mentioned above, the mouth exam letters are a small change, but the process by which it came about illustrates the reason for the existence of a judges advocacy association such as the ADSJ. So please, if you have an idea or suggestion you think may benefit your fellow judges, don't hesitate to bring your idea to the attention of an ADSJ board member. Your idea may just lead to the next new advancement for judges. *