

## Preparing for Practical Exams

Congratulations on passing your theory exam. That is the first hurdle overcome. You will now be preparing for your practical examination. If this is your first group exam you will no doubt be nervous and unsure as to what to expect. If you have exhibited at the examination shows previously you will have some idea as to the proceedings. If you are already on the group panel or a doing a re-sit you will be more comfortable with the process but as expected, will still be nervous. NZDJA has produced Protocols for practical exams, these are available on the website.

### Before exam day

Preparation is paramount. The better prepared you are, the less likely you are to falter due to nerves. You have already demonstrated your knowledge of the breed standards by passing the theory exam but you will be expected to recall the standards (which can be in your own words), especially the key elements for that breed. You will also be expected to demonstrate your knowledge of the history of each breed, the form and function and how this makes each breed unique. Where there are similar breeds, e.g Welsh Pembroke Corgi and Welsh Cardigan Corgi, be sure you can identify the differences between them.

You will be required to critique in full at least one dog. The examiners are looking for you to verbalise what you are seeing and what you found when you went over the dog. Practice critiquing at every opportunity. A good idea is to use photographs, videos etc so you can do it at home. Be careful not to quote the standard if it does not apply to the dog in front of you. Don't say "short backed and cobby" if the dog you are critiquing clearly has a back longer than required.

After you have judged a few dogs, the examiners will ask you to justify your decisions. Often, we know Dog B is the better specimen—the key at exam time is being able to explain it. Practice with photographs of different dogs. Practice speaking out loud and explaining your placings using breed specific terminology. Get family members or other judges to help you with this.

The examiners will also expect you to know the height and weight requirements for each breed and be able to ascertain if the dogs in front of you conform to the requirements in the standard. To help you with this, get a tape measure and make markings on your leg. Know what the height looks like in comparison to your own calf, knee, mid thigh etc. Don't forget to adjust for the height of your shoe heel. If you are going to have some table dogs which only have a weight standard, practice feeling what different weights are like. Pick up heavy objects and try to guess their weight then check on the scales to see how close you were.

Don't forget that you will receive a list of the breeds entered prior to the day, so in your last week do as much prep on these breeds as possible.

### On the day

Be at your venue with time to spare. Make sure you are dressed appropriately and are wearing comfortable shoes. Ladies remember the height of your skirt when bending over and don't wear floaty skirts and scarves or jewellery that dangles. Gentlemen ensure your tie is not hanging in the dogs face, wear a tie pin if necessary. Good luck.