

NZDJA

How important is the pink lead?

by Lavina Diamanti

I felt compelled to write this article when recently asked by a new exhibitor for particular colour lead for her new puppy as she had been told by a fellow exhibitor that it would help her puppy win. Really? That comment followed on from another discussion a few weeks earlier about the colour and style of a ladies suit and whether it influenced my decisions when judging. I was astounded. The truth is, I judge dogs, not suit colour, not lead colour but dogs, pure and simple. Pretty leads and nice suits may complement and enhance the overall picture but are never an influencing factor when making my decisions. I am sure my fellow judges would echo my sentiments.

The questions highlighted for me a perception about judges that is probably quite unjustified. Yes, in New Zealand (and Australia) we are mostly all-rounders with a specialist level knowledge in one or two breeds. Our system and the limited number of entries in each breed doesn't allow for anything else. But our examination system ensures that our judges have a reasonably sound knowledge of the breed standards and they have also demonstrated that in the practical examination. (I for one can attest to literally hundreds of hours of studying breed standards, travelling for hours to attend training seminars etc.) The changes to the examination system that NZDJA are implementing will ensure that this process is even more robust and we will produce even better quality judges. But how do we demonstrate this to the exhibitors?

We might be judging the dogs but the exhibitors are judging us. The sad fact is it only takes one or two judges to make poorly influenced decisions for it to reflect badly on the rest of us. Before you know it, many exhibitors think we make our decisions based on all things other than the qualities of the dogs in front of us. In my experience, I am too busy concentrating on the dogs to barely notice who is handling or what they are wearing. So how can we change the perception? I don't know that we can, but what I do know is that if we were all to judge by the advice of the late Tom Horner, England's great dog judge and journalist, we would be well on our way.

"If you are going to judge dogs, a full understanding of the breed standard is a bottom line essential. The judge must not only know what the standard actually says but understand its implications as well. Even a child can memorise the Lord's prayer but it takes an entire lifetime to fully understand what it really means. And so it is with breed standards. Time, experience and learning by one's mistakes teach the good judge that there is much more to a breed standard than the printed word.

When judging dogs you must not be swayed by any consideration, except by the relative merit of the dogs in front of you. You have but one duty: to judge the dogs. Forget the handlers, and forget what the dogs have won previously. Place the dogs as you think they should stand, never mind if the winner belongs to your best friend or your worst enemy. Disregard the fact that you won under one of the exhibitors last week, and that another is judging at the next show. Be completely selfish – please yourself and simply judge the dogs and safeguard your reputation. That is the only way to gain respect from your peers."

Amen.

National Board

Patroness:	Annette Buxton
President:	Martin Hewitt Phone: 03-312 6504 Email: martin_hewitt@xtra.co.nz
Vice President:	Karen McIntyre Phone: 03-312 0413 Email: kazie@xtra.co.nz
Secretary:	Debbie Hull Phone: 07-849 3467 Email: rclassi@xtra.co.nz
Treasurer:	Jill Brooker Phone: 07-867 5542 Email: bayparque@xtra.co.nz

Region Chairpersons

Region 1:	Kathleen Hardwick Phone: 07-826 4554 Email: daxford@xtra.co.nz
Region 2:	Linda Strongman Phone: 07-828 4750 Email: lynmar@xtra.co.nz
Region 3:	Betty Parker Phone: 06-355 9126 Email: bettyparker@clear.net.nz
Region 4:	Lavina Diamanti Phone: 03-578 6998 Email: lavina.diamanti@gmail.com
Region 5:	Kaye Finlayson Phone: 03-347 0059 Email: kenterprizes@xtra.co.nz

Important Dates

Auckland Practical Exams: Sat 16th July 2016

Christchurch Practical Exams: Sat 30th July 2016