

NZDJA

Regulations v Ethics

by Lavina Diamanti

There has been some commentary recently on social media after Dogs New Zealand published an FCI regulation regarding judges exhibiting dogs at FCI shows that very few of us were aware of. It can be found in the *Regulations for FCI Dog Shows* document and reads:

(FCI) Regulation 11 RESTRICTIONS FOR JUDGES AT SHOWS

"The dogs that a judge handles at a FCI-CACIB show where he is not acting as a judge must be either bred, owned or co-owned by him, by a partner, by a member of his immediate family or any person living with him in his household."

Dogs NZ goes on to clarify: *This regulation only applies to the Dogs New Zealand CACIB shows, currently a maximum of four shows per year. This includes all judges listed on the Dogs NZ judges panel. Championship, Open, Ribbon Parade and Junior Showmanship Judges. Aspiring judges are not part of the official panel and are therefore exempt from this regulation.*

This has quite an impact for judges since we are used to handling other exhibitors' dogs and it is a common occurrence. In some cases, dogs reside with us, and are shown by us, but aren't owned by us. Up until now, this hasn't been an issue, but now we have FCI shows, we need to be mindful of this regulation before we step in to help out a fellow exhibitor who needs a handler.

Mostly, these situations are totally innocent and there is no intention of any unethical behaviour. However, delving a little deeper into this regulation to get a better understanding paints a different picture. And while this regulation may seem a little harsh, it has obviously been implemented for a reason. Picture this: the 'professional style' handler, who has a reputation for getting the very best out of a dog and elevating them into the ribbons, who is also a judge, and most probably is well known to the judging panel. Is it fair that they handle other exhibitors' dogs? Is it ethical? Your opinion would most probably be based around your own personal circumstances and may even change if they are handling one of your dogs or one of your competitors' dogs.

I would venture to say that this regulation was included to make the FCI dog shows a more even playing field and to remove 'unethical' behaviour, either real or perceived. And that isn't a bad thing.

Now I'm not advocating that we bring similar regs in to cover the rest of our shows, but it does remind us that, as judges, we are bound by the *NZDJA Code of Conduct* and the opening point states:

Judges, as experienced members of the dog world, must at all times act with courtesy, professional integrity and complete impartiality and, by their actions, act as an example to other New Zealand Kennel Club members.

The *Code* also states:

Judges when exhibiting must by their demeanour and sporting behaviour, set an example to other exhibitors.

This, to me, also includes acting in an ethical manner. We, as judges, are also being judged. Our behaviour in the ring as an exhibitor says a lot about what sort of judge we are. The ethical exhibitor is also the ethical judge. The Cambridge Dictionary describes ethical as "Relating to beliefs about what is morally right and wrong". To put it more broadly, ethics consists of the moral code that guides a person's choices and behaviours throughout their life. It is based on their moral values and principals which are most likely formed early in life and cemented in early adulthood.

I take a simple approach: just because something isn't breaking a rule or regulation doesn't mean it is right and even if no-one else would know about it, I would know, and I have to live with my conscience.

In the words, from 1981, of retiring US Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart: "Ethics is knowing the difference between what you *have* a right to do and what *is* right to do". If in doubt, ask yourself the question: is it ethical? If the answer is no, then you have a decision to make, always remembering that you will be judged by your decision.

Why put your reputation as a judge on the line? 🐾

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Important Dates

31 August 2022 Effective date for Breed Standards for exams

31 December 2022 Cut off for completion of mandatory training