

THE RULE OF FIVES

THE RULE OF FIVES HAS BEEN REPRINTED ON MANY SITES AND PRINT PUBLICATIONS. IT IS A FRESH APPROACH AND A GOOD TOOL IF YOU JUDGE WORKING, TOY, OR TERRIER BREEDS

Excerpted from (Akita, Chihuahua, Mini-Bull, Toy Fox Terrier) AKC Judges' Seminar Handbooks

Breed Type. You should know it when you see it. Richard Beauchamp put it this way "Breed type is such an elusive thing... It is something that can't be taught but it can be learned. Even when type is present to the fullest, one person may see it and the person next to him may see nothing at all. It is clearly visible – yet defies description."

You've had it happen as you sit ringside with a friend. No two dogs are identical and no two standards put equal emphasis on the same features of type. Working breeds may emphasize soundness whereas Toys stress esthetic beauty and Terriers want temperament that never quits. All are critical to Breed Type and it is by your knowledge of Type that you will be judged. Rules and schedules aside, it is Breed Type that you are duty-bound to observe, protect and preserve. Have you ever thumbed through photos of dogs from say, fifty years ago? Some



represent advances in soundness or grooming but for example, how closely did Saddler resemble the Fox Terrier of today? The Akitas of the Seventies could not win in the ring today. But a Chihuahua is still a Chihuahua, even the Taco Bell dog was immediately recognized as a Chihuahua. Many judges take the easy way out – picking winners on soundness, faces, advertisements, or an opportunity to advance. They may get by, indeed, they may get a lot of assignments by making popular decisions but they will never be known as great judges.

If anyone takes this personally, they should not be here. I'm nobody, just a messenger trying to deliver methodology learned from some of the greatest judges. I will give you Five Rules which properly applied, will gain the respect of breeders as well as your peers.

Prioritizing these rules will protect your integrity. You will have done your job. Hopefully this will help you judge every dog according to its breed standard and nothing else. There are many more "finer points" you will study but above all, you should clearly demonstrate your commitment to the preservation of overall Breed Type.

First Things First. As a judge, you have to quickly weigh many factors, the most important of which is the overall health, condition, and temperament of the dog. If it is sick, malnourished, unkempt, lame, can't be examined, or threatens to attack, you will disqualify, excuse, or mentally eliminate it from consideration, depending on the situation.

The Breed Standard. That out of the way, you will then compare each dog to the AKC Standard. To do so you must constantly refresh your memory on every breed you judge because our minds play tricks on us, some of which can be embarrassing.

One judge admitted that a good friend took him aside and said he had been awarding dogs with a very obvious breed fault and that people were talking. Re-reading the standard, he realized that something said by a handler-friend had seated itself into his subconscious but indeed, it was in direct contradiction to the breed standard. The judge recalled many times, when weighing a hard decision, he had unwittingly selected for the fault instead of against it.

The best judges read the standards on a regular basis and when in doubt, they refer to them in the ring.



Seminars. Given the plethora of seminars and some of the people selected to present, you really do need to read the breed standards on a regular basis! You should also bear in mind that presenters who, having a problem in their own breeding program, tend to over-emphasize a fault beyond that which is conveyed by the standard, or they settled for ignoring it and consequently, tend to minimize that fault in seminar discussions. If you have any doubts about something said in a seminar, ask the presenter for clarification. If still not sure, go ask two top breeders working in two different bloodlines. There are judging techniques not covered by AKC Breed Standards but which are very important to ring craft, particularly for judges crossing over into another Group. Protocol on how to approach and "go over" certain breeds. No matter how many pages you take home today, they cannot take the place of examining and observing real dogs.

Applying The Rule Of Fives

Okay, here comes the difficult part of judging. Many standards emphasize one feature over another and that helps but what can you do in every breed, every time, that will earn the respect of exhibitors? If you recognize and select Breed Type with unerring skill, you will become known as someone who "has an eye for a dog" rather than a "popular judge."

Michele Billings once admitted she was having a hard time "getting a handle" on Akitas. I suggested she talk to Roy Ayers, Virginia Hampton, Eleanor Evers, etc. A few years later she did the Akita National Specialty, drawing rave reviews, even from those who won nothing. What higher compliment can a judge receive? The best judges agree the following five priorities help them define type in each and every breed.



Breed Character. When the dog enters the ring or is undistracted by the handler, note whether it carries itself with the correct attitude. A Bully will bounce; an Akita is dignified, purposeful; a Chihuahua may twirl or play; a Toy Fox will strut to the end of the lead and survey his ring. If you don't know how the breed should act, go visit with breeders.

If the dog acts tired, it could be the end of a long day but if the handler can't bring the dog around by sparring, baiting, or gaiting, you must disregard it because you are unable to assess breed character, i.e. Type. It matters not what the reason (and handlers are full of excuses), it is a dog show and you are to judge them on the day. It may be a dog you adore but if it is showing badly, you will be seen as a fool if you put it up. You judge dogs, ringside judges you.

It is a puppy? First show? Okay then be forgiving but don't award it unless it is as outstanding in type as this Akita puppy! You will be doing no favor to the breed, the handler, or your own reputation. Even a structurally correct dog is a bad example if it fails to display proper breed character and personality. There's always another day and another chance for the dog to convince another judge that it has correct temperament and type for its breed.

It's been said before but must be repeated here. An Akita performing like a Minpin has a serious lack of Breed Character. A dog that droops or is bored is something other than a toy breed. And while a Chihuahua may shrink back from a stranger, a terrier that does so should be mentally eliminated. Sure there will be in-betweens but if you apply for the breed, you should know it well enough to judge the degree of un-typical behavior and its significance in that particular breed.



A beautiful dog that lacks character misrepresents the breed. Therefore Character is the first Priority.

Outline is #2 on your checklist. There are breeds with very similar silhouettes but you are supposed to know the difference. Proportion, topline, angulation, tailset, ear carriage - all are distinguishing features of breed type. If you use the ink-blot test and the dog fails, forget it. You know why....



A Havanese is not a Lhasa outline. An unclipped Poodle will still have that up-on-leg "poodley" profile that separates it from the Lowchen. If a dog in the ring makes you wonder if you would know its breed if you saw it on Park Avenue, for goodness sake, reject it. That is after all, why the public chooses a purebred. Silhouette then, is Rule #2.

Head and Expression is #3 in most breeds. Doesn't matter if it is a head breed or not, the head is what owners look at every day. An Akita with a GSD head cannot possibly have the intimidating expression of a courageous hunter of bear, boar, and burglars but please, any suggestion of a chow scowl is a serious no-no. Size notwithstanding, a Chihuahua with Papillion skull couldn't possibly have those huge luminous eyes so typical of the breed. So even if the standard fails to emphasize the head, it is an indispensable feature of breed type. It may take a keen eye to distinguish fine differences between the Toy Fox, Toy Manchester, and Minpin head but that is the mark of a great Toy Judge.



You have a duty to know and award the dog who acts like it's breed, presents an easily recognizable profile, and whose head and expression define it as such. If you are down to the ribbon but find yourself confused by a Bullie head with a significant stop, remember priority rule #3.

Movement - Soundness versus Type is a worn out debate. Everyone knows you "can get a sound dog at the pound" so we will not repeat that discussion other than to stress that movement is indicative of a lot more than soundness. It clearly demonstrates correct type for that breed.

In many breeds, it is the critical test of correct conformation. Should a Peke move like a Pom? A Bullie like a Boston? Of course not, so beyond soundness, movement exemplifies breed Type. Please, on this one thing, do not get lazy. If the Collie moves like a Shepherd, it may be exciting and dramatic but it is all wrong! Do not fall into the trap of generic judging, especially as regards movement. Okay, so ringside will cheer for the big moving dog but does that make the Clumber moving like a Cocker an outstanding dog? And let's face it, Bull Terriers, Miniature or Standard, should move like a weight lifter, not like a sporting dog!

Do you want to be known as a "movement judge" or as someone who "really knows the breed." Which is the greater compliment? More

to the point, which is more important to preserving that breed? This is Priority #4.



Coat is on this list because it constitutes an important element of type in many breeds and is essential or can be a disqualification in many. Go beyond the Maltese or the Old English. Sure, they are uniquely coated, but if you really know your stuff, you know even breeds with similar coat types have subtle but important differences. An Akita does not have the longer flatter coat of a Malamute but does have a stiffer, fuller coat than a Siberian.

The differences can often only be determined by touch. (That does not mean a massage.) Reading about coat does not allow your tactile senses to learn type. A Mini-Bull does not have the coat of a Staffie-Bull. Both will be short, flat, and glossy but the Bullie's coat feels harder because the hair shaft is slightly thicker. While the Toy Fox Terrier's coat looks like a Minpin's, it is ever so much smoother, as though the dog was wrapped in tight-fitting satin. Each hair has a smaller diameter and tighter cuticle, and not to put too fine a point on it, that is the finer point of type.

In some breeds, coat can be the difference between survival and death or fitness for the job the dog was bred to do. In others, it is window dressing but if you know Type, you must give coat a top five Priority rating.

The Sum of These Five Priorities?

Summarily exclude any dog that fails any two of these priorities. I say that because there are varying degrees of departure from the utterly correct, even in these five areas. If the dog acts like a duck and waddles on the down-and-back, it is wrong no matter how beautiful its head, how perfect the structure, and how faultless its coat.

Judge each dog against the standard, not the competition. You know that but in the real world, if a dog catches your eye and excels in all but one of these priorities while the competition is of average quality with no glaring fault, which will you choose?

It is disappointing when you have to pick the “best of a bad lot” and astute judges complain that it happens too often. Is there a solution? Of course!! WITHHOLD ribbons. Be understanding, offer to discuss your decisions but be firm when there is no above-average quality. In the long run, it is a kindness not to mislead the novice into wasting more entry fees, or worse yet, taking the dog home to breed.

If you are certain in your knowledge, if you have applied the “Rule of Fives” and found no dog you are comfortable with, then your duty is clear. The reason you have before you dogs that lack Type is because too many other judges did not know or select for type. They have allowed breeders and handlers to think you will just routinely give something in the ring the points.

Please. Disappoint them.

*- from Judges' Seminar Guidebooks prepared by Barbara (BJ) Andrews
JEC Chairperson, Akita Club Of America
Founder and First President, Miniature Bull Terrier Club Of America
Toy Fox Terrier Club Of America Approved Presenter, AKC Gazette Columnist
Author of two Chihuahua Breed Books, BIS, BISS, and Group Winners*



Used with permission from -

Copyright © 1999-2009 TheDogPlace.org / NetPlaces, LLC - Under penalty of law, no portions thereof may be stored, reproduced or reprinted in any form without specific coded consent of the publisher. Click here for [coded Reprint Permission](#)

