



Attending Your Dog's First Show

Written by Linda Hartheimer

I'm sure that you are beyond excited about attending your dog's first show. To give you an idea of how things work and what to expect, I have put together this information, which I hope covers everything and answers many of the questions for those new to dog shows.

Many of these suggestions apply whether you are using a handler (breeder or professional) or showing the dog yourself. Here is a link to a brochure that explains dog shows, including dog show etiquette, how the classes are judged and in what order. <http://www.infodog.com/misc/dssa/DSSAnewcomer.pdf>

Remember above all that this is a sport, and good sportsmanship is very important. Because judging is subjective and unfortunately at times can be political, we may not always agree with the outcome, but we congratulate the winner and hope that we will get our turn to win at a future show. Also, realize that it is not common for young pups to win at shows and that these shows will serve as an excellent way to socialize the pup to dog shows, work on ring training and make it fun for them. The pups can detect if you are nervous or stressed, so try to stay calm and go with the flow.

1. Do not feed your dogs breakfast the morning of the show. Give them

a few biscuits or a small handful of their kibble. We want them to be hungry and work for the food (bait) in the ring. You should give them water. Make sure your dogs are clean, nails short, and ears clean. Do not Frontline/Topspot them a day or two before as it will show on the coat.

2. Please arrive at the show grounds about an hour before your scheduled ring time. This will give everyone time to potty the dogs, work with the dogs a bit and get them acclimated to the show site. Then, it is important to put your dogs back in their crates. Remember to bring chairs, sunscreen, wear comfortable shoes, raingear, layers, show lead, water for your dog, a bowl and cleanup bags. Prong collars, Haltis and electronic collars are not allowed on the show grounds at AKC events, which include the parking lot and fields, so only walk your dog on his regular martingale or flat buckle collar or show lead. Check the judging program to see if Flexi leads are allowed as some shows have banned them for safety reasons.

3. In order for the dogs to be their best in the show ring, expect to keep your dogs crated in your car for most of the day. The pups should only be taken out to acclimate them to the ring and people, go potty and get ready to be shown. If it is warm, inquire about crating your dog under the tent, in the building or purchase space blankets, clips and fans to keep



the vehicle cool. Ask an experienced person at the show to advise you on whether your set up is safe for the dog.

4. Do not allow your dog to approach another dog that you do not personally know to be of sound temperament. Do not make the assumption that all dogs on the show grounds are friendly, as you do not want your pup to have a negative experience. Even friendly dogs may feel stressed or territorial in the crowded atmosphere at a show.



5. It is important that you stay organized and alert to the directions and ring status.

6. Whether the show is indoors or outdoors, avoid the area near the ring entrance as this is the site of a lot of activity, and you do not want to be in the way.

7. Your dog should be near the ring entrance, pottied and groomed ready to enter the ring or be handed off to the handler at the appropriate time. If using a handler you should be ready to take the dog back as soon as the dog exits the ring. The handler will advise you if your dog is required for further judging or is finished for the day. If you are handling the dog yourself and have any questions please ask the ring steward.

8. Picture taking will help us see how the dogs showed and give us important feedback on how they looked in the ring.

9. Do not be offended or insulted if someone makes an inappropriate comment about your dog/breeding/breeder. As in any sport, some of the people are outright strange or overly competitive. The downside of our sport :(

10. Even experienced breeders/handlers can get nervous before showing, so please do not take it personally if we seem distracted or need to focus before going in the ring or need to chill when we come out.

11. If you have a question, feel free to ask but wait until judging is completed.

12. If your dog wins the points or its class, you may want to get a professional photo with the judge at the end of judging.

13. REMEMBER - this is fun! Enjoy seeing your dogs show, they are dogs and may or may not behave, but they will still expect your love and affection when you take them home.



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