

“...not to exceed six pounds.”

Most of you will recognize the title phrase from the AKC standard for the Chihuahua. The one thing that you can count on people knowing about the Chihuahua is that it is the smallest of the breeds. In doing some research on our standard and its evolution, I found it interesting that from the breed's recognition to the present time, six pounds has most often been mentioned as the maximum desired weight for the Chihuahua.

While breeding sound examples of any breed is no cakewalk, when breeding toys, you tend to multiply the possible problems. When the breeders got together, formed the Chihuahua Club of America (CCA), and put forth a standard, they felt that sound Chihuahuas could and should be bred within the one to six pound range. To insure that this breed retained the desired size, the standard for many years included the phrase, “if two dogs are equally good in type, the diminutive is to be preferred”. There was no weight disqualification until the standard was revised in the 1970's. The prevailing feeling at the time was that judges were often missing the “equally good in type” part of the statement, and taking too much to heart the “diminutive to be preferred”. There was concern that the overall soundness of the breed could suffer. A compromise was reached when the standard was revised; the “diminutive to be preferred” was deleted, and the weight disqualification was added.

This is an example of the standard setting out to protect an essential breed trait, and evolving to protect that trait and overall breed soundness. Our breed standard is our blueprint, and it has served well in each of its many incarnations; however, the preservation of essential breed traits lies with the stewards of the breed--you and me. The CCA urges judges to weigh a Chihuahua, should they feel there is a question of size. It has always been my feeling that weighing, like charity and good manners, should begin at home. It is up to us as responsible breeders and exhibitors to ensure that our dogs are within the standard before we take them into the ring. By carefully monitoring the size of our dogs, we are not only protecting an essential breed trait, but also our own reputations.

Those of you who are early into a love affair with the breed will doubtless have many questions about size, and how it relates to whelping and breeding in general. I urge you to study the materials available through the CCA and AKC. The best way to begin to understand the challenges of our breed is to work with a reputable experienced breeder, and observe their methods and results. There is no better place than the CCA National Specialty show, or the CCA Spring Rotating Specialty show, to get to know the people who work with and love this breed. The National show is held in Chicago, Illinois, each year in October. The dates are normally the first weekend of October. The Spring Rotating Specialty will be held in Dallas, Texas, May 4-6, 2007. For information on both of these shows, go to the website at [chihuahuclubofamerica.com](http://chihuahuclubofamerica.com).

In the next column, I would like to explore a few more of our breed traits, and the evolution of our standard with regard to them.

Bruce E. Shirky  
bshirky@texas.net