

spotlight: Chihuahuas

Highlighting a breed column of general interest each month

Using Technology to Our Advantage

The technology explosion of the last several years has affected all of us in many different ways—some wonderful, and some not so great. There is a wealth of information out there that is available in seconds. Ascertaining the validity of that information can be somewhat disconcerting, however. If you are careful and discerning in your research, you can find the answers to your questions, but it still takes time and research. The great thing is that you have what amounts to an unlimited library at your fingertips and the ability for instant written communication with others.

Club web sites have become a wonderful resource allowing pet owners to learn about the breeds they love and become involved in the sport of dogs. The Chihuahua Club of America is making every effort to make its web site user-friendly and helpful to the novice and professional alike. Information about health, training, membership, and breeders are just a few of the areas that our web site addresses. The web committee and webmasters have recently revamped the site and made many improvements.

Education is one of the prime objectives of any breed club, and the CCA is no exception. We have many knowledgeable and talented people in the club, and we are making every effort to utilize them. In order to do this, the club's board has instituted several changes aimed at reaching out to our membership and involving them in the decision-making process and business of the club.

These changes include initiating a "listener line" for our board-meeting conference calls and posting the agendas for these meetings two weeks beforehand. Our conference-call records are indicating that 15 to 20 percent of the membership is listening in. This is a far greater percentage than that of members attending board meetings at the spring and fall shows, where there are so many other things going on.

Also, our four regional vice presidents are often tasked with polling the members they represent and asking for their input. Communication is carried out by e-mail concerning questions and issues that affect members.

Another innovation is the committee liaison program, in which each board member is assigned a group of club committees to communicate with and then to help bring their issues to the board. In this manner, the committee chair has a direct link to the board, and the board is updated on committee activities on a regular basis.

By improving communication internally and externally, we are able to reach a larger audience, and we can take more responsibility for getting accurate and reliable information to that audience.

Our hope is that the public will see that supporting the dog sport and the AKC is the best way of protecting the breeds that they love. Keeping high visibility and providing reliable information and education are the best ways to convey this message, and the technology boom has helped to make this all a little easier.

Any problems that clubs have encountered due to the availability of instant communication have been more in the area of civil discourse between individuals. These are issues that can only be resolved by individuals taking personal responsibility and setting positive examples for others to follow. Club leadership must take the lead in this regard.

As a dog club we must use technology to our advantage. By enhancing both internal and external communication, the CCA is attempting to accomplish that goal.

Please visit our web site at chihuahuaclubofamerica.com.

—Bruce E. Shirky, San Antonio, Texas; texaskachina.com ♦

