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Selection—The Future of the Chihuahua

Our breed's parent club, the Chihuahua Club of America, and the American Kennel Club are guardians of the Chihuahua's *breed standard*. The breed standard is a blueprint of the breed's specific qualities such as *appearance, movement, and temperament*. It is our "word picture" of the appearance and behavior of an idealized Chihuahua. The breed standard is "the standard or model which breeders endeavor to achieve."

The basis of judging in conformation dog shows is *breed type*, which is the combination of characteristics that are typical of a particular breed. The judge looks at the entered dogs to discern the ones who most perfectly resemble her mental image of ideal breed type. The goal of the conformation show is to identify breeding stock for the future of the breed.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks to proper selection is allowing what we *like* to stand in the way of something that is equally correct and fully acceptable. These "likes" can be something we overly focus on, and sometimes they do not fall within the range of preference. Restricted vision serves as a detriment to the breeder and to our breed as a whole. If decisions during puppy selection are based entirely on a personal preference, we risk inaccurately interpreting the breed standard.

This can sometimes be seen in our show ring, with some Chihuahuas exhibiting such traits as extremely short muzzles and curly tails, both of which are incorrect according to the standard. Only when we select within the confines of our breed standard do we work to produce better dogs.

Selection of our puppies will influence the future of our breed and should not be taken lightly. The longer people breed and watch puppies grow and mature, the more proficient they will be in evaluating what stands before them.

If we are doing our job as breeders with the best possible intentions for the future of our breed, some very good dogs will be neutered or spayed, while those who are even better will be retained for future breeding.

It behooves all breeders to work in the best interest of the breed. *Selection* is what it's all about, and it's the key to breeding success. An inability to look at your dogs objectively can wreck your dreams for the future and derail years of hard work. Successful breeders who produce quality dogs year after year are consistent with their selection process. They maintain a picture of the type they are trying to produce and know the ingredients that make up that type.

Finally, your ability to select wisely will depend both on your in-depth knowledge of dogs in general and your breed-specific knowledge. Read your standard until you know it forward and backward, and understand what you are reading. Above all, think of the future of our breed when selecting your next show puppy.

—Virginia (Jenny) Hauber (first appeared June 2013)