

March 2019 AKC Gazette (rerun from March 2015 issue)

Why You Aren't Winning in the Show Ring

You went to see a dog show and thought it would be a great family hobby. You decided to look on line for a show dog to purchase. Hey, that was easy! You walk in the ring with your beautiful little Chihuahua expecting that "blue ribbon" or purple ribbon for points. What? You didn't win?

Well, that's not surprising. I've heard it over and over again of all the show dogs purchased that weren't really show dogs. There are many breeders who count on the buyer who doesn't do their homework. These breeders brag about champion lines and how many champions they have bred, how many champions are in a pedigree and show you lots of photos of beautiful Chihuahuas. The Internet is full of these breeders.

Then, after several thousand dollars spent on non-show dogs, you realize you might need to do something different. You start doing your homework. You contact the parent club and ask for references of quality breeders. You spend time studying the Chihuahua standard and what it means. You go to shows and study the dogs and see what the winning dogs have to offer. You make contact with their owners and breeders and establish some quality groundwork. You might choose to join an online group of mentors. Yes, this all takes time. Patience is the key to all success in the show dog world. So many people just keep running in circles trying to get that great show dog but forget that anything worthwhile takes time, energy and effort.

A show dog is a good example of the AKC standard of that breed that has been developed by the breed's parent club. This is a blueprint of what your show dog should look like. Unfortunately, most people have much more to learn about dogs in general. How is a dog put together? How does it move? What was it created for? The dog has *many* parts. All these parts must come together to culminate into one dog, a dog that is "put together" well. Then there is the fact that no dog is perfect. So we need to pick and choose those things that we personally can accept or cannot accept in the dog that we select for the show ring and possible breeding program.

Don't take the easy road. Don't keep spinning your wheels and spending your money on dogs who aren't worthy of a championship. Find a mentor, someone who has been breeding top dogs for generations. Nothing beats the years of experience of top breeders. You can read everything but with experience behind you, you will always be more knowledgeable.

Dog shows are a great family hobby. But any hobby is more fun and rewarding when you excel. This sport of dogs can be expensive and time consuming. If you are going to participate, get smart, get informed, and get going!

—Virginia (Jenny) Hauber, 2015