

SENIOR CONFORMATION JUDGES ASSOCIATION, INC.

RESULTS OF MEMBERS QUESTIONNAIRE

SEPTEMBER 1996

These questions were based on the criteria in the areas of the judging approval process brought up by our members who took the time to respond to requests for input on this subject.

QUES. #1. 93% of our members believe the AKC has not administered the granting of initial or additional breeds in a fair and/or equitable manner.

COMMENTS: This is an unbelievable percentage of our judges that are left with this perception. This figure was mentioned to the AKC at our December 11, 1996 meeting.

QUES. #2. 94% of our members believe a multi-Group judge with 20 years experience should receive equal credit for his or her experience as would a handler who has been handling for 20 years.

COMMENTS: It is interesting to note that other studies or committee reports, as well as prominent writers, have indicated the similar ground rules should apply.

QUES. #3. 88% of our members believe a judge, who has been judging 15 or 20 years, should go through a somewhat less stringent approval process than individuals applying their second time around.

COMMENTS: The AKC Delegates Committee Report on this subject took a similar view.

QUES. #4. 99% of our members felt that there should not be any secret reports made on a judge by an AKC Rep.

COMMENTS: This is an extremely high percentage, and one would think that the AKC would pay attention when such a large percentage of its judges believe the compiling and recording of secret reports is not desired. Anyone aware of good management procedures realizes that individuals should be told of any shortcomings or undesirable habits in order that they be able to correct them. One does not wait until promotion time, or in a judge's case, additional breed time, to tell someone they are undeserving of advancement. What is even worse, when our judges are turned down for breeds, they are not even told why. We believe this practice is unacceptable.

QUES. #5. 95% of our members felt that they had a right to see any and all letters or complaints made to the AKC by anyone concerning any facet of his or her performance or actions.

COMMENTS: This bears directly on one's right of due process to respond to his accusers.

QUES. #6. 97% of our members believe that letters or reports complimenting them should be made a part of their records.

COMMENTS: It is hard to believe that the AKC would need prompting to initiate this equitable policy.

QUES. #7., #8., & #9. The question was asked of three categories of individuals (**BREEDER JUDGES, GROUP JUDGES and AKC REPS**) that if four of each of these individuals were given 12 - 15 randomly selected dogs of a breed to rate as excellent, good, fair, or poor, would they rate them all the same. The following are the results of the categories:

BREEDER JUDGES: 96% NO

GROUP JUDGES: 98% NO

REPS: 99% NO

COMMENTS: We believe these figures are extremely significant in that it is very obvious that our judges are not casting negative aspersions on the AKC Reps. As one can see, there is only a percentage point or two difference in each category. The resounding results were what all of us see every weekend at the dog shows. All of us, even though knowledgeable in our breed, have a different opinion as to what an excellent specimen of that breed is. **THIS BEING THE CASE, HOW ON EARTH CAN A GROUP OF AKC REPS, OR FOR THAT MATTER ANYONE, OBSERVE A JUDGE JUDGING A CLASS OF DOGS AND COME UP WITH A VALID OPINION, AND YET THIS VERY PRACTICE IS A PRIMARY SOURCE OF DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT OUR JUDGES ADVANCE. ANOTHER UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICE.** We thought we won this battle years ago when we convinced the AKC to first take the Rep out of the "Hands On Test" panel and later to remove the Rep from the panel altogether. Of course, that was a whole 24 months ago. Every time we get a new team at the AKC, we get new ground rules, and we are right back to square one with the Reps evaluating our judges on placements. Perhaps it is time to have the Delegates hand out firm directions to the entire Fancy. That once they, the Delegates, approve a process for approval, it be made a part of the Rules and Regulations not to be changed without the entire Delegate body approval. After all, the AKC Board of Directors cannot change a dog show class without the Delegate body approval. Is not the judging approval process as important as a dog show class? Think about it.

QUES. #10. 93% of our members believe that a professional handler, initially applying for breeds, should not be granted a breed he has never handled.

COMMENTS: Although here again the percentage was overwhelming, the 7% of the minority did make some cogent comments that are worth thinking about, and that is that a handler who had handled, for example, a number of the long-legged terriers could possibly take on one or two long-legged terriers that he had not actually handled. This would apply, as well, to similar breeds in other Groups. This view is similar to the views a good many individuals espoused for a breeder of many years; namely that the AKC should establish the policy of making provisions for a successful breeder. For example, a successful breeder of one of the sight hounds be given other sight hounds for his initial approval. Stop and contemplate. Under the present policy, what on earth does anyone learn about an individual's capability to judge a breed when a good many of the newly approved judges start out with at least ten years in the breed, and often times, many, many years more. All one can ever learn from watching that individual for a year is not how much he knows about his breed, since he enters the judging world with that knowledge; rather, we can only observe his ring procedures. This is worth all of us thinking about since some of us have long subscribed to the philosophy that a large percentage of the breeders should be given more than one breed initially.

QUES. #11. Question #11 is quoted, "How do you believe the testing and other procedures implemented in the past few years has affected the quality of judging?" We will simply quote the results of this question :

- A. significant improvement 7%
- B. minor improvement 40%
- C. no change 42%
- D. not as good 10%

(off a percentage point since we rounded off our percentages)

COMMENTS: With all the new emphasis in the past 10 years on education, testing and what have you, only 7% of us think that the testing and other procedures implemented in the past few years has significantly improved the quality of judging. Whereas the other 93% believe there was only minor to no improvement with 10% saying it is not as good, one does wonder where all our great judges of the past came from!

QUES. #12. 96% of our members felt that the AKC Reps should receive specialized training before evaluating the humans who are evaluating dogs, especially since their employer, the AKC, places such emphasis on specialist training for the dog evaluators.

COMMENTS: As we all know, the AKC selects from the dog fancy a breeder, a limited judge, or on a few occasions, a Group judge, and appoints them as an AKC Rep. They go to the AKC for a week's or so exposure at headquarters, and then are turned loose to evaluate the thousands of judges in the field who are casting judgment on thousands of the 130+ breeds of dogs. With all due respect for our Reps who are fine individuals, having the unqualified Reps pass judgment on the judges is the biggest single flaw in the entire process. We have advised the AKC that if they have a formula that they somehow anoint these individuals to make them, in effect, all-breed judges, that we should use the same formula on all of our judges, and do away with all of their recommended requirements of attending seminars, specialties and the likes. To the best of our knowledge, none of the appointed Reps have attended a large number of specialties or breed seminars before assuming their tasks. A job like theirs requires special talents and education in personnel management, observation and evaluation techniques.

"When a judge applies for additional breeds, a conference call is established between the AKC Judges Department and the field Reps. At that time, the Reps comment on each applicant's qualifications for approval of the breeds applied for. The Reps, we are told, refer to written notes and sometimes rely on mental recollection when observing judges."

QUES. #13. 84% of our members do not believe this is an acceptable procedure to be used as a major input for the decision-making process in the advancement of our judges.

COMMENTS: One of the things one must consider is the fact that all 16 Reps are on the phone at the same time. One does not have to have his doctors degree in human behavior to realize any negative comments by any one Rep are heard by all of the other Reps. And we all know what that can lead to. Good management and personnel advancement policies dictate that input of this nature should be from single independent sources, not a collective telephone conversation. This procedure is unheard of in corporate America, the military, or civil service.

QUES. #14. 96% of our members do not believe the AKC Reps are qualified to evaluate all the breeds they are presently evaluating and commenting on with our judges.

COMMENTS: We have been informed time and time again that the Reps sitting at ringside have questioned a judge's placements. The previous comments covers this aspect of the observer program as well.

"Chapter 7 Section 1 of AKC's Rules and Regulations reads, "Any reputable person who is in good standing with The American Kennel Club may apply for leave to judge any breed or breeds of pure-bred dogs which in his or her opinion he or she is qualified by training and experience to pass upon, with the exception" and it goes on to list the exceptions."

QUES. #15. 88% of our members believe the AKC is not complying with their own Rules and Regulations when they require judges to consult with the Reps and middle management at AKC to determine when and how many breeds they should apply for as opposed to allowing the individual to determine when he or she is qualified to pass judgment on a breed.

COMMENTS: The Delegates, many, many years ago in their wisdom, allowed the Board to approve judges.

Their authority included the provisions, which to this day, are found in the AKC Rules and Regulations . It is left to the individual to decide when they believe they are qualified to take on new breeds, not the unqualified Rep or middle management.

QUES. #16. 81% of our members believe the AKC's judges application process is too complicated.

COMMENTS: One of the recently added questions to the judge's application is, "Are you a Delegate?" We intend to ask the AKC what on earth being a Delegate has to do with being qualified to judge dogs. Talk about perceptions. One of the major things that come to mind that a Delegate gets involved in are the politics of selecting the Board of Directors. We do not believe this is appropriate to be on a judge's application.

QUES. #17. 88% of our members believe the costs are excessive for judges attempting to fulfill the requirements imposed for the granting of additional breeds.

COMMENTS: This speaks for itself when one considers the travelling, hotel, and other expenses involved in attending the national specialties and even the seminars. Another very major point that is never considered by the AKC is that a good many of our Group judges judge 30 - 40 shows a year, and that doesn't leave one a lot of time to travel around for seminars. We feel it is just as effective, and a whole lot more efficient, to assemble 40 or 50 breed specialists as we do at our Institute thereby allowing the judges to make one trip and take in 5 or so breeds in one day. We are in no way putting down the positive advantage of attending a national specialty. We are talking about the practicality of a Group or multi-Group judge taking in 8 - 10 national specialties in a short period of time prior to applying for the respective breeds.

QUES. #18. 93% of our members believe that the average judge feels intimidated when it comes to speaking out against established AKC policies.

COMMENTS: This may well be the saddest commentary of the entire questionnaire; that we judges are afraid to express our opinions and rights about speaking out against those policies and procedures that we do not believe in.

QUES. #19. When we asked the question directly to the individual making out the questionnaire by asking have YOU ever felt intimidated by a Rep at any time in your career as a judge, it was interesting to note that 52% of the judges had actually felt intimidated.

COMMENTS: What was interesting was that there were a large number of our senior people that were included in the 52%.

QUES. #20. 98% of our members felt that a complaint of any nature made by an exhibitor concerning a judge at a show to an AKC Rep or club official should be made in writing on a form and signed by the individual making the complaint with a copy furnished the judge on the day.

COMMENTS: It was stressed in the preface to the question above that we were not talking about bench show type complaints. We are talking about the sort of complaints like the letters written by disgruntled exhibitors or with one with minor complaints against the judge that nonetheless are forwarded to the judge by the AKC for response.

QUES. #21. 79% of our members felt the appeal process concerning judging approval should be removed from the AKC Board of Directors.

COMMENTS: As we all know, present policy has the Board acting as judge, jury and executioner. There were quite a few comments made that the entire process of judges approval should be removed from the Board and given

to an outside committee or board.

QUES. #22. Question #22 is quoted, "Have you participated in "The Breed Evaluations - A New Experimental Program?". (Questions #23 & #24 were related).

COMMENTS: We only had a few members who had participated, and we do not believe this is a valid sampling. The very limited results were one person indicated that they were approved for a full Group, four were approved for some breeds and three received no breeds. Of these very few people who participated, one thought the program was excellent, three thought it was good, and four thought the program was unsatisfactory; so obviously, one can extrapolate who thought it was great, who thought it was fair and who thought it unsatisfactory,. The only interesting comment, and we stress when you are talking about this small a sampling, it is meaningless but interesting, that three people got no breeds, but there were four that thought the program was unsatisfactory. Worth noting: the system has since been abandoned. The SCJA opposed it from the outset.

QUES. #25 & #26. We only had 55 members who had actually participated in a breed evaluation by an AKC Rep and of these 55, percentages below thought the AKC Rep was qualified to evaluate the breed and considered the process: excellent **5%** , good **31%** and fair or unsatisfactory **63%** .

COMMENTS: The results speak for themselves.

QUES. #27. 100% of our members felt that we should continue these questionnaires in order that your Board, and on occasions, others, are aware of the views of our members.

QUES. #28. 77% of our members agreed with our long-established policy that your Board only take action or devote their time on those matters which have 2/3 majority.

COMMENTS: 100% of our members want us to continue with our questionnaires. We certainly will continue the practice and request our members to submit suggested questions for consideration in this year's questionnaire.