

SHOWING YOUR LABRADOR

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This article is written by Kendall Herr, Dickendall. Kendall has shown, bred and competed with Labradors for the past 40 years. She is an AKC judge and a member of the Dallas Fort Worth LRC and the LRC, Inc.

Showing Your Labrador

Getting into showing must be overwhelming for the novice these days. Our number of entries has grown by leaps and bounds. There are so many types in the ring, so many people in the breed and so many stories and opinions.

Dog showing is exhibiting our breeding stock, so breeders and potential owners can see our stud dogs and brood bitches, see the puppies they produce and make decisions on which way to go in their breeding program or purchases of puppies.

Showing should not be a cutthroat competition. It is only one person's opinion and you paid an entry fee to get that opinion. Win or lose you have been evaluated against the competition on that day by that particular judge. Judges, like dogs, come in different types. It is your job to find the "good dog man" who understands your breed. Find out who is doing a good job and support him.

Your dog has faults, like every other dog at the show. You should understand your dog's faults and virtues. Everyone feels differently about different faults. What will really bother one person may be totally ignored by another.

Condition is very important. A Labrador only looks his best a few months a year. Learn to know when your dog is at his best and go with him then. Some dogs seem to look better inside and some better outside. Yellows usually look better than blacks indoors. A dog with bad feet or poor movement will look better outdoors. Your dog will look different against different competition. Just as color changes depending on what color is beside it, dogs look different depending on their neighbors in a class or if they are at home standing on your lawn. This helps to explain why you can win under a judge one time and not place under him the next time you show under the same judge. What you are up against makes all the difference.

Handling really shouldn't matter. A good judge should be able to find a good dog despite poor handling. However good handling can make it easier to find a good one and can help a poor dog look better.

There are many variables at dog shows that will cause you to lose a lot more than you will win. You will be a winner if you use dog shows constructively and for the purpose they were intended. Go to shows even when you don't have a dog to show. Watch the classes. Try to judge them yourself. Ask yourself why you like one dog over another. Have reasons for every decision and pick out the type you like and want to strive for. Are the dogs you picked out related in any way? Study those pedigrees. After the judging talk to people. Do a lot of listening to the "old timers". Everyone you talk to will have a different opinion and outlook on things. Sort things out as to what makes sense to you. Respect different opinions. They make the dog game interesting.

If you go at dog showing with the right outlook you will make some wonderful friends, develop a hobby that may turn into a lifestyle and you will be a real winner.

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