



Back to the Future

by Lisa Dubé Forman

Fortuitously, as I was preparing to submit my article for the deadline of this October *Canine Chronicle* issue, the AKC announced the New Judging Approval Proposal by the ad hoc committee which was tasked with reinventing the judging process. I was able to put on hold, maybe permanently, the other topic I was writing about and jumped head first into this one.

I have sought opinions from several, well-established judges along with a few smart, savvy newer judges to try to gain a balanced perspective or collections of opinions on this very important subject. First, I pride myself on being a pragmatic, equitable and progressive individual. I am not in any sense of the word a pessimist, I am not a habitual nay-sayer, nor an antagonist. I also believe that my contributors opinions are both well-reasoned and poignant. I have read the ten pages of the new proposal on the Judging Approval Process along with the equally as long, ten page FAQ sheet which accompanied the proposal posted September 13, 2011. Where do I begin?

It is like pinning the tail on the donkey but I will open with this statement. I agree wholeheartedly with the preamble in the cover sheet of the AKC letter which states, "The preservation of the quality of AKC Conformation dog shows depends on the exhibitor's full faith that AKC is providing knowledgeable and competent judges at its events."

Thank you! It is as if someone is finally listening to what I and others have been preaching for how long? As a

dedicated breeder and exhibitor, it bears repeating that there are innumerable breeders and exhibitors who have given up on all-breed shows and/or showing dogs. They have given up due to the lack of knowledgeable, proficient breed judging; the constant jockeying for points while competing against regular, employed professional handlers; the dwindling of breed entries and with it, breed points, and importantly today, expense. The latter being an ever-increasing issue in the austerity of which we all live and this will continue to affect breed counts. In the Northeast, for example, we are paying \$32-\$35 per entry, per day for an opinion reached in approximately one-and-a-half minutes.

I am enthusiastic about the opportunities of advancement for approved judges. Using AKC verbiage scattered here and there, I am excited with the new policy resting upon the merits of the individual. This will provide talented judges who have displayed proficiency through previous assignments the opportunity to advance at a greater pace. I am thrilled with the elimination of the one for one policy coupled with our ability to apply for a maximum of 14 breeds with each application. These aspects of the proposal are huge strides, long overdue and sensible progressions. The objectives seem to roll off the tongue, as if they were effortless, but are they?

How do we balance the AKC's preamble with the reality facing judges today? I do not believe that the new judging approval process, in its entirety, is capable of achieving bal-

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ance and fairness. We will look at several key components of the new judging approval process and apply them to what is happening today. The proposal begins and states clearly, "Approval to judge is a privilege and not a right. Anyone applying or accepting an AKC assignment does so with full acceptance of that statement." After reading this, a contributing group judge had this to say, "I have NEVER felt that judging is a PRIVILEGE! I had success in breeding and showing my own dogs. I served a type of apprenticeship by being an all breed club President and multi-show Chairman with entries of over 4000 dogs. I completed all the requirements and tests that AKC had asked of me. Consequently, I feel that I have EARNED the right to pass judgement on dogs. I went through the 'school of hard knocks' and earned my degree. Now, after 45 years in this endeavor someone at AKC could take away my ability to judge certain breeds if they don't agree with my opinions?"

One worrisome component in the new process the group judge alludes to is the often-mentioned removal of breeds. Many of today's show environments are emotional and high-strung with a palpable tension. Frequently, exhibitors and handlers demonstrate poor sportsmanship especially when losing. Most all of us have witnessed or have heard about an incident. The new judging proposal reiterates one key component, "Removal of Breeds, Three unsatisfactory evaluations of "Marginal" or two "Does Not Meet" from AKC Executive Field Representatives in any combination of breeds places judge on probation for those affected breeds. Any additional unsatisfactory evaluation on previously affected breeds of "Marginal" or "Does Not Meet" from AKC Executive Field Representatives will result in review by Judges Review Committee and potential removal of that breed(s) with negative reports."

What may cause such serious actions? The new proposal states, "The AKC Executive Field Staff will seek and consider the opinions of the fancy for evaluations and recommendations of judging members of the sport. The Executive Field Staff may seek from members of the fancy perceived to be experts in their breed or with considerable experience in the sport such that their opinions would be of merit..."

For me and others, this is a loaded gun in the hands of what some may consider novices. First, who is this illusory Field Staff? We can only assume by the ambiguous language that they will evaluate our judging decisions? What is and how is the AKC going to define breed experts? If I were exhibiting every weekend, will that make me a breed expert because of familiarity and frequency? If I am a Club President, does that make me a breed expert? I know many club officers and presidents in a number of breeds who could not point out a Metatarsal or show us the Bicep muscle on a dog; this applies to many exhibitors as well. Are these people going to be the Judge's adjudicator? One group judge contributes, "While I am pleased that AKC is making an attempt to revise the system, I do not see that the new proposals are helpful. In fact, it gives increasing power to club members,

professional handlers, and reps to evaluate judges when, in fact, the judges in many cases are more knowledgeable and more senior in experience than the evaluators."

On this crucial point, how long do you think it will take for exhibitors to realize that, after losing, if they complain loudly and often enough to an AKC Field Rep or directly to AKC, they may gain leverage over Judges? There is a term for this, it is blackmail. If you think I am exaggerating then you are living under a rock. Most all judges can recount an experience where they have been confronted by an exhibitor. Some confrontations have been in anger, some have left judges stunned by the aggressiveness or audacity of the exhibitor and even a small number of encounters are menacing.

A group judge recounted how recently an exhibitor stalked them after breed judging. The exhibitor had an entry with a serious fault and, depending on the Judge, a disqualifying fault. According to AKC policy, "Judges are required to examine and gait all dogs regardless of the presence of faults within their standard (deviations) and their severity. Breed disqualifications and lameness are not affected by this policy as Judges can address these as they feel is appropriate for each individual situation and in accordance with the Rules, Regulations and Policies of the American Kennel Club." This Judge examined the entry in the spirit of the policy and, upon the judge's discretion, the judge did not disqualify the dog; however, it did not win its class. The exhibitor afterwards sought out and complained to the AKC Representative claiming the Judge was rude and yelled at them. The Rep confronted the Judge and, not uncommonly, began to scold the judge for being rude without first inquiring as to the details of the incident. In this case, the Judge interrupted and readily defended themselves and stated the exhibitor was outright lying. Throughout the day, as the Judge completed other assignments, this exhibitor, curiously and regularly, appeared ringside. As the Judge recounted, they stood and stared at me. The AKC Rep was made aware of this very strange behavior and advised the judge to have a witness around them whenever possible. Towards the end of the day the judge, while waiting to judge their group assignment, was again shadowed by this exhibitor. They reappeared several feet away, again staring at the judge, and when confronted, the exhibitor chillingly replied that she wanted to make sure she would never forget him.

It is not uncommon that judges email or I learn of disturbing incidents that may, under the new proposal, easily have an influence over and effect removal of breed(s) from a judge. Professional handlers are employed by clients to exhibit their client's dogs with the purpose of gaining a championship title on the dog. Extending beyond the breed ring is Top Ten breed statistics, Grand Championship status with varying levels, and then the highly competitive group competition. Then we have Top Twenty in group statistics and, finally, we have Best in Show. On that tier, we have Top Twenty amongst all-breeds statistics and, singly, ranking of Best in Show wins. Did I miss any? It is very competitive and involves a great deal of money.

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"I find it objectionable that AKC Reps have the ability and authority to question or challenge judges placements and awards."

Nowadays, we are hearing all too often that, and I might add alarmingly so, judges are being confronted by some AKC Field Representatives. Judges report they have been openly and aggressively challenged as to their placements or final decisions. Judges, usually provisional, complete their assignments and are confronted by the observing AKC Representative. A number of the Judges accounts are similar. Absent are meaningful discussions and insightful questions regarding breed entries virtues and faults and why the judge placed one entry over another. Instead, some AKC Reps have demanded to know why the judge didn't put up "so and so"? In these cases, the AKC Rep has actually named the exhibitor(s), handler(s) by their first name.

One judge contacted me after my August article and related the following incident. "The slow and expensive situation you described can be exacerbated if you get crosswise of one of the reps you will commonly run into. That will slow you right down. They can decide what is enough of an entry to be sufficient to evaluate, and refuse to evaluate you even if they are at the show. And you probably haven't had the pleasure of running into a negative evaluation yet, and hopefully never will! That will slow you down even more. A professional handler, in a fit of anger since I apparently never put up anything she showed me, stamped over to the AKC rep in my area and complained bitterly about what an ugly bitch I put up instead of hers, that she would never show to me again, etc. So, ever since then, this rep has closely questioned everything I did in every breed and, although this rep gave me a superior evaluation in breed before now, this time in breed they wrote me up, giving me no chance to defend my choices beforehand." {sic}

I find it objectionable that AKC Reps have the ability and authority to question or challenge judges placements and awards. In the recent, summer 2011 issue of the AKC's judges newsletter "The Standard," the Judges Operations Department describes the role of the AKC Executive Field Representative. "In addition to the observation of provisional judges, the Field Representative also observes those judges previously identified as struggling with either procedure or quality of selection. Frequently, the post-observation interview takes as long as the observation, as it is a mentoring experience. Explanations, rationale and understanding are far more important than merely negative criticism when difficulty is noted. These conversations include discussions regarding unsatisfactory tests and exhibitor or club complaints filed against judges." The incident above is just one of numerous accounts as told by the judges themselves and is in stark contrast to an idyllic, mentoring experience.

Another provisional Judge recounted an incident after finishing one of their provisional assignments. Interestingly, this breed is one in which they have personal experience owning and exhibiting. They described the interaction as exceptionally negative, whereupon the Rep stated they had been observing this particular breed for

over thirty years and, therefore, they would have placed the winners in both sexes well back in the ribbons. The AKC Rep required the Judge to "Take as much paper as necessary to defend yourself" and the judge did as requested providing analysis from memory the virtues of their winners. Now many people may think that this should occur more often as it weeds out the inferior judges or as the AKC's new proposal states, "Among various individuals, the ability to judge effectively is decidedly unequal despite frequently remarkably similar backgrounds and experience. It is essential to recognize the disparity among applicants and act accordingly." I would tend to agree, however the winner(s) in question have supposedly been recognized at specialties before and after this assignment and/or have won in large, major-pointed competition.

Under the new proposal it is likely that both of these judges would be written up with a 'Does Not Meet' or 'Marginal' evaluation. Indeed, the one Judge indicated she did receive a poor performance evaluation. Reasons why? One judge had a Handler bitterly complain because they lost and the other because the AKC Rep felt better qualified to pass judgement on the breed. Ironically, the Handler who sought out the AKC Rep and complained stating they would not show under that judge again, not long after went on to show under that same judge again. I'd say this displayed questionable intent. Was this handler attempting to teach this Judge a lesson?

I recall one of my first provisional breed assignments on my giant breed of 27 years. After the assignment, I met with the Rep and was summarily scolded on how I examined the dogs. The evaluation cited me with a rating of 1 for unsatisfactory on this point. Fast forward, I was judging my two approved breeds and had the fortunate occasion of having a lovely, quality class dog entered in each breed. I felt strongly that their quality and type were superior to my champions and therefore I put both up for Best of Breed over champion(s). I made my way to the hospitality area whereas the AKC Rep, who previously was unavailable to observe my judging, spoke with me. Remarkably, from the time I completed my assignments and headed over to the hospitality area, the AKC Rep had already received two complaints about me citing I was very rude and nasty. Indeed, coincidental; perhaps too coincidental. The AKC Rep did not inquire how my assignment went, nor if I experienced any issues. They simply were not interested and they stated the complaints in a matter of fact manner. I am left to ponder if the AKC Rep, under the new proposal, would place another black mark or possibly a 'Marginal' or 'Does Not Meet' expectations in my file based on fictitious claims made most likely by a disgruntled Handler and an exhibitor. If that were the case, I would have three negative reports in my file and therefore I most likely would be on probation or my two breeds could be removed. One could speculate that any other Judge might be walking on eggshells now and would be in

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a tizzy as to who they should please. Should they reward Best of Breed to undeserving specials over quality class dogs because of the pro handlers on the end of the leashes who are frequently seen in tête-à-têtes with AKC Reps? Should a Judge put up a mediocre dog over a quality specimen because that exhibitor has previously complained to AKC about the judge? Is it now all about the squeakiest wheel getting greased? Go look at the new proposal. Absent is any language that protects or defends the Judge as to theirs being the final decision in the ring regarding breed quality, awards and placements. Just warnings.

I find it amazing that one of the biggest concerns facing Judges today is not addressed in the new process. In fact, it not only does not address the absence of AKC Field Reps at shows but the new proposal embraces, enhances and revolves around the role of the AKC Field Rep and their "Executive Field Staff". If you recall, the AKC Board made an administrative decision which curtailed or significantly diminished the appearance of its Field Reps at shows. The new proposal restates, "All judges are subject to evaluations by AKC Executive Field Staff including procedural and breed evaluations. All interviews for new or additional breed applicants will be performed by AKC Executive Field Staff."

As I understand it, the new proposal will not put an end to the madness of playing 'Tag' cross-country with AKC Field Reps. There are only 12 Reps to cover the United States. In Mr. Bo Bengtsen's well-researched article for TheDogChannel.com, "AKC Judges: Facts and Figures, Everyone Talks About Dog Judges, But Nobody Knows Much About Them," he states there are over 1400 dog shows annually. That is 104 weekend days per year but if a Rep is to cover every show then we have about 116 shows per Rep, per year. Obviously, we have a problem. I did note in the new proposal, again, an ambiguous reference to AKC Executive Field Staff and am unclear how this will help the situation.

Advancement under the new proposal revolves around evaluations. "Requirements for Regular Status for New Breed and Approved Breeds states the applicant must complete a minimum of three assignments in each permit breed...Additional permit assignments may be required. Judges with breeds on Permit status must be observed three times by different AKC Executive Field Representatives on any combination of permit breeds."

Regarding the reduction of permit assignments, I agree this is a positive step with the number being reduced from five to three assignments. Although I object to the proviso of reliance on Field Rep evaluations, I believe the modified language is positive as it now proposes the evaluations can be on any combination of permit breeds. However, this new proposal language does nothing to assist those judges with provisional (permit) status in one or few breeds. I reference the above-mentioned article on TheDogChannel.com in which I am amazed at the statistics. "Of the 3,189 Confor-

mation Judges, almost half of all those Judges - 1,386 or about 43% - were approved for just one or two breeds, 810 for one breed and 576 for two breeds"

As written, the modified evaluation section of the new proposal appears on the outset to be helpful for established judges with multiple breeds and/or a group(s) who are fulfilling the evaluations requirement. However, I may err in speaking too soon as one contributing group judge recently wrote me regarding the new process, "In order to finish the requirements for the four rare breeds in the group, it took me three years and \$7,000. To finish the paperwork for the nine breeds in the second group it took me two years and \$6000. Presently, I have judged my provisional breeds five times and there have been no reps." Clearly, this new process will not help those provisional of the 1,386 conformation judges with one or two breeds when a group judge, who is infinitely more marketable, cannot find the elusive "twelve wise men."

Let us take another closer look at proposed evaluation language. The new process states, "Pending conflicts and availability, the Field Staff will traditionally observe judges in those breeds with the greatest entry in the classes as it will provide the best opportunity for the judge to display their capabilities in judging the respective breed."

What if you are one of these 1,386 judges and you are officiating at a show with a provisional breed entry of say, six, and there happens also to be a multi-breed or group judge provisional for a popular breed with an entry of 25. Who do you think is going to be observed? Will it matter to anyone if you flew cross-country to get there? All at your own expense to fulfill an assignment on a prayer that you will find an AKC Rep in attendance for an observation? No evaluation? Well, tough luck, maybe next time, or even maybe next year.

I want you to now take an even harder look at evaluations. Regarding the "Requirements for Regular Status for New Breed and Approved Breeds", the AKC posts a FAQ sheet. A question posed is, "What determines sufficient dogs present of acceptable quality to demonstrate sufficient competence in the breeds?" The answer, "To receive an evaluation in a breed, there must be enough entries present of quantity and quality to provide an opportunity for the judge to display their ability to prioritize and make decisions. Very small entries do not present this. Entries of extreme poor quality do not either. A rule of thumb is a minimum of four entries in a class of varying quality will usually be sufficient, but other variables may determine whether the entry is sufficient {sic} or not. Please remember, specials are not a consideration when determining whether an entry is sufficient to evaluate."

If that does not get you rankled, then I don't know what will. Read it again. Perhaps you have traveled a great distance to fulfill an assignment in which you are one of the fortunate who has an AKC Rep in attendance and available to evaluate your judging. If the Rep feels that most or all the

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four breed entries are of extreme poor quality then this assignment will not be considered for advancement in that breed. We trust the AKC made another typographical error in this statement, (I underline the objectionable part), "A rule of thumb is a minimum of four entries in a class of varying quality will usually be sufficient." As we all know, this number of entries in one class is atypical in most of today's all-breed rings. I will assume (you know what they say about doing that) they meant to say, "four entries in a breed of varying quality..." unless they were referring to Winners as a class in which I insist still remains atypical in most of today's all-breed rings. Unless I am way off base, I understand the new proposal to mean that if you have only two to three entries in your provisional breed then it most likely will not be considered sufficient. If this is correct, then this requirement is out of touch with reality. In many breeds, you may have only one or two dogs entered and two or three bitches, all of which are in various classes and then have one or two go absent. You may have one or two specials entered but, according to this statement, your choosing between the specials for Best of Breed will not be taken under consideration as it is not deemed sufficient.

The new proposal states, "Judges may apply for regular status on a completed permit breed before completion of all permit breeds, but may not apply for additional breeds before achieving regular status in all permit breeds." This should be unacceptable to all Judges. We need to keep the forward momentum. We should be able to apply for another breed to replace the one we just completed provisional (permit) status on. In practice, when judges are offered assignments, we do not always receive all the breeds we are approved for (regular or permit status) so we may fall far behind in one of the permit breeds while we are near finishing one or more of the others. This has created a near standstill for many of our provisional judges but especially for our 576 judges who are approved for just two breeds. It is stagnation and under the new process nothing will change. Key point to know is that just because we have a new judging approval process does NOT mean it is retroactive. On the FAQ sheet the AKC clearly states, "The requirements for judges to request regular status in permit (provisional) breeds are determined by the policy in effect at the time of request. Requests for regular status prior to January 1, 2012 must meet the criteria of the policy adopted {sic} in 2000 and most recently updated in 2007. Request for regular status submitted after January 1, 2012 must meet the criteria of the newly adopted policy."

If you still do not understand, then in layperson's terms, if you are currently provisional you MUST fulfill the policy requirements you applied under which was in effect from 2000 and amended January 2007. Simultaneously, while you are drowning in stagnation to complete your provisionals come January 2012, the doors will be opened so that qualified fanciers on their first application may be approved for a maximum number of breeds equivalent to the largest group

or a complete group. If you are one of the 1,386 judges who are provisionally approved in one or two breeds then come January 2012, you will have to vie for provisional assignments with these new, multiple breed judges. The key difference is that they will be marketable since they can judge a number of provisional breeds and you cannot. It is irrelevant if you have been toiling away in obscurity for numerous years to finish one or two breeds.

In the introduction of the proposal, the committee takes special care to mention, "The successful development of judging competency requires talent and ability to judge, individual motivation, significant personal effort...also vital to understand there is a significant investment of both time and resources as well as a considerable amount of individual effort that will be required." This to me is an acknowledgment of what I have written about in previous articles regarding time and money. Many will agree with me, this is double-talk for, 'It is going to cost you a boatload of money and time because if you think you cannot get assignments now, just wait until we open the floodgates for applicants to be approved for upwards of a group.' I will expand on a previously shared and noteworthy comment a group judge shared with me after they read the proposal, "I have been a judge for 45 years and am approved for one group and 10 breeds in a second group. I have served the fancy in a myriad of ways over the years but am now faced with the reality that it is probably impossible to finish the provisional breeds approved and certainly I will never be able to achieve approval for the second group. The reasons are time and economics. In order to finish the requirements for the four rare breeds in the group it took me three years and \$7,000. To finish the paperwork for the nine breeds in the second group it took me two years and \$6000. Presently, I have judged my provisional breeds five times and there have been no reps."

Another group judge wrote, "Judges will carry the brunt of AKC's funding problems. Fewer judges will be needed, not more. Let's flood the market with more new judges who can't find work. Since we have to pay now to apply for more breeds, how do we get something for our money? I now have less than 2 breeds to judge for each year I have been judging. I am going nowhere. At this point, I really don't care anymore. I will not be applying for any more breeds." These statements are poignant as I know both judges and have the utmost respect for both of them. If they as group judges have little hope, then how does that make me feel with just two hound breeds, provisional in one, approved under the old 2007 Judging Approval System?

Here I will add and I again quote the aforementioned article, "There is no question that we have many more AKC judges than we did 30 years ago, and since the number of dogs exhibited has not increased nearly as much as that, this may explain why there's such intense competition for judging assignments today. (In 1980 the total number of dogs shown was 949,053 compared to 1,335,177 last year — a hefty increase, but not nearly as large as the number of

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judges.) If you assume that the average entry per judge per day is 100 dogs — obviously a hypothetical figure, since the AKC maximum allowed is 175 dogs, although we often see half that or less — this adds up to a total of about 9,500 days of judging in 1980; 13,350 last year. Sure, this sounds like a lot of assignments, but based on the number of judges we currently have in the US (more about that later) it works out to an average of only about four days' work per judge last year. We know that some of the most active judges officiate at 50 to 100 shows per year, so obviously quite a few others were left with no assignments at all last year." Mr. Bengtsen is not making an argument that we have too many judges, he is simply citing the statistics. I am providing this excerpt because it does reveal some startling facts and perhaps explains why one or both of my esteemed colleagues have lost hope.

Have you considered this aspect of the proposal? Qualifications for Advancement by Invitation: (New Breed & Approved Judges) "Individuals may be recommended to the Judges Review Committee for invitation by Executive Field Representatives, Breeders, Parent Clubs, Professional Handlers, Judges and Show Chairpersons." For me, this is a mighty big leap of faith. My thoughts are based on 27 years in dog shows, and I must say I am not convinced this is a wise progression. For instance, we are being asked to believe that all Professional Handlers will conduct themselves with complete impartiality when recommending judges for advancement. Handling dogs is their livelihood. Their employment enables them to pay their taxes, feed the family, pay the mortgage. In essence, their clients pay the bills. When their dog does not win, the clients want to know why. The handlers are held accountable and, sometimes, the clients may hire another handler. I know there are honorable Professional Handlers who are unprejudiced, without fear or favor. I simply have difficulty seeing the majority of them recommending reputable, learned judges who, more often than not, did not feel the quality of the handler's exhibit(s) warranted a win, on that day or any day. One reputable Breeder/Judge recently shared a conversation between her and a handler, "We now have a number of handlers in ____ breed that openly admit they are showing poor quality for the paycheck; and it's not up to them to decide whether the dog is a good specimen or not." The Breeder/Judge finishes by saying, "The professional handler more than anyone should be subjected to a more rigorous examination."

"It gives increasing power to club members, professional handlers, and reps to evaluate judges when, in fact, the judges in many cases are more knowledgeable and more senior in experience than the evaluators," writes a group judge. This comment is appropriate for not only this section but also the earlier section describing the AKC Executive Field Staff seeking and considering the opinions of the fancy for evaluations and recommendations of judging members of the sport.

Continuing under the section, Advancement by Invitation: (New Breed & Approved Judges) we read further, "The

applicant's judging observation reports by AKC Executive Field Representatives have consistently demonstrated above average abilities and knowledge to select dogs of quality in any class and reward virtues according to the Parent Club breed standard." Shall we now assume the twelve Field Reps will automatically be granted the elusive All-Breed judging status as a means to pass judgement on every breed and recognize an outstanding judge with exceptional abilities? Once a judge with these rare, gifted qualities is discovered, those anointed and qualified individuals will be presented to the Judges Review Committee for consideration. The number of permit breeds approved would be determined by the Judges Review Committee up to one complete group or a combination of breeds from multiple groups (not to include a complete group) up to the equivalent of the largest group.

Other notable comments from my contributing judges are concerns about the re-evaluation aspect of this process. It is fair to say that there are countless judges and breeders who have become quite cynical over time due to the fragile, economic news leaked continuously about the AKC's well-being. "If the Judging Review Committee Staff deny any breed(s) of the applicants, then the new proposal states applicants may request re-evaluation by writing to the Judging Operations Department with a non-refundable \$25 processing fee. Re-evaluation involves a review of the entire application and may result in fewer breeds granted." One Judge commented, "I bet that many applications will be subject to the \$25 appeal process. They will be more critical from the start, just looking for something to kick back to the applicant. That should bring in additional needed revenue (non-refundable, of course).

On Ringside Observer Experience, they will now only be included for criteria consideration from National or Regional Specialties. I do not take issue with this because, in some cases, the old process was abused. However, the approval process states, "Individuals engaged in Parent Club mentoring may not exhibit to the judge/applicant for a period of four months after and the mentor may not show to the judge following approval of the breeds for four months after." How realistic do you think that is? My goodness, I suppose we should be flattered that someone thinks we even remember faces, let alone the names of the mentors without having to open the dusty, recordkeeping box to check first. Yet, I know there are individuals that are most likely abusing this as well.

What can I say about the Parent Club's Recommendation for AKC Approval on a member of their club to judge their breed? It is both generous and favorable but at the same time, it opens Pandora's Box. I believe that some members serving on parent club board's will eat their young live, so we are now to entrust that on an annual basis, they will, in a bipartisan manner, set forth three members names as recommendations for judges? Sans, any internal, political character assassinations? Boy, this is going to be a real doozy. I bet we could sell tickets for this.

