

Judges' Breed Seminar Report. March 22nd 2008.

On a sunny Saturday in March a keen band of enthusiastic Newfoundland judges participated in an excellent seminar at Heskin, Lancashire. The aim of this learning opportunity was to give both breed specialists and all rounders an in depth understanding of the origins and history of the breed, and also to examine the Breed Standard in detail.

There was an excellent turn out of candidates, helpers and CC Breed Judges all willing to share their expertise, while a group of Newfoundland dogs and bitches in all three colours happily acted as guinea pigs during the afternoon so that candidates gained hands on experience.

During the morning we enjoyed two excellent talks which prompted a great deal of discussion. Mr Hedd Richards' presentation on the Breed Standard was fascinating as always, and in particular the candidates were given the opportunity to ask him detailed and specific questions about the judging of different colours. There was a valuable discussion about the judging of Landseers, whether a head blaze is desirable and how to assess a white and black with heavy ticking or marbling in the coat. Hedd gave us a valuable and thought provoking insight into some of the difficult decisions judges have to make when choosing between quality dogs of different type. He explained what he looks for in a top winning Newfoundland and emphasised the importance of balancing quality against faults. He also shared with us some of his thoughts about his recent Crufts Judging appointment. He allowed candidates and other CC judges to put their point of view on a range of issues, and led the debate with skill, humour and patience. Two Champion bitches were used to illustrate many points in Hedd's lecture. Thanks to Rob and Cheryl Hobbs for bringing Ch Sheridel Nerissa of Alphabear (Top Bitch in 2007) and Sue Walden for bringing her Landseer Ch Joalta Swinging on a Star. We felt privileged to have the chance to examine these outstanding girls. Also thanks to Sue Benyon for allowing Hedd to grab her Landseer boy, Millthorpe Sea Eagle at Kaijasholme at short notice !

Jill Barker illustrated her talk on the Origin and History of the Newfoundland with fascinating photographs both of the island of Newfoundland (which looks very grim!) and of dogs from the 1800s onwards. She discussed how the breed developed on the island and explained what terrible conditions the dogs endured during the dreadful winters when the dogs roamed in huge packs searching for food. We learnt that the Landseers and blacks developed separately and that liver and white Newfoundlands were also common. It was interesting to learn how the dogs were brought to Britain and sold in Bristol and Poole in large numbers in the 18th and 19th centuries. There were some amazing pictures of early Landseers with long stilt like legs and curled tails carried high over their backs. We saw photographs of a team of 19th century black Newfoundlands pulling an enormous load of timber over snow in the Yukon, Canada. She explained the importance of size, strength and stamina to the Newfoundland in order that it could perform the function for which it was bred. She also told us that the wording of the Breed Standard was drawn up in the 1880s in Britain and that the function of the breed (i.e. draught and water work) was considered paramount by breed fanciers of the time. Altogether this was a fascinating glimpse into the history of the Newfoundland which helped us understand how the breed developed and changed.

After a super lunch the candidates were split into groups and given the opportunity to go over a range of dogs with help from four CC Judges, Hedd Richards, Jill Barker, John Evans

and Mike Sutcliffe. This was a great chance to listen to different opinions and understand why and how judges reach decisions. Thank you to all those judges who gave so freely of their time, and travelled long distances. Also a special thanks to all the sporting and generous owners who brought their dogs for us to go over. The atmosphere was wonderful all day and we all learnt a tremendous amount. The car park was commandeered to act as a show ring to put the dogs through their paces. We were encouraged to ask questions and then subjected to a fun quiz on the Breed Standard which we fortunately marked ourselves so some of our strange answers were not made public!

Special thanks also to all the NNC committee who turned out in force and worked as a close knit team to make the day a great success. I would recommend this seminar to everyone who wishes to judge our lovely breed. It was truly an inspirational day.

Margaret Cox.