

True Measurement or Wicket Tyranny

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Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water. The use of the tools available to measure a dog includes a wicket, the judge who sets the wicket and the dog.

In the Brittany world we want very much to retain our small size bird dog (the smallest of the pointing breeds). However recently there has been a rash of measuring for what seems to be spite. Believe us, any Brittany can be measured in or out with a very minor unseen difference in placing of the wicket. Recently a dog was measured out because it was measured on the ground, not on an appropriate surface. Recently a dog was measured out because the exhibitor was incorrectly told the dog must be left free standing and they were not allowed to touch the dog.

Remember many exhibitors are novice and are in considerable awe of the judge. All the more reason for the judge to be on the side of the exhibitor and to be trying to measure the dog IN. Measuring a Brittany (or any dog) is serious and must be done with full concentration and knowledge. You should want to measure a dog in, not try to measure a dog out. A dog's career and even a breeder's program can be at stake. Not giving a dog a ribbon is one thing; disqualifying it is something else. Do it when justified but be careful and do it properly.

Key points in measuring:

Dogs that resist measurement should be excused. Never should the wicket be placed on a struggling dog. Yes, it has been said that some exhibitors have taught their dogs to struggle. Not your call, if the dog is not standing in a natural position DON'T MEASURE. Note: The dog should not have its head pulled back in an exaggerated show pose but be standing at ease.

At outdoor shows a platform (of adequate size and non-slip surface) must be provided.

The wicket legs must be set at the proper length, verified with a metal tape measure and then shown to the exhibitor. (This obviously means that all judges who judge a measurable breed should have a metal tape measure in their possession.)

The exhibitor should set up the dog in a natural stance with the head neither pulled up in a show pose nor pushed down below the withers. If you are unhappy with the positioning of the dog request the exhibitor to reset the dog. Do not touch the dog yourself.

Next place the wicket on the highest point on a dog's shoulder blades. Finding the highest point of the shoulder blades can be a challenge since they are further back on dogs with good layback and closer to the neck on dogs with straighter front conformation. Use the left hand to locate the correct

spot and then bring the wicket held in the right hand up from the rear and place it correctly. Make sure that the dog has not suddenly alerted to birds flying overhead or photographers throwing toys in the next ring, etc.

Note whether the wicket reaches the ground with both legs or swings free depending if you are measuring for top or bottom of the standard.

Remove the wicket with equal care backwards over the rear of the dog so as not to hit the dog. Sometimes judges are so pleased that the dog did measure in that they happily yank the wicket up and give the dog a pretty hard slap in the process.

Advise the exhibitor of the outcome and mark the judge's book.

Get on with your judging.

Measuring is serious business and should not be taken lightly by exhibitors or judges. When done well, Brittany folks will thank you. When done poorly, the future of the breed suffers. Good skills and good sportsmanship should prevail with respect to the issue of measurement.

