

## **Reasons/ Explanations for Changing to Howard Johnson's**

As many of you have heard, we have changed the National Specialty Show site from the Holiday Inn (HI) in Ft. Smith to Howard Johnsons (Ho Jo's). Several members have expressed their concerns about the move. Let me assure you, the change was made with the best interests in the American Brittany Club at heart. We all hate change. I can remember when we moved to the Holiday Inn a number of years ago, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice president actually received death threats because of the move. I'm very happy to say that has not occurred with this move. I personally am taking a wait and see attitude. Let's see how well Howard Johnsons works for us. Who knows, it might be better.

Let me get to some of the specific concerns voiced by a couple of our members.

### 1. Why the change from Holiday Inn to Howard Johnsons?

This change was made for several reasons.

- A. Working with the HI was becoming very difficult on several levels. First, they would not get back to us in a timely manner on a contract for the ballroom and meeting rooms. 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President, Nancy Anderson, met face-to-face with them over a year ago to negotiate room rates and the ballroom. She had to meet with two different people. She secured a block of rooms for the Nationals but the HI would not get back to her to negotiate on the ballroom. This put us in a time "crunch" as we could not submit paperwork to AKC to approve the show without the show site. Nancy's concern, and rightfully so I think, was "I couldn't say anything until I got AKC's approval because I understood from them that I could make no announcement about the show (this includes date, location or judges) at all until approved by them." Her understanding was that the ABC could possibly be fined if this information was given out before AKC approval.
- B. The costs of the Holiday Inn have escalated every year. In fact last year we received a call in October about the show in November 2007 with whoever was in charge at that time. They wanted to change part of the arrangements and costs even after the contract was signed. For our 2008 show, we were told that they wanted \$2,650 for the ballroom alone and the price would be going up to \$3,000 in the near future.
- C. The people in charge of banquets change frequently and they don't seem to communicate with each other. We didn't have anyone from the group sales office in the hotel from Thursday until Monday. There was no one to contact when things went wrong. We had to

rely on the front desk people trying to find the right person to help. We have spent hours on the phone trying to straighten out problems.

- D. Room costs to both ABC and the individual exhibitors are less. With gas prices going up so much, these differences might make the difference between someone coming to the Nationals or not. Also whether they would enter additional dogs. Rooms at Ho Jo's will be \$55 - \$65 plus taxes with an additional fee of \$10 for dogs. Rates at the Holiday Inn were about \$20 more and one of the managers there wanted to charge us \$50 per dog at the event whether the dog went up to the sleeping rooms or not.
- E. Numerous people have had problems with HI reservations over the past several years. Personally we have had problems every year for the last 4 years with either making reservations or having rooms available when we arrived. A number of other people have said they have had similar problems. Several of our judges have also had problems at check-in. They were required to present credit cards and then were billed after the show instead of charging their rooms to the ABC account. Nancy Anderson has spent hours on the computer and on the phone trying to get things straightened out for judges and ABC members. We have the same problems every year and things don't get "fixed" permanently.
- F. We have had a number of problems with people's dogs defecating or urinating on that hall carpet and not cleaning it up. We have almost gotten fined for it every year for the last four years but were able to talk them out of it since they couldn't say for sure (prove) it was one of the Brittanys and not some other guest's. Most of the people I know leave their dogs crated at the show site the entire weekend and not have them in their rooms. A few have their dogs with them at night only and some prefer to keep theirs in their rooms. This was a problem when we had to evacuate for the fire alarm because dogs had been left loose in the rooms and people couldn't go back up to secure them or even get them. Dogs can be crated at the Event Center and ABC will provide a security guard.
- G. The HI restaurant service has not met our needs in the past few years. Poor service and long waits for food. Some waited over an hour last year. ABC received complaints from several of our members as to the quality of the food itself. Also the costs of the meals were getting very high. Most people have eaten lunch in the hospitality room for a number of years because they didn't have time for a sit-down and order lunch when they are showing dogs. Most people prefer to leave the hotel for an evening meal away from things. Ho Jo's has a shuttle service that we can use if needed.
- H. Safety concerns were also considered. Emergency apparatus cannot reach the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of the HI. This is not the case with the 2-story Ho Jo's.

2. Concern about contracts with the show superintendant, videographer and hotel.

- A. We do have signed contracts with the show superintendant for 2008 and I am in the process of reviewing and signing the 2009 contract.
- B. We did have an agreement with Holiday Inn for a block of rooms for our 2008 show. This was dependant on the signing of an agreement for the ballroom and meeting rooms. Repeated attempts to meet with Holiday Inn to negotiate a contract were met with no response. Since we had to move forward in order to get paperwork to AKC, we began negotiating with Howard Johnsons.
- C. All agreements have been cancelled with the Holiday Inn. The ABC is under no financial obligation to the Holiday Inn.
- D. We do have a signed contract with the Howard Johnsons for a block of rooms for the 2008 National Specialty Show. The number and types of rooms is the same as what had been blocked at the Holiday Inn for 2008.
- E. We have a contract for 2008 for the Fort Smith Event Center for the show site and are negotiating for 2009. The rooms and the show site were negotiated through just one person, who was very willing to work with us.
- F. We have a signed contract with the videographer, Canines in Action Video, for both 2008 and 2009.

3. Location of show site, Fort Smith Event Center (FSEC).

- A. Yes, the hotel and show site are about 300 feet apart. However, most people will not be walking back and forth with all their grooming paraphernalia several times a day. There would be no need to. There will be a security guard Friday and Saturday nights at the Event Center. As we have done in the past at the Holiday Inn, ABC will pay for this guard.
- B. Concerns about taking our dogs out when it's raining or snowing seems to me a little "over the top". When a dog's "gotta" go, a dog's "gonna" go rain or shine and whether we are at the Holiday Inn or Howard Johnsons the same holds true. There is both a concrete area as well as a grassy area adjacent to the hotel for airing our dogs.
- C. The size of the main hall at FSEC is smaller than the ballroom at the HI, 8,500 square feet compared to 11, 400 square feet. However, the ring size will be the same as before as dictated by AKC specifications. Until about 5 years ago, we used only 2 of the 3 ballrooms so we had a great deal less space. We even had more dogs with less space and even had vendors in the same areas a few years ago.
- D. The main hall of the FSEC will not have to be covered with plastic. This will save us about \$1,200 along with the time and aggravation

of putting down and taking up the plastic. The show area will of course be matted.

- E. Hospitality area as well as vendors will be adjacent to the show so you won't have to go out of the main hall.

#### 4. Ho Jo's Rooms

- A. If one would take the time to check Ho Jo's web site, they would find all of the rooms at the Howard Johnson's have coffee pots, irons, and ironing boards. Most of them also have microwaves and small refrigerators. The business king suites have a king bed, pull-out sofa, 2 TV's along with coffee pot, iron and ironing board, microwave and refrigerator. We don't need elevators when we only have 2 floors that means you don't have to wait for an elevator when your dog desperately needs to use the bathroom. The rooms range from a single queen to a business king suite.
- B. The bar at Howard Johnsons is beautiful and larger than the bar at the Holiday Inn. Appetizers are also available on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights.
- C. Internet service is available and free.
- D. The hotel provides a continental breakfast and offers a lunch menu. They may be offering dinner by Thanksgiving but no guarantee. Tonya said if we wanted lunch on Saturday and/or Sunday, they might be able to provide hamburgers, etc. but I don't believe that people who are showing want a sit-down lunch, especially since hospitality will be in the show site this year.

I hope this helps to explain the reasons for the change from the Holiday Inn to Howard Johnson's for our 2008 National Specialty show.