

DELEGATE'S CORNER

JUNE 2018 DELEGATE MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Don James, AKC Delegate

Leonberger Club of America

This quarter's meeting started a day early for myself and many of my fellow Delegates. On Sunday, AKC hosted the first of what we hope will be several informational sessions called 'The Educational Summit'. I was a member of the Parent Club sub-committee that worked on initial planning of the event so I was glad to see that it came off so well. I was also concerned that, since it was staged 1 day prior to the regular 2-day Delegate's meeting, that the vast majority of the attendees would, in fact, just be fellow Delegates (sometimes known as 'preaching to the choir'). I was wrong. Yes, there were many Delegates in attendance but fully 30% of the attendees were members of Parent or All Breed clubs who were not currently seated as Delegates.

The Summit was designed to brief people on the many activities offered to AKC Member clubs and to detail future plans and visions for staging performance, companion and conformation events. Each topic was introduced by a member of the AKC staff which was then followed by a panel discussion which included club members familiar with the topic under discussion. Topics covered included:

- 1) Club Development by AKC Director of Event Operations Support Glenn Lycan
- 2) Juniors by AKC Vice President of Sports Services Mary-Beth O'Neill.
- 3) Breed Preservation by AKC Executive Vice President Mark Dunn.
- 4) Club Communications & Social Media by Brandi Hunter, Vice President of Communications and Public Relations
- 5) Public Education Through Community Involvement by Ashley Jaccot, Public Education Manager
- 6) Government Relations The Positive Effect of AKC's Lobbying efforts to protect the rights of dog owners by Sheila Goffe, Vice President of Government Relations
- 7) AKC Canine Health Foundation Health Initiatives from Dr. Diane Brown AKC Canine Health Foundation CEO.

The major takeaway here centered around the Club Relations portion presented by Glenn Lycan and LCA friend Karen Burgess. This involves an event that is presented annually by the All-Breed club of which I am President, The Greater Clark County Kennel Club. The weekend prior to our annual All Breed show, our club presents a 16-event performance weekend that resembles a Dog Decathlon. We offer titling in Obedience, Rally, Agility, Trick Dog, Scent Work, Barn Hunt, Fast CAT Lure Coursing, CGC, Farm CGC and this year are adding demonstration events for Flyball, Dock Diving and Frisbee Dog. Not only do we offer titling, we offer all dogs (mixes and purpose bred) the opportunity to participate in instinct test for all of these events and offer an Iron Dog contest for dogs competing in multiple events. AKC feels strongly that events like these held in conjunction with a regular All Breed conformation event may be the future for all of our clubs. We certainly don't expect clubs to offer the variety of events that my club offers, but recommend they start by offering just one or two of the events listed above to see how it is received by their local dog owning public.

During the regular meetings, there was much talk about the dissatisfaction with the AKC website's Marketplace effort. Not that Marketplace is a bad idea, just that it's been implemented very poorly without a lot of thought to the downstream ramifications of the way they chose to roll out the system.

The idea behind Marketplace is simple enough. Provide potential puppy buyers the opportunity to learn about AKC's various breeds and, once they've settled on a couple of possibilities, a way to find breeders who may have puppies available from litters they have bred. This is laudable. The problem is that there's been very little vetting of the breeders who are listing their litters on Marketplace.

Just one example of what we're dealing with. If a breeder is a Breeder of Merit for, say, Golden Retrievers and is a member of the Golden Retriever club, if that breeder also breeds, say, Shelties but is neither a Breeder of Merit of Shelties nor a member of the Sheltie's national breed club, they will still be listed as a Breeder of Merit and a Parent Club member on the Sheltie page (which they are not) because it carries over from those designations they do have with Golden Retrievers. That's just one small example of the issues we're trying to have corrected.

There is also nothing to prevent unscrupulous breeders from listing on Marketplace. There used to be no process in place to check to make sure that breeders listed were telling the truth about their breeding programs. That has changed. I am now designated not only to be able to check the Leonberger section of Marketplace looking for fraudulent claims made by listed breeders. I also have access to a tool that allows me to correct those misstatements, no questions asked.

AKC has developed a hierarchy for listing breeders on Marketplace.

- 1) Breeders of Merit
- 2) Bred with Heart Breeders
- 3) Parent Club member Breeders
- 4) All Others (including the unscrupulous ones)

It's clear that if a club does not have a lot of listings (like the LCA breeders), when potential customers visit the Leonberger Marketplace page, it's entirely possible the only breeders they will see are the bad guys. The LCA has a fairly large contingent of breeders who are Breeders of Merit for Leonbergers. However, none are currently listed on Marketplace. I know that our BOM designated breeders don't see any reason to advertise on Marketplace because they don't have any issues placing all of the puppies they whelp. But, we need to think of this another way. If our BOM breeders list on Marketplace even when they don't have puppies available, people landing on the Leonberger Marketplace page would see those listings first and be very likely to contact one of those breeders who could then impart a little education in their direction and steer them to a club breeder who may have puppies available or let those folks know when THEY will have puppies available. The idea is to keep potential puppy buyers potentially contacting and doing business with the breeders we would prefer they not patronize.

Now, breeders could argue that it doesn't make any sense to fork over the \$99.00 fee required to list on Marketplace, BUT, if you are a Breeder of Merit, YOU CAN LIST FOR FREE.

Sure would like to see this change in the next year. BTW, AKC receives a quarter of a million hits on Marketplace every year, so there are plenty of potential customers out there.

The Leonberger is considered by AKC to be a low entry breed. We are currently the #97 most popular AKC breed. Last year, AKC logged 3,056 Leonberger entries in conformation events. In order to climb out of the Low Entry category, a breed must have 3500 entries. We're close. In fact, of all the low entry breeds in AKC (and there are a bunch), we are ranked 5th from the top.

The most interesting potential change that came out of this meeting is that both the Parent Club Committee and the All-Breed committee voted unanimously to forward a motion to the Board of Directors to implement what we've been calling 'The 1+1=1 Rule". Basically, this is a way to encourage low entry breeds to enter more shows. Many do not because their population makes it unlikely they will have more than a couple of dogs entered at any given show. For example, if an entry is 1 class dog and 1 class bitch, under current rules, neither dog would garner championship points. Under the 1+1 rule, the dog or bitch judged to be Best of Winners over the dog of the opposite sex would be awarded 1 championship point. A good idea. Not surprising that it passed both committees.

I'll end by making a shameless plug for a new effort rolled out by AKC called AKC.TV. This is a full channel of programming that's available on streaming outlets such as Google and Amazon Fire. It's available on the Internet at <https://akc.tv/>. There's some very good informational and educational programming on this channel. If you have access to any of these platforms, give it a look.

That's all for now. Next meeting is in September. I'll be up for reelection to another 3-year term on the Delegate Parent Club committee. Wish me luck.