

Where Do We Draw the Line?

by Lisa Bryant, Philadelphia, PA

FROM THE AFGHAN HOUND STANDARD:

The Afghan Hound should be shown in its natural state; All colors are permissible, but color or color combinations are pleasing; white markings, especially on the head, are undesirable.

Let me start with, I don't live in a fantasy land. I do realize that once they get to the open class, no Afghan is shown in its natural state. At least not any that are going to win. They are plucked, stripped, scissored, whatever is necessary to achieve the expected coat pattern or length, enhance strengths and minimize flaws. You can still get away with showing a puppy au naturel but by the 12-18 class, they need a saddle to be competitive and if you're dog hasn't developed one yet, you waste your money on entries, leave them home to mature or get out the stripping knife and stone. We have all come to accept that trimming is required for the show ring. Like it or not, that is today's reality.

Here is my question. WHERE DO WE DRAW THE LINE? I took a 6 month vacation from shows earlier this year. I guess absence truly does make the heart grow fonder because I was eager to return to the ring at a weekend cluster with a good entry (majors and a large specials class). I did not have a special in the ring but, of course, I watched BOB. There was a dog in the ring with an all breed handler that was dyed and quite honestly not dyed well. The dog looked unnatural next to the other dogs. It's hair did not have any color variation or shading (high/low lights).. I was shocked. I wondered if the dog's owner knew. I wondered if somebody should tell them. Then I was told quite bluntly that the owner was at the shows the previous weekend so they not only knew, they saw it. The special didn't win the 2 days I was present but it has won elsewhere.

A fifth grader can see this dog has been dyed and yet no judge has excused it and some have actually awarded it. The icing on this dry, tasteless cake is that this dog is not the only dyed Afghan Hound in the ring these days. There are others winning who are dyed in part or in whole. Most of them have better dye jobs.

From the Rules, Policies, and Guidelines for Conformation Dog Show Judges

[R] Color You have the clear authority under Chapter 11, Section 8C, from the Judges Rules to withhold awards from any dog which, in your opinion, has had its natural color or markings changed. "The handler or the owner, or both, of any dog or dogs from which any award has been withheld for violation of this section of the rules, or any judge who shall fail to perform his duties under this section, shall be subject to disciplinary action."

Is there not one judge, not one breeder judge who will step up, draw the line and act to enforce our breed standard before Afghan Hounds are unrecognizable... dyed, sculpted caricatures, resembling stylized statues more than their ancestors?

So again, my question is WHERE DO WE DRAW THE LINE? Is it now acceptable to dye an Afghan Hound for the show ring? If so, how long will it be before dyeing becomes a requirement to win like trimming is today? With few exceptions, to win with a Poodle, you need to dye them as well as to hire a handler. Is that what we want to become of our Afghan Hounds? Is that an acceptable future for our breed? I really hope not.

BARK BACK

Letters
to the
Editor

Dear Fran,

The July/Aug/Sept issue was beautiful. To add my two cents about the decreasing interest in Afghans, I had Afghans when there was a surge in interest and if not a disaster, it was close. Many people cannot cope with the personality and grooming required. Mine spends her time sitting on the back of the sofa. I didn't get my puppy until I retired and had the time to spend with her.

It would be nice if you had a classified section for puppies and Afghans needing new homes. Also please urge advertisers to include a telephone number for those of us without a computer.

Joan Forsyth
Monroe, GA

Hello,

I just subscribed to the Afghan Hound Review. I looked forward to reading the magazine every two months.

I'm a proud owner of a 3 year old male Afghan named Hero. He is real beautiful and sweet to say the least. So this is good way for me to read about others and learn all about the Afghans.

Dalia Andre