

So You Think You Would Like to Show Your Beagle?



Susan Tringham
Vice President of The Beagle Club of Queensland
Life Member of Ipswich Kennel Club
All Breeds Judge

(This article was originally published by the Beagle Club of Queensland Inc. 2019 ©)

I'm not sure how to get started. It's a statement we have all made before our journey of entering, exhibiting and handling our beagles at a conformation show. Perhaps, your dog's breeder has asked you to consider showing, as he/she thinks your Beagle may do well in the show ring? Perhaps it's simply another avenue to enjoy time with your beagles. There are many reasons behind those who have taken up this hobby.

OK. First things first. Let's check if you have the most important things. You have a Beagle – that's a good start. There are a few other things to consider before taking our first step into the show ring:

- Is your dog a pure-bred Beagle?
- Is your beagle registered with The Canine Control Council of Qld (Dogs Qld) or another canine controlling body in Australia?
- Do you have registration papers listing you as the owner?
- If your beagle is co-owned, you must have permission from another owner to show him.
- Is your beagle over 3 months of age?
- Are you or the person who will be handling your beagle for you over 7 years of age?
- Have you taught your beagle to walk on a lead, using a chain correction collar?

If you have these things in place, the next step will be to ensure your beagle is trained to undertake an exhibition in the conformation ring.

Training your beagle for conformation showing

Always use positive reinforcement when training your Beagle. Use small pieces of food as reward. Please do not over do the treats. Beagles are prone to the serious health issue of obesity.

Have you practiced having your beagle stand on a table and have people approach & touch? Never leave your beagle alone on a table. If they should fall, apart from the fact they may injure themselves, your beagle may never let you put them on a table again.

Familiarization with ring procedure

I think it is always a good idea, for people wanting to start showing their dog, to go to a show and watch what goes on. You may be able to go with the breeder of your Beagle. He/she, or another beagle exhibitor will be more than happy to help you understand how it all works.

At first, ring procedure must appear as total chaos to the uninitiated. Dogs, who all look the same to you, run around, stand on tables, someone pokes and prods them, they run around a bit more, and then one of them wins!!! How did that happen?? As you attend shows and talk to other beagle exhibitors, you will become familiar with the order, procedure and outcomes that take place in the ring.

Eventually, if you want to get serious about showing, you will be required to join The Canine Control Council (Qld), currently known as Dogs Queensland. For your first venture into the ring, that is not

necessary. It is a good idea to make your first show experience at an "Open" show. An open show is run by various all breeds and breed clubs (such as The Beagle Club of Qld), as part of the process for trainee judges. Trainee judges have to gain experience at a certain number of open shows, attend lectures on all breeds in a certain group (our group is group 4 or Hound group), and pass written and practical examinations before they become eligible to award Challenge Certificates to the breeds in that group.

Challenge certificates are awarded to the best dog and best bitch of each breed at a "Championship" show. Each certificate carries a certain number of points awarded to the dog. A dog must receive 100 points in order to attain the title of "Australian Champion".

Groups and all breeds

There are 218 different breeds from 7 different breed groups currently recognized in Australia. Of these, 39 fall into the Hound group. Each of these breeds has a breed standard, or "blueprint", to which it must be compared. That's a lot of information a judge must evaluate in the few minutes he/she has to examine each dog. At a Show, a judge can have up to 250 dogs to evaluate.

Getting ready for your first show

Alright, let's get back to your first foray into the show ring. Your first step is to enter your dog in their first open show. (If you are not sure how to enter your beagle into a show, the Beagle Club of Queensland can assist). All dogs exhibited at a show must be entered into a specific class or "open age" class. The youngest class being Baby Puppy, for dogs from 3-6 months, and the oldest being Veteran Over 10 years.

The day before the show, give your dog a good wash and brush. Make sure the teeth are clean, ears inside and out are clean, and nails trimmed. It's a good idea, on the day before the show, to gather what you may need to take with you and put your equipment in your car, so you don't forget anything in the morning. (Who can think straight when they're in a mild panic?)



You will need collar and leads. A short lead for showing a longer one for exercising your dog. A crate to keep him safe and secure; a towel; brush; a bowl and water; a shade structure; a chair; and maybe a snack for you and your dog are standard items to be packed for the show.

The big day dawns. You arrive at the venue in plenty of time to pick up your exhibit number and catalogue from the show secretary. Settle your dog – give them a brush, toilet and drink before you're due in the ring. You are wearing comfortable smart casual clothing with closed in

shoes. You've removed keys and loose change from your pockets. The noise made by these can be disruptive to some dogs. You have definitely removed your phone and placed it on silent for while you are in the ring!

You have your dog's collar on the right way around and it is attached to a lead of suitable length. You have your dog's exhibit number attached to the left side of your chest, or in an armband, on your left arm. You do not have any food in your hands. If you have food in your hands, your beagle will be continually looking for it, instead of standing still for the judge.

Watch what the people and dogs before you do, when they enter ring. This give you an idea of what the judge will expect you to do. You will be asked to do similar things, when it's your turn.



At this stage, tell the ring steward that this is your first time in the ring. He/she will then know to talk you through the process. The ring steward will also inform the judge that you are a new exhibitor. The judge will tell you exactly what he/she wants you to do.

You're OK. You can do it! Ignore the fact that your heart is pounding and you feel a bit nauseated. Everyone felt the same when it was their first time in the ring.

Your number is called – it's your turn. Listen to the directions from the steward. Usually you will lead your dog around the ring at a steady gait (trot), until you reach the examination table. Place your dog on the table and set them up, like you've been shown, and you've practiced.

The examination of your dog is done methodically but the judge, with each dog within a breed examined in the same way. It starts with the judge having a look at your dog, to get an overall Impression. The judge will



then approach you and usually ask the age of your dog. Tell the judge the dog's age. Do not enter into conversation with the judge. You must not tell the judge your dog's name or any information which would allow the judge to identify the dog, the breeder or the breed lines of the dog.

The judge will do a full examination. Your dog must stand still while examination is taking place. If your dog is a baby or a puppy, most judges will allow for their exuberance and excitement at meeting a "new person". After all, a beagle should be a "merry hound" and should never shy away at a stranger's touch.

A breed Standard is so important for conformation exhibitions but don't forget, the evaluation of any dog is subjective. As no dog has ever met the breed standard EXACTLY, it is up to each individual judge to determine how closely a dog conforms to the Standard in HIS/HER OPINION. The examination of the dog on the table and the observed gait around the ring give the judge the information he/she requires to award 1st, 2nd or 3rd in each class; Best Dog; Best Bitch; Best of Breed; Best in Group, and ultimately, Best in Show.

Starting with the dog's head and expression – a beagle should have a soft, appealing expression. There are several things that influence expression: the shape and colour of the eyes, the ear length and carriage and the facial markings. The judge will then check the dog's dentition, which should form a "scissor" bite. The head should be carried on a long neck, long enough to sniff the ground without impeding forward motion. The judge will feel for the dog's front angulation, the length of the upper arm, the width and depth of chest, the straight front legs, going down to tight front feet. The judge will proceed along the sturdy ribcage, the strong, straight back to the well-set tail. They will examine the muscled, moderately-angled rear. The presence of two normal testicles in a male dog, and the colour & texture of the coat will also be assessed.

After your dog has been examined on the table, it will be time to move your dog around the ring to assess your beagle's movement. There are several ways that a judge may require you to move your dog around the ring, so watch the exhibits before you and follow the directions of the judge. Moving your dog should be done at a moderate pace and the dog should not break their gait and begin to run around the ring. A trot is all that is required.

After you have received your directions and have gaited your dog to the satisfaction of the judge, you will be directed to a location within the ring. If you are the only exhibit in your class and the judge considers your dog is worthy, you will be awarded first place. If there are other dogs in your class, you will be asked to stand to one side, while judge examines each other exhibit in your class.

You will then be asked to stand your dog, in a line with



the others in your class. The judge may alter the order in which the dogs are standing. You may also be asked to gait your dog again, either alone or with the other dogs in your class. The judge will then award placings of first, second, third etc. You may now leave the ring but if you've won a first place, don't move away too far – it's not over yet.



If your dog is male, you will have to wait until all the other male dogs have been examined and awarded their placings. Once every age group has been awarded their

placings, all the first-place winners (with the exception of the Baby Puppy) compete to be awarded "Best Dog". The whole process is repeated with all the bitches that are entered, until we have the Best Dog and Best Bitch. They will now compete against each other, for the title of "Best of Breed".



There's a lot more that goes on after that but you now have enough information to get you started. Just don't forget, we were all new exhibitors once and those of us who have stayed will tell you, yes, it can be chaotic, competitive and disappointing at times. Without a doubt though, showing your beagle will be fun and rewarding. Who could ask for more than a good serve of friendship with fellow dog lovers, and a chance of winning something on the side?

