

Picture Perfect

You show your Weimaraner, your dog wins and now you want to get a professional photograph.

Has anyone ever taught you the “do’s and don’ts” for getting the best possible picture? While we do all kinds of preparation to get a win, when it comes to recording it in a professional photograph most of us just wing it. A little preparation will vastly improve the quality of your next professional photograph.

To get some tips on getting a great photo, I talked to several professional dog show photographers and asked for their advice.

Every dog show photographer that I spoke to started with the exact same advice...train your dog to have its picture taken. It’s unfair to a dog to expect them to fully cooperate with a brand-new experience in the middle of the hustle and bustle of a show setting. Sure your dog knows how to be stacked but has he or she ever been asked to step up on a platform while a stranger with an unfamiliar piece of equipment hovers over them and then suddenly there’s a flash of light? In addition to these new things, you’re probably all excited (which your dog picks up on) and you’re babbling on to the judge (who is a stranger). It’s to see how very confusing the situation is to your dog.

Training a dog to have its picture taken is mostly training to accept a new situation. In some more enlightened handling classes, the instructor will stage a “getting a photo taken” session. If your class doesn’t offer it, get a couple of your dog show friends to reenact it and give your dog some practice. Make sure to do both indoor and outdoor training.

Once you and your dog are comfortable with the basics, there are some finer points to consider. At what angle to the camera does your dog look best? Should your dog be set perfectly in line with the camera so you get a side shot or does a slight angle work better? If your dog has great facial expression you won’t capture it in a profile shot but a little angle toward the camera will emphasize the head. Take a little training time and try out some angles in front of a mirror. If you choose to have an angled shot, tell the photographer so he or she can help you get the desired pose.

We’ve talked about the dog, now let’s talk about the human. We’ve all seen photos where the dog looks great and the human “ruins” the picture. Very few people look good when they’re photographed talking. “Come up for air” and close your mouth before the shutter snaps.

Your dog has an ideal angle to the camera and so do you. Want to look a little slimmer in the photo? All you need to do is angle your body so you aren’t facing the camera head on. Decide if you want to look straight at the camera (like a deer in the headlights) or look down admiringly at your dog. Don’t hold your head up so high that you get an “up the nostrils” picture. If the dog is on a platform you’ll be holding the lead at a different angle than when you show. Where will your hands be in the photo? Work all of these things out in front of a mirror, memorize your ideal position and have it ready for your next picture perfect photo.

Carole Lee Richards

PO Box 516, Collingswood, NJ08108

ymar_column@yahoo.com