

What Do Judges Think?

As a judge of Weimaraners and as a longtime owner, I bring an insider's view of what it's like to judge Weimaraners in conformation. What do other judges think about judging our breed in the show ring?

The question intrigued me and I set about asking a few fellow judges about our breed. I make no claim that what I found out is based on a scientifically designed sample of opinions. Rather, it's just a compilation of several conversations that produced recurring answers to my question. Those of you who show your Weimaraner in conformation may be surprised about how we are viewed by people who judge our breed.

I got a mix of comments about show handling and overall reaction to judging the breed. Here are a few comments about preparation of the dogs. Several judges mentioned the grooming that they have experienced and specifically about the cleanliness of the dog. They noted that there's a distinctly different feel of the newly washed coat and one that hasn't seen shampoo and water for a while. Having a smooth coated breed can lull you into less than ideal standard of hygiene. Also, in the realm of grooming, the length of toenails was mentioned by more than one judge. "Some of the nails are long enough that the dog could sit on a perch," was one direct quote. On a positive note, the general friendliness and good nature of Weimaraners was greatly appreciated.

Further comments about the dog touched on the behavior and training for the show ring. While no negative comments were made about the antics of puppies, there was a hope that older dogs were better socialized and trained to allow for thorough evaluation on the exam.

Numerous comments were made about common handling errors. The most frequently mentioned was about the speed of gaiting. The consensus was that Weimaraner handlers seem to think that, "...faster is always better." Yes, reach and drive are important to demonstrate in the show ring, but every dog has an ideal speed. One specific example was given about a dog that was beautiful at a slower, controlled trot but couldn't hold its topline at breakneck speed.

Another tip for improved presentation, specifically centered on free stacking at the end of an "out and back." When a handler completes the "out and back," stops in front of the judge and free stacks their dog the objective is to give the judge an overall impression of the dog's conformation. If you come in too close to the judge that "big picture" view doesn't happen. Handlers coming in too close to the judge only afford a good look at the top of the head and back.

One comment that totally surprised me was the handling error of showing the dog with its tail, "...cranked up like a terrier." Our standard isn't specific on the angle for presentation but does say that the tail should be carried in a manner expressing confidence. In other breeds, that usually means a tail that is held at a "two o'clock" position and not at high noon.

There was universal agreement by the judges that Weimaraners are not an easy breed to show. They are big, strong dogs with a streak of independence and insatiable curiosity. With all those characteristics in one package it is an art to get sustained cooperation. Whether it is the buzz of an insect, a bit of fluff on the ground or the photographer in the next ring, most Weimaraners find those things to be far more interesting than giving the handler their undivided attention.

Think of the last time you showed your Weimaraner and see if any of the observations that I got from other judges apply to how you show your dog. Hopefully these "inside" tips will help you in the show ring.

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