

## RAMP-YES, MANDATORY- NO

A controversy appears to have surfaced regarding the use of the ramp. The Board is requesting that ramp examinations be mandatory for the initial examination of the Basset Hound. Though I call for and use the ramp myself, I would like to play Devil's Advocate and present the opposing arguments and reasons for not changing the present situation which gives choice and offers alternatives to judges.

I believe there are very good reasons *to request* the use of a ramp, but many judges, including myself, feel mandatory use of the ramp is unnecessary and impractical. The first good reason for its use is exhibitors like to stack their dogs on the ramp! With its use, a judge may accomplish a thorough exam easily and more quickly than he can with a dog on the ground. If the dog is elevated, he may see and feel whether or not important desirable features such as pronounced sternum are present. Using the ramp places less stress on the back, both exhibitor and judge. However, the BHCA Board is requesting **a rule change** that would, if passed, make **it mandatory** for the initial examination of a Basset by every judge to be done on a ramp. I doubt this will pass but let's look at some of the reasons why some of us feel that **mandatory** is neither necessary nor practical.

The use of the ramp is presently at the discretion of the judge and I believe it should remain that way. There is no compelling reason to make it compulsory! Bassets are not small or easily intimidated as are some table breeds, which may spook if a judge looms over or comes down on them. I understand the other ramp breeds were invited to join the BHCA in the mandatory ramping thrust, but they declined the opportunity to join forces. Or they did not respond. Obviously they feel mandatory is going too far. Let's look at some consequences of **making** the ramp mandatory..

Some judges have judged Bassets on the ground for decades and are comfortable doing so. Changing their routine after decades of an established method may not suit them and could create misgivings, subconscious or not, about the breed in general. We do not need that! Allow them to make the decision themselves, as is current practice. Give them some time now that **they have heard the desires of the club**. Having judged the breed for 25 years, including the National and the Sweepstakes, as well as many other Specialties and all breed shows, I am comfortable no matter the elevation and **so are others**. If I have only one or two Bassets entered I do not need and may not request a ramp, especially indoors.

Next, and furthermore, Superintendents do not carry multiple ramps as yet and the ramps are not equally suitable to be used for Bassets. Recently, my husband judged a specialty and the ramp supplied by the club was good as ramps go, but some exhibitors complained that the dogs were slipping on it. The tread material had been glued on in the wrong direction. In other words ramps are not standardized. I believe ramps must be to be *standardized before* we can consider mandatory ramping.

Next, what happens if the judge doing the group has not judged the breed already that day? The Board wants the ramp to be used in the group ring in that case. But, the judge inadvertently neglected to ask for a ramp and no one realized he had not judged Bassets earlier that day. So there is a delay and confusion while a ramp is found and brought to the ring. This delay will make both the exhibitors and judge unhappy, and for what purpose! A judge can examine a Basset on the floor/ground with no problem.

A further negative for mandatory: one must improvise and use common sense occasionally when judging. Ramps do not lend themselves to improvisation. Ramps are to aid the judge and exhibitor. Which way does the ramp go in the ring under a tent, out of the sun? Should that be mandated too? The judge chooses the location and direction of the table for judging table breeds. It is rather easy to move the table if weather or other circumstances dictate a move. Ramps are not so easily adjusted and require more than one person to move them. They occupy a lot of space and in the event of a downpour, who gets the tent, the ramp, the judge- or the exhibitors with their dogs? In addition, styles of judging vary and someone who wants to get behind a dog on the ramp cannot do it if his ramp is going in the most traditionally placed direction.

Consider this situation: If this mandatory use of the ramp for Bassets is instituted, what if there is no ramp available? Does this **mandate No Judging**? Just a few weeks ago I had no table for the Juniors' small dogs until 8:20 a.m., although I started judging at 8:00. I called for a table many times. I examined the larger dogs first, set up the judge's table with a no skid surface, and began the examination of one small dog. The table finally arrived. It was easy to substitute for a table. Would that be easy with a ramp? No - There is no easy substitute!

Next, will our costs to enter shows skyrocket as Superintendents' expenses increase with their purchase of many ramps and possibly larger trucks for hauling them? Our entry fees and other show expenses are on the rise now and this will contribute to even more to cost escalation.

Or consider the next development. Will the Basset Hound Club of America **set a precedent** whereby all breeds mandate how their breed is best judged? On a ramp, on a 5 inch riser, on a 12 inch platform, or how about lap dogs on laps where they were designed to be? All these rules and regulations put into place so that the judges can *really* see and feel them? I don't think so.

Finally, should everyone who wants to show his Basset need to have a ramp at home? Do most exhibitors train on a ramp? I would like to hear from more of the members regarding this issue, not merely from the Board who appeared to act impulsively without considering consequences of their demand.

"Ramps may be used in emergency situations to judge any breed. . . . At the sole discretion of the judge, approved breeds may be judged on the ramp or on the ground." P. 13, **Rules, Policies and Guidelines for Conformation Dog Show Judges**. (9/07) This is a good rule. Let us keep it simple.

As mentioned I believe the many ramifications of making a ramp mandatory for Bassets have not been duly considered. I believe we are in the discussion stage not the rule making stage. Leaving the use of the ramp to the discretion of the judge does just that: one will follow the wishes of the club and use it if at all possible and deemed useful but use his/her judgment in extenuating circumstances. I think our strong recommendation to judges to use the ramp is sufficient. **Mandatory** use is not necessary or practical!

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