

Breeder Conversations

with Mary-Frances Makichen

In each issue I'll ask breeders one question about anything connected to the world of Cavaliers. Each of us as breeders has a unique perspective on that world. There are no right or wrong answers — just the delight of sharing information and finding out how we're all alike and different.

What preparation do you feel goes into getting a dog/bitch ready for the show ring?

Heidi Mohn Covington Cavaliers

The day before a show I bathe my dog, put on a mesh drying coat, and crate dry it as I do for each bath. I might fluff the fringes with a blow dryer the day of the show. That's it for the weekend—it's that simple!

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by-step process, it's a way of life, beginning from the inside out. A good diet, lots of outdoor play and exercise, good coat care and fun training.

All our dogs, showing or not, have proper feedings to maintain ideal weights, tangles & dead hair kept out of coats, regular bathes in a quality shampoo and finished with a good coat conditioning oil to protect from staining and breakage. Our several covered outdoor play areas with deep pea gravel for the rainy days here in the Pacific Northwest have allowed for good exercise rain or shine. If it's not raining the dogs are let out on the often-damp lawns to run and muck about. Muddy wet feet dry on raised ventilated mats to allow good air circulation and dirt to fall to the floor preventing feet staining.

We do little to no structured training. Young pups, standing, with attentive ears and a wagging tail are rewarded. Table work becomes comfortable with routine grooming and subtle training for confidence. I never worry

where the feet are placed because a well-built dog is uncomfortable standing anything but four square, in time, the perfect stack will appear. Leads are typically introduced just a few days before their first show, and they always leave every show knowing the show ring is a really fun place to be.

Karin Ostmann Sheeba Cavaliers

I know that some people think getting a dog ready for the show ring is all about grooming but grooming is a very small part of it. I believe the most important preparation for the show ring is a consistent conditioning program.

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They need some regular road work and exercise to stay in excellent physical shape. Another aspect of physical conditioning is how healthy their coats look. Coat health is a direct reflection of the nutrition a dog receives. It's important to monitor how a dog's coat looks and to provide good nutrition, vitamins, and supplements.

Lastly, Cavaliers need to be mentally prepared to be show dogs. They need time to figure out what they're expected to do in the show ring. It's good for them to feel like they have a job to do and to learn how to do it well. The most important thing is for

them to have fun at the show. I think when you put all these together you have a dog that is ready to win.

Lamont Yoder Woftam Cavaliers

What does it take to make a STAR in the show ring? Socialization, Training, Adequate nutrition, and Regular exercise.

S = Socialization. There is always

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good debate among breeders as to whether genetics or socialization creates the fearless temperament we love in the breed. Certainly an adequate balance of both is imperative.

T = Training. Find training classes in your area or for fun make your own with breeders of other breeds. Whatever your method, have your adult Cavalier happy and ready to go in the ring - wagging, fearless, willing to stand naturally and free bait without being hard stacked by a kneeling handler.

A = Adequate Nutrition. This is probably one of the most important aspects of preparation for the show ring, and everyone seems to have their own formula for success. We feed Royal Canine's "Natural Blend," obtain our own meat source as well as fresh produce and create our own special mix for our dogs. We also feed Dr. Kruger's

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Show Formula supplement and we love it. Show dogs should be in proper weight with a rib cage and loin that can be seen/felt and not a sausage body that rolls when they gait.

R = Regular Exercise. Our Cavaliers enjoy a daily run in the yard, barking and running after bunnies. You don't have to road work your Cavalier, but if your yard is not adequate in size or your dogs are always in a run (I don't

care how big the run is), don't act surprised when someone tells you their topline rolled when they gaited around the ring. Good muscle tone is important.

With a bit of common sense, the ability to use objectivity in evaluating your own dogs, balancing the above four topics of preparation while keeping the breed standard in mind will create tomorrow's STAR!

