

Notes on the Judges Review Session:

Guido Perosino (dogs) & Maria Kerekes (bitches)

April 17, 2010 Sacramento, CA

Submitted by Dianna Parish & Mary Decher

Guido Personio—

His overall impression is that there has been much improvement since his first judging experience with the LCA in 1993. Our breeders are maintaining good type and temperament. In America, Leos are used as working dogs much more than in Europe. There are many who work as therapy, agility, rescue dogs and other activities. "Keep it up!" This is an important point since the Leonberger is a "working style" dog. He cautions that we should be very careful about our future. We have been working in the right direction; the challenge now will be to continue to manage the quality as the breed becomes more popular. He feels strongly that the LCA should maintain the care and oversight of the breed, not other organizations.

In 1993, European Leos were much stronger. Today there is not much difference. He is most pleased with the adult dogs he saw. Top dogs are the hope for the breed. He did not award any excellent ratings in the Novice Dog class—the younger dogs were of average quality.

In the other classes, he was pleased although there were a couple of dogs with too much black markings. A Leonberger should never look like a black dog from a distance. They should not have black spots—that is one of the first steps away from the breed standard toward black and tan dogs. In general though, the coat color was great. He did not see any sand colored dogs (which is accepted but not desired). He is concerned about the length of coat. Some dogs had a short coat or did not have the undercoat. These dogs can tend toward their own morphology—they tend to be narrower with too much view of the underline. They often do not have an adequate mane, often no feathering and lighter in bone. They look a bit too much like the shepherds.

Masks—in general they were good. There were some broken masks but most were OK. The mask must be visible in the Leonberger but it is not an obsessive aspect of the breed. If they look like they have a mask, giving the right image of the breed type this is enough although a strong mask is desirable; the mask is a "natural" character.

Bone—he felt this was an area where our dogs were somewhat lacking. There was not enough bone in both the males and the females he saw. Too many were too light in bone, tending towards a Shepherd appearance. Over the coming years the LCA needs to pay attention to substance. This is a LARGE breed.

Tails—these were disappointing. Tails are a big concern in Europe right now, the high tail set and short croup. Tails are a part of the type of the dog, affecting the outline of the breed. It is not just an aesthetic consideration; there are functional reasons for a proper croup and tail set. Short croups can lead to cesareans in females. Incidentally, the rear angulation is a historical problem in the breed.

Heads—there were a lot of oval-shaped heads and underdeveloped underjaws (chin). This is important as it impacts the profile of the head (that should never appear triangular), an important component of the dog's type. Well set and carried ears, hanging down at the cheeks is an important point to watch for, to ensure the right type and expression and to avoid similarities with breeds like the Estrela Mountain Dog

Bite—this is also a very important component to watch for. The bite should be scissor or level, and lower jaw strong rather than pinched.

Movement—mostly the movement was harmonic but there were a lot of rolling backs. Few had adequate drive and reach. They should have more power, which they get from proper angulation in the rear. This is an historical, quite difficult to overcome, issue that affects movement and health.

Maria Kerekes—

Overall there was heavy bones and heavy type. The females must be elegant. They must be harmonious and in correct proportions. Medium bone is OK in the females because the Leonberger is a dimorphic breed [*representing two distinct forms for the males and females*]. 2-3 dogs she saw could have had more bone. Some were overweight and out of condition. Many need more muscle development.

Color—overall was good, possibly better than in Europe.

Coat – Females tend to have a little shorter coats than males and this is OK.

Head—mostly excellent, some eyes too round. Look for dark eyes in breeding. Lips should be tighter, loose or open lips are not a feminine quality. Ears and teeth were OK. Round eyes are an issue. Look for dark eyes in breeding.

Body—in general the bodies were very good and had excellent proportions. Some had a very elegant neck and topline. There were a lot of females with a short croup and curved tail, especially in movement. This is very bad and must be worked on. We should be able to recognize a Leo from 100 meters [approx. 400 feet]. There were high quality dogs that could not be rewarded because of the tail set. The rear and front angulations must be carefully considered in breeding as well. The rear angulation leads to the dog's drive and the front angulation to its reach. Movement will be impacted with poorly angulated bones. Pay special attention to the upper arm, it should be as long as the shoulder but often is short, which leads to a dog too low to the ground.

Showing—handlers should not pull up on the leash while showing their dogs. Pulling up on the leash will not change the structure of the dog; it will not hide their problems but perhaps call attention to them.

Toplines—she is pleased. In Europe croups tend to be overbuilt but not so much here.

Tail—agrees with Guido about the tail comments. This is not a quality that is easy to breed out. Leos need short loins but not a short croup.

Movement—there was too much pacing in movement. This tends to be a relaxed, lazy movement for the dogs. It can indicate the dog is out of condition and needs more muscle development.

Character—all dogs she saw were of typical Leo character. One or two in the younger classes were a bit timid however. There was some discussion that dark eyed dogs tended towards a better temperament but Guido pointed out that although this may be an opinion as a breeder, it cannot be a comment as a judge. There is no scientific basis for that empirical observation.

Both—

Showing & Handling—LCA handlers have improved a lot in our showing skills. Please take note that it is OK to tidy the dog's feet and to groom the dogs. Clean and trimmed feet is a health practice, not just an aesthetic quality. Clean coat, teeth and skin are similarly a good health practices

Feathering—Ear feathers are good but should not interfere with the shape of the dog's head. DO NOT trim excessive feathering with scissors or a stripper—the feathers can be combed down.

Both Guido and Maria enjoyed judging our dogs and spending time with the LCA people.