

# **Critiques and Gradings**

## **Information about how this works at Belgian Shepherd Dog Club of Queensland's Championship Specialty Shows.**

In addition to following the Australian National Kennel Club (ANKC) show requirements, our appointed judge has agreed to provide written Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI) style critiques and gradings. FCI is the biggest canine organisation in the world, the international head body. The FCI is to the world what the ANKC is to Australia.

### **Critiques and Gradings**

When a breed specialist judge officiates at our Specialty Championship Show, the Belgian Shepherd Dog Club of Queensland (BSDCQ) arranges for the judge to complete written critiques and FCI gradings. This is done during class judging.

The following information is intended to help exhibitors understand what to expect on the day.

### **Judging Process**

Each class will commence as exhibitors would normally anticipate, with all exhibits in that class entering the ring in catalogue order.

As each individual exhibit is examined, our judge will evaluate that individual dog according to the breed standard. Judging is expected to be similar to normal individual judging, with visual and physical examination, and exhibitors requested to move their dogs in the normal anticipated patterns (triangles, out and back etc) as required by the judge.

While the judge is assessing the exhibit, they will provide a verbal critique, which will be transcribed by the critique writer inside the ring. Methods used to record the transcription include, but are not limited to, handwriting into a carbon copy book, typed directly into a lap top, Dictaphone and retyped later. These critiques may be audible to those standing immediately ringside.

At the conclusion of the individual assessment, the judge will determine a grading indicating their evaluation of the exhibit. Gradings will be noted by the critique writer on the critique forms.

Once all individual exhibits have been assessed, the judge will then select 1st to 3rd place winners in that class in the normal way.

At the conclusion of class judging for each sex, all class winners will return to the ring for normal ANKC challenge and reserve challenge judging, then Best of Breed judging.

General special judging will also be as exhibitors would normally expect and will follow ANKC rules.

### **Critiques**

At the end of the day, the judge signs off to confirm that the critique transcript is a true copy of the judges remarks and gradings. Where possible, the written critiques will be available for collection by exhibitors at the end of the day. A copy will be retained by the BSDCQ and will be formatted into a Critique Book available for sale, and made publicly available on the club's web site after a period of a year.

Each dog is given a written critique of approximately 20–50 words. Most international judges speak fluent English and there are very few times in Belgian breed history where an interpreter has been required to translate to English at our Australian Specialty Shows.

The critique should include the judge's overall assessment of the dog and its quality, and it should cover the main merits and faults of the dog. The critique for a non-excellent or non-very good dog should indicate the reason for the grading.

### **Gradings**

FCI type gradings, will form part of individual judging of all exhibits, with Excellent gradings being offered to excellent dog over 12 months of age.

Baby Puppies and youngsters will still be critiqued, and will be eligible for a Promising or Very Promising grading. There will not be a grade provided to other baby puppies who do not receive the Promising or Very promising.

Possible gradings are:

**EXCELLENT** may only be awarded to a dog which comes very close to the ideal standard of the breed, is presented in excellent condition, displays a harmonious, well-balanced temperament, and is of high class and has excellent posture. Its superior characteristics in respect of its breed permit that minor imperfections can be ignored; it must however have the typical features of its sex.

**VERY GOOD** may only be awarded to a dog which possesses the typical features of its breed and which has well-balanced proportions and is in correct condition. A few minor faults may be tolerated, however none of a morphological nature. This award can only be granted to a dog that shows class.

**GOOD** is to be awarded to a dog which possesses the main features of its breed however showing faults, subject to that these are not concealed.

**SUFFICIENT** must be awarded to a dog which corresponds adequately to its breed without possessing the generally accepted characteristics, or whose physical condition leaves something to be desired.

**DISQUALIFIED** must be awarded to a dog that

- does not correspond to the type required by the standard;
- displays behaviour clearly not in line with its standard or is aggressive;
- has testicular abnormalities;
- has dental flaw(s) or a jaw abnormality;
- shows a colour and/or coat imperfection;
- does not appear healthy;
- shows some fault(s) listed in the breed standard as eliminating faults.

Dogs that cannot be awarded any one of the qualifications mentioned above should be released from the ring with:

**CANNOT BE JUDGED** (Nil Award) – This rating is given

- to a dog whose gait and movement cannot be assessed (dog does not move, constantly jumps up and down around its handler or tries to get out of the ring);
- to a dog that constantly avoids the judge so that it cannot be examined to inspect its bite, teeth, anatomy, construction, tail or testicles;
- to a dog that shows traces of operations or treatments that appear like attempts of deception;
- if the judge has reason to suspect operations intended to correct some fault in the dog (e.g. eyelids, ears, tail).

Awarding of challenge certificates will follow ANKC rules. So, for example, in a situation where no exhibit in a particular class receives an excellent grading, this will not preclude the class winner for competing for the challenge.

### **The Exhibitor Experience**

While exciting, the process of judging will be a somewhat different experience for exhibitors than what they are used to in the normal all-breeds ring. Although only ever one judge's opinion on the day, it is still a great privilege to be able to receive a critique and grade from a breed specialist, as well as hearing their thoughts on other dogs.

The learning from such an experience is invaluable. It is certainly anticipated that individuals may wish to discuss and reflect on the judge's assessments or determinations with friends, as part of their learning process. However, out of respect and courtesy for the judge, please ensure any commentary is kept discrete and well away from the ring.

Please be prepared that it is not expected that every dog will receive an Excellent grading. This is never the case in Europe, and indeed, in many cases, particularly for young or immature dogs, exhibitors will show great pride in a Very Good grading. A general glance at most show results for Belgians in Europe would see on average approximately 50% of dogs receiving an excellent grading, 30% a very good grading, and 20% a good grading (other gradings are less common). Across classes that percentage differs, with younger classes seeing far less of the Excellent gradings, and sometimes none. It wouldn't be unreasonable to expect a similar result at a BSDCQ show.

We hope you thoroughly enjoy the day, and take great benefit from learning, both about your dogs and those around you. We are confident all exhibitors will maintain the good sporting behaviour and respect towards the judge that the BSDCQ is known for and is often commented on favourably from those who have previously judged our breed.

*Many thanks to the Finnish Lapphund Club of Victoria for allowing adaptation of their original article. <http://www.flcv.org/fci-critiques-and-gradings.html>*