PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dr. Gerard C. Penta

I have mixed feelings regarding the Garvin Committee proposal. On the one hand I applaud the attempt to standardize another part of the evaluation process, especially since the process has recently moved away from standardized requirements. However, I see so many problems with this proposal that, if implemented at all, it should only be tried on a very limited basis with a few breeds in a pilot program. At best it may become one very limited tool with which to evaluate a judge's ability to translate breed knowledge into a competent judging performance.

If, on the other hand, the AKC decides to use this as breed education in all breeds it will be very controversial, a colossal headache and extremely expensive for both the parent clubs and the AKC. And for what? To produce a distant second best methodology for educating judges. In other words, I think the Committee is overreaching if they tout this as a model for educating judges. As one tool that offers a standardized way of evaluating judging ability, this may have some merit, especially if limited to smooth coated breeds. However, it is useless even as a means of evaluating performance if, as suggested, there are many possible acceptable placements.

If this proposal is used at all, I would suggest the following: To start, a pool of 20+ (larger if possible) dogs should be evaluated by a large and representative number of breed experts. While parent clubs are the first place one should go in search of breed expertise, it could be a mistake in some instances to limit such a search to only parent clubs. After working with parent clubs for 20 years it appears that some legitimate breed experts may be fully supported by a breed club at one time and be considered a club pariah at another time. Also, some group judges may, through study, experience and exemplary performance, be regarded by most people in a breed as having a certain expertise in that particular breed, even though it is not the judge's original breed.

The assembled breed experts should classify these dogs in three or four categories such as excellent, good, fair or poor. Of course, these breed experts should only have the videos to evaluate so that they are only seeing what the applicants will see in the test. The time limit should be the same as the time limit for the applicant. There should be a clear and common understanding of what is meant by each classification (e.g. excellent = a dog that will often win or place in the group, comes very close to embodying the standard). Any dogs which are classified by more than one-third of the breed experts as being in a different quality class than the other two-thirds of breed experts have assigned them should not be used in the pool. Once a pool is established a random class of eight dogs can be selected which includes some representation of at least three of these quality classifications (no preset number from each classification) A judging performance using this test class may then be evaluated using the criteria used in the former performance evaluation test to determine acceptable performance. In essence this becomes a virtual PET.

To do what is proposed in a meaningful way would involve a great deal of time, effort and money. In the end, we would have developed a secondary tool for evaluating judging (evaluation of actual judging performance being the primary method). I for one would rather see the Committee broaden its scope and composition and take a fresh look at the entire judging approval process.