

## KENNEL CLUB ACCREDITED TRAINERS RECEIVE UPDATE ON JUDGES COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

Kennel Club Accredited Trainers met at the Kennel Club in London today (Tuesday 13th February) to receive an update on the Judges Competency Framework (JCF), the Kennel Club's new method of judges' education and approval which will commence next year.

Opening the proceedings, Chairman of the Kennel Club Training Board, Gerald King, welcomed everyone to the meeting and emphasised the importance of the role which Accredited Trainers currently play in the education of judges, a role which they will continue to play once the JCF begins.

Jeff Horswell, who is leading this project, was introduced and gave the meeting an update on the JCF. He gave some background and then outlined the achievements made by the JCF in 2017, which included the establishment of the current pilot scheme involving 14 breeds and the drafting of a code of best practice for Breed Appreciation Days, the breed-specific seminars which breed clubs must hold in order to meet their obligations under the JCF.

Work is already underway in 2018 which includes the collation of feedback from the pilot clubs and general IT development, but particularly enhancements to the established Find a Judge website service, as well as the recent announcement on the appointment of Breed Education Coordinators (BECs) and the development of a critique writing seminar.

Statistics received from the 14 pilot breeds showed that of the 180 individuals who had attended the ten breed seminars held thus far, 91 per cent were breed specialists and/or non-group judges and nine per cent were group judges; and the average mark achieved in the multiple choice exam was an impressive 92 per cent (75 per cent is the current pass mark).

A couple of aspects of the JCF had already been adjusted as a result of feedback from Q&A sessions held across the country, including an increase in the number of stewarding days from four to six and the requirement for judges to undertake a critique writing course at Level 1 and not Level 2. Further adjustments may be needed once all the pilot clubs' feedback has been held and analysed.

The dissemination of the role description for the BEC has resulted in 27 breeds notifying the Kennel Club of their appointee. Full and ongoing support from Kennel Club staff will be given to each person in this role and a BEC seminar is planned for later this year.

General implementation timescales were highlighted, in particular the key milestones of the three-year transition period expiring at the end of 2021. By 2024, all judges must have passed the Requirements of a Dog Show Judge exam which they must take again every five years in order to keep judging.

Someone judging for the first time as of 2019 will need to meet the basic Level 1 requirements to be eligible to judge, which includes attending seminars given by Accredited Trainers and passing exams. It was highlighted that it is for this reason alone that the role of the Accredited Trainer is as important as it ever was, and perhaps more so.

The Accredited Trainers were provided with an outline of the new online critique writing seminar, to be launched shortly. The way the Find a Judge website service will list judges in future was also explained – this will not only list all the different levels for each judge but will also include a search mechanism which will advise inviting societies of the availability through differing JCF levels and timescales; exhibitors will also be able to search to see who is judging their breed.

Discussion turned to the Eye for a Dog assessment, being developed in conjunction with the Finnish Kennel Club. This is an assessment on general canine conformation and movement – it is not a breed specific test and candidates will be required to describe salient points such as head, coat, movement and hindquarters. It is a one-off test for any judge who wishes to achieve Level 4 (CC) status or for those already approved for CCs to add a further CC breed. This assessment is due to be piloted later this year before it is rolled out in 2019.

The different kinds of mentoring were outlined, confirming that it will be possible for candidates to be mentored on a one-to-one basis as well as in a group at club mentoring days. Further opportunities could include being a student judge in a ring where the scheduled judge, society and exhibitors are in agreement for this to take place. Early feedback from the pilot breeds had indicated that student judges very much enjoyed being mentored and found it useful and interesting.

Observed judging would take place preferably at a breed club show or at a show with supported breed classes. Once all Level 3 requirements are met, the candidate must pass a hands-on Breed Competence Assessment arranged by the Kennel Club with support from the breed.

The plans for the JCF had been widely communicated throughout the show scene, with three Q&A sessions held by breed clubs and general societies in 2017. A further three sessions had been held already in 2018 and questions have been fielded at Kennel Club Question Times. Drop-in sessions and further Q&As are planned for this year and there will be a presence for the JCF at Crufts with staff from the Education and Training team. Further communications are planned and regular JCF updates are posted on the Kennel Club website.

The meeting for Accredited Trainers in London ended with questions being taken from the floor. A lively discussion took place and amongst the topics raised were breed club supported entries, the Kennel Club Academy annual subscription, Judges Development Programme credits and the Code of Best Practice for Judges.

Jeff Horswell said: "We were delighted by the response of the Accredited Trainers to the plans for the JCF. Attendance at the Breed Appreciation Days has been excellent and the feedback from delegates positive. It is encouraging that so many breeds have appointed their Breed Education Coordinator already.

"Feedback from mentoring has also been enthusiastic, with mentees enjoying the relaxed way of learning. On the ground, many judges and would-be judges are positive about the changes with many breed clubs wanting to start holding their events now. The enthusiasm has been so encouraging for the dedicated team working hard to make this project real."