

Measure for Measure

Something you don't see every day is happening in the ring.... The hum of ringside murmurs increases as more and more people realize judging has ceased. "What are they doing to that dog? What's going on? What's everybody looking at? Come and take a look,- the judge called for the wicket."!

The Weimaraner is a "measurable breed." What does that mean? Simply, that our breed standard specifies a range of acceptable heights, and if an exhibited dog does not fall within that range, it should be disqualified.

The Weimaraner's AKC standard says the following: "Height at the withers: dogs, 25 to 27 inches; bitches, 23 to 25 inches. One inch over or under the specified height of each sex is allowable but should be penalized. Dogs measuring less than 24 inches or more than 28 inches and bitches measuring less than 22 inches or more than 26 inches shall be disqualified."

Measurement at a show is done using a wicket. The scenario described above happened at a Weimaraner Specialty, and while sitting ringside that day I heard more confusion and misinformation about the process than I thought possible. Weimaraner exhibitors need to know how, why, and when the wicket is used.

First, let's talk about the equipment. Like the wire hoops of the same name that are used in the game of croquet a wicket looks like an inverted letter "U". The wicket used in the Weimaraner ring has a height range of 17 to 30 inches. Its legs can be adjusted in half inch increments and locked into place.

Next, what's the procedure for properly wicketing a dog? Judges of measurable breeds are tested on the proper use of the wicket before they are approved. The instructions are very detailed; the short version is that the measurement must be done on a flat, non-slippery surface. At indoor shows the measurement is done on the floor, while at outdoor venues a large plywood board is brought into the ring. The judge adjusts the legs of the wicket, locks them into place, verifies the height with a tape measure, and shows it to the exhibitor. The handler then positions the dog in a natural stance on the flat surface. The judge places a hand on the highest point of the dog's shoulder, brings the set wicket over the dog from behind, and quickly places it at the shoulder. The judge then marks in his book either "measured in" or "measured out – disqualified" If an unruly dog will not stand for wicketing it is excused from that day's competition, in which case the judge's book is marked "excused – unable to measure".

Under what circumstances should a judge wicket a dog? The AKC advises judges of measurable breeds that they should measure if they have a question about the height of an exhibit.

When else can a dog be wicketed? An exhibitor may protest the height of another entry but only if it is in the same class as the exhibitor, and the protest must be made before any dog in that class is examined and gaited. The exhibitor tells the judge that the height is being protested and the judge must measure the challenged dog and note the results in the judge's book.

That's all there is to it, the mystery is gone and the ringside murmuring and confusion should be over. You now know the basics of wicketing. While you don't see it done often, wicketing can happen in the Weimaraner ring at any time because this is a measurable breed.

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