

Leonberger Speciality in Estonia, June 2010

I was glad to be invited to judge at the Estonian Speciality. I knew, there is not a big amount of Leonberger, just a young population, but I also knew that there are Leonberger-people, fans who brought Leonbergers from abroad, from excellent kennels from Europe and Scandinavia to substantiate their breeding, so I was really waiting for the possibility to meet this nice young Leonberger-population in Estonia.

There were about 50 Leonbergers shown at that day, this is a really big amount for a smaller country and a young club. There were also some competitors coming from Finland and Holland, who did not care about the long way and came to this great show.

In totality I can say that I was satisfied with the quality. I have seen large-sized, well-boned dogs with mostly harmonious shaped body. In the female classes there were also some smaller sizes, but very harmonious built, and elegant, which is a very important attribute for a female.

In the younger classes I have met some weight-problems, mostly fed a bit too lovely, which mostly makes forepasterns weak and back also not so straight and firm as we wish to be. Dogs in the youth-classes rated with Very Good has had mostly these problems and sometimes also loose lips. Loose or sometimes open lips were generally a problem, not only in the youth-class, but also in the adult-classes, of course more by the males. In some cases it was together with loose eyelids – which is not keeping Leonberger-type. Sometimes loose or open lips are inside or both sides pink which is a pigmentation-problem and is getting wronger with the age, and unfortunately disturbs the expression very much. For me is a nice expression absolutely a must for a winner dog, because „excellent type” is not only harmonious body but also excellent head and expression. I must say, I love dark-eyed dogs, and I could not really find so much of them. Sometimes eyes also were more roundish, which is also not correct. Almond-shape is the right form for a Leonberger-eye, which does not sit too deep and is neither too big or too small. I did not notice mask-problems, and was also satisfied with teeth and bites.

Generally said I was satisfied with bodies, dogs have had nice proportions in body and had mostly good condition. A common problem is a short croup – first of all by the males -, which makes rear angulations straight, and the dog can not have a nice drive from the rear legs while moving. Short croup also can cause not correct carrying of tail – really much dogs carried the tail ringed up and over the topline while moving. I can accept carrying tail over the topline, especially by males, but do not like ringed-up tails because it has not so much to do with the character. Ringed-up tails became a common problem in Leonberger breed in the last some years, and in my opinion it cannot keep with Leonberger-outlines. I think it is important to look for the correct tails in breeding.

As the competitors could see and feel I really like judge Leonbergers in moving. Moving incorporate and shows so much important qualities (body structure, angulations, joints, bonus, tail carriage, condition, character) that I really think it is one of the most important things to look at. An excellent mover will have all the desirable qualities what we are looking for when we speak about the right, harmonious Leonberger-type.

At last but not at least I must say that I was really satisfied with the temperaments and characters of the dogs I could meet. Self-confidence, playfulness, balanced behavior, and an emotional tie to the owner, this is what we especially love in our Leonbergers. I was very pleased at this point.

My special love in my work as a judge is for the veterans. My special-prizes for the oldest male and oldest female in the show went this time to dogs in the age of 5 and 6 years, which is of course not a veteran-age. I was told that there are as good as no veterans in the country, because of the young population. So I hope, I will be able to judge in Estonia in some 5 years again, and then I will be glad to see a lot of nice happy veteran Leonbergers and their descendants.

Thank you for the invitation, I felt very good at this well organised open-air show in nice weather and surrounding, with nice Leonbergers, kind owners and fair competition. I wish you a good luck in your breeding, and an excellent health for your Leonbergers.