

## “Making up” a British Champion

by Claire Merrion (Secretary, The Chow Chow Breed Council)

Dog exhibitors world-wide aspire to the award of Champion status to their dogs. As this award is regulated by the individual Kennel Club's of the various countries, the pathway to achieving it differs vastly from country to country. It is very interesting to read the recent articles in Chow Life which are helping us to understand the national differences. In the United Kingdom (Great Britain) we are regulated by The Royal Kennel Club. Although we recognize many other national regulatory bodies, such as the AKC & the FCI, The Royal Kennel Club alone sets our rules.

The UK definitions of eligibility for entry in classes need special attention. As in other countries there are age-related classes for Puppy (6 – 12 mths.), Junior (6 – 18 mths.) & Veteran ( 7 + years), but we also have several classes which depend only on how many 1<sup>st</sup>. prizes an exhibit has won ( Novice, Graduate, Post Graduate & Limit). We have an Open class, which is open to any exhibit, but we do not have a Champions class. Breed Clubs often have extra classes either for AOC ( any other colour .... which means not “red”) or for specific colours (blue, cream, fawn or black) individually and also classes for Smooths. These definitions result in some dogs appearing as “seen dogs” as they can qualify to enter as many as the exhibitor wishes. This is why we often state the entry numbers separating dogs and entries (e.g. 33 dogs, 41 entries, 37 bitches, 47 entries). All colours & both coats, rough &

smooth, compete together for the Challenge Certificate (CC) and the Reserve Challenge Certificate (Res. CC). We do not have separate CCs as in some countries. There is only 1 CC for each sex at any one show. In this country we do not have a grading system, but the judge is required to write a critique on the first 2 dogs in each class and to send their critique for publication in the weekly dog press (“Our Dogs”) or KC Judges Critiques.org.uk

Other official awards which can add letters to a dog’s name are the Junior Warrant and the Show Certificate of Merit. The Junior Warrant is gained from points won at Open and Championship shows & then JW may be added after the dog’s name. The Show Certificate of Merit is gained from points won at general all-breed Open shows, so adding ShCM after the name. Neither of these awards qualify in any way towards a championship.

The Royal Kennel Club allocates Challenge Certificates to each breed in ratio to the number of puppies registered and the number of show entries made. Every few years they revise the CC allocation per breed, so if breeding & show numbers decrease we lose CCs (or vice versa). A set of CCs is 1 CC & 1 Res. CC for each sex. Currently chows have an annual allocation of CCs, of which 8 sets are awarded to Breed Clubs & the remaining sets to General Championship shows.

At a championship show the CC may be awarded to the Best of Sex & the Res. CC to the Reserve Best of Sex. The word “may” is important as, although rarely used, the judge has the prerogative to withhold the CC and/or the Res.CC if he/she considers the exhibit not of

sufficient merit. To become a Champion a dog must be awarded 3 CCs each by a separate judge and at least 1 CC must be after the dog is 12 months old. There is now an additional requirement. Thanks to “perceived health problems” which emanated from the European Union, we now have Category 2/3 breeds (originally High Profile breeds) of which the Chow was Category 3 and is now downgraded to Category 2. In the Category 3 breeds the dog must pass a veterinary check at a General Championship show before gaining their championship (or being allowed to compete in the Group). These checks may be taken after gaining the 2<sup>nd</sup>. or the 3<sup>rd</sup>. CC. Vets, being human, can vary much in their assessments as can be proved by several incidents in different breeds where the same dog has both passes and failures!

The Res. CC has very little relevance. It only upgrades to a CC when the CC winner is disqualified (a very rare occurrence). A disqualification only occurs if the dog does not meet the eligibility conditions or if something is inaccurate on the entry form (many years ago that happened to another breed when the owner misspelt the dog’s name Bell as Bells).

The large general championship shows are conducted on the Group system. Our group is called the Utility Group ..... it was really one they couldn’t name easily after Terriers, Toys, Sporting etc. were named. Apart from the name the system of Group Judging is internationally the same.

As we have no champions class and the CC is awarded to the judge’s decision of “best on the day”, we are continually challenging for the CC against dogs which are already champions. This is why we don’t use the term “finishing” as the Americans do ..... we call it

“making up”. If there is an exceptionally good dog or bitch being exhibited at the time, then the CC is almost impossible to achieve. Remember how difficult it was when Eric Egerton’s Ch Ukwong King Solomon ( 78 CCs) and when Rodney Oldham’s Ch Towmena Impudent Miss (40 CCs) were in the ring! It wasn’t impossible to beat them on the odd occasion but many which were worthy of champion status missed out just due to an accident of birth. The Kennel Club has considered the ideas of “Grand Champion” or of a number of Res.CCs counting as a CC but has so far rejected them in order to keep the UK Champion status at its supreme worth.

The Royal Kennel Club have now announced the following:-

If the dog has been awarded 2 Challenge Certificates, with one being awarded when the dog is over 12 months of age, in addition to five RCC’s from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 with the awards coming from seven different judges. This can count towards the title of Champion.