

## Irish grooming championships 2014 - time to start prepare ☺

4 months now until the Irish grooming championships takes place. Are you considering competing? Or feel frightened by the thought of competing?

Read this and maybe some of your questions is answered and you also find that it isn't as scary as you first thought.

### The competition

You compete in 3 different classes – divided into the technique that is use rather than what breed you do.



**Hand stripping** – this is the class for any dog that you hand strip terrier, schnauzer, and spaniel to name a few. You can use your fingers or tools- it doesn't matter as long as your technique is correct.

Sadly the everyday groomer seldom have any dogs in for hand stripping – most pet owners doesn't know about the technique and are not prepared to pay for the work. And that makes it hard for groomers to find suitable dogs to use in the competition. Most of the dogs done in this class ends up to be simple dogs like border terriers and Jack Russell's

whilst going on grooming competitions abroad you find fox terriers ,Lakelands ,westies and schnauzers as the main breeds in this class



**Hand scissoring** – in this class the whole dog is hand scissored (except feet/face on poodles). You don't need to do a perfect show trim – you can hand scissor a cute pet trim as well –as long as it fits the dog. Any breed of dog is allowed- mixed breeds as well.

**Clipped** – this class is for those styles where you use a clipper on part of the dog – as a poodle in a pet lamb trim with clipped body and hand scissored legs for example. Again – you don't need to do a breed specific trim – you can do a cut pet trim on a drop coated breed or a bichon in an alternative style. This is the class that is closest to a groomer's everyday work.

The judges will look at your technique, how well the style suites the dog, if you do a breed specific trim they will also look at the accuracy of the trim. Your handling of the tools and the dog is also important.

For those that are new to grooming there are 2 classes – one called Career start – this one is for students or groomers that are just out of training. It's a class where you are allowed to use

any breed/style and technique and it's a great introduction for new groomers to the competition world.

For the groomers that have been doing this for a couple of years it's a similar class called Novice Class – that's for the ones that have never been competing before and are quite new in the industry



And finally we have the Creative class – in some people's eyes upsetting because you use colors and don't bother about doing "breed specific" "grooms. But it's a class where the groomers can unleash their creative side and nothing that is used in this class is harmful for the dog and no one makes a fool out of the dog. It's done with love and the only ones looking ridiculous is sometimes the groomers ;) The aim is to create a picture – not just the dog. So the groomer has to dress up to suite the creating they have made on the dog

The Clipped, Hand scissored and Hand stripped class is divided into 2 sections – Open and Champion. Champion class is for those who have won a similar class previous to the competition – either here or abroad.

There is also an "international" division to those classes if the competitor isn't living and working on the isle of Ireland.

When the judges are judging they look at several factors – pre preparation, amount of hair to take off, difficulty of the groom, how the trim suites the dog and if you do a breed specific trim how well that is done, technique used and the handling of the dog.

And that actually sums up the main purpose of a grooming competition – to make the groomers raise their skills in those areas.

The dogs need to have at least 8 weeks coat growth for the competition so that the judges can see a clear difference between before and after.

### **Preparing for the competition**

Choose a dog that behaves well on the table and doesn't get stressed in new situations. Ideal it should also be a dog that is good looking breed standard wise – It's always easier to make a

beauty look good...

Start 4 months before the competition and do your desired trim on the dog to set the lines and to see if you need to change anything. This is a good way of training your brain on the look that you want to achieve so that you don't get a black out at the competition ( which happens to us all ...)



Put the dog on a coat care scheme from now – wash /brush/strip on a regular basis so that the coat is in top condition .  
Time yourself when doing the trim – easiest is to divide the dog into sections and set a time that you are allowed on each section. By doing that you prevent yourself for getting stucked on one part and end up in panic because the time is running out. Allow yourself 1½ hour for the general groom and then 30 min for the final touch up – this gives you time to go thru the dog to take away all the little bits that sticks out and give it a perfect finish.

### **Pack your bags**

On the day before the competition it's time to pack your bag – put all tools that you can image that you will need and then a couple of backups as well. You also need to bring a grooming table and an extension cord for your clippers.

### ***Some other things that you might need:***

painkillers – the stress can give you a headache  
plaster(band aid) – you might end up cutting yourself in a finger...  
water bowl for the dog  
cage for the dog  
poop bags for the dog  
baby wipes to clean your hands  
water for you to drink  
some snacks if your blood sugar starts to go low  
a towel to dry the dog if it rains  
dryer to dry the dog if it rains  
cornstarch if the dog gets dirty if the weather is bad  
a clock so that you can keep track on the time  
A show lead that you use when presenting the dog to the judges  
A fabric to cover your grooming table when presenting the dog to the judges – chose something that matches the dog and makes it stand out.

Wash/prepare the dog as late as possible before the show – absolutely best is in the morning

of the competition...

The dog should be completely clean and mat free all over. Nails cut, ears cleaned and free of hair, clean eyes and the private parts should be short clipped and clean. And off course no external parasites!

This is part of the judging so if you fail here you will lose points.

### How it's done

30 min before the class starts it's a prejudging. The judges will go over all dogs and check the preparation and take notes on how long the coat is and what style the groomer wants to achieve. This is the time where you can tell the judge if there are any problems - maybe there is coat missing in an area or you had to change style/dog close to the competition.

You can also ask the judges any questions you have.



When the pre judging is done you are told to start and then it's time to groom.

During the competition you are not allowed to look into a book or ask someone at the side for help.

Keep an eye on the clock!

Try to keep your table free – use a chair beside the table to store all your equipment

All parts of the groom needs to be done within the time frame- that means if you wants to use chalk on your hand stripped dog to enhance the color or spray the top knot on the poodle it needs to be done within that time. When the time is out you are told to stop and put your tools down. You then clean up the table and put the show lead on the dog and the fabric on the table. You can comb the dog and

maybe spray a shine spray on it if you want.

The judges will now go around and check out all the dogs and you now need to present the dogs to them in a nice way. Try to stack it as on a dog show. If you feel unsure on how your breed should be stacked – check out pictures on show dogs on internet or in show dog papers. Train yourself and the dog in advance on it.



When the judges have gone over all dogs in the class the 3 finalists will

be announced.

Preparation and training is the key to success – the better prepared you are – the less is the

risk of you having a black out or “nervous breakdown” due to stress.

Don't be afraid to compete – no one will laugh at you and you are the brave one – and remember – you are the one in the ring so you are already ahead of the ones standing beside it.

Here are some more useful points written by Eve J Somers that is a UK grooming judge:

Check your allowed time BEFORE the class starts!!!! If at all possible, try not to use dogs with ear infections, missing coat etc.....if the dog is poorly it's not fair at all to expect it to stand for you for two hours or more.....

Preparation.....dogs coats should be spotlessly clean with an alive appearance and the comb should glide through no matter how dense it is, no mats anywhere, nails trimmed, pads clean and clear of excessive hair, ears clean and free of hair on the inside ( I am aware of the debate about ear plucking, but to be met with ears stuffed full of hair and red and smelly is not acceptable ), the sanitary areas should be attended to....watch out for mats in the armpits, the feet, in the tuck up on the loin and behind the ears

Technique and handling....competitors should use equipment in a safe, correct and professional manner.....all dogs must be kindly and safely handled.

Coat length and density.....the coat should be long enough and dense enough to enable the competitor to produce a trim that shows a definite difference to when they started.....and the evidence will be on the floor at the end of the class.....

Clipping and scissoring.....all clipped areas should be neat, tidy with no hairs missed....scissored areas should be neat and tidy with no long ends appearing on combing out.....blended areas should show no obvious line from short into longer hairs

Hand stripping.....the jackets/body coats should be flat, even with hopefully no holes.....flat work should be neat, tidy and sharp....ideally on the harsh coated terrier the legs should be stripped.....if not, blending scissors should be used.....all blending should be seamless.....

Shape.....the final shape should be clear, balanced, symmetrical and in proportion.....for example, back legs to be the same shape, size and be in keeping with the rest of the trim....a pedigree dog should be true to breed type, especially heads, and a cross breed should look like one of the breeds it consists of.....with creative styles, the rules of balance, proportion and symmetry still apply

Finish....the finished coat should be even, with no long ends, no clipper lines and no scissor marks. Edges of ears should be short and neat.

Degree of difficulty.....when decisions are being made, the degree of difficulty has to be a factor.....a dog with lots of dense coat trimmed into a good shape and style using scissors only will obviously regarded as more difficult than a dog with a sparse coat that has been clipped.

Products....I personally don't mind what products are used as long as they are legal, safe, and appropriate and that a comb will go through, with the exception of sprayed topknots and backcombed heads.....

Final presentation.....an eye catching table cloth in a colour that shows off your dog and a nicely standing dog all enhance the final picture....

You should also consider the comfort of your competition dog.....many dogs used for competition are clients dogs, people who have been kind enough to lend their babies for the day.....these dogs are not used to being away from their owners, are in a strange place and have to behave on a table for a couple of hours.....so it's a good idea to try and keep them as de-stressed as possible.....and remember to carry a spray bottle of water so that you can spray their mouths with water to prevent overheating, especially if they haven't had a drink properly to keep the faces clean and dry. And incidentally, keep yourselves comfortable and hydrated too.....

If you want to compete and have any questions about it – feel free to contact me on [mia@dreamdogz.ie](mailto:mia@dreamdogz.ie) and I try to help you out.