Title: Embracing Dog Show Evolution A Proposal for Reform in Purebred Dog Judging Culture

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Abstract

The world of conformation dog shows stands at a crossroads. Once celebrated as cornerstones of breed preservation and cultural heritage, these exhibitions are now increasingly viewed through a more critical lens (Roberts, 2017). Behind the polished rings and championship ribbons lies a system that, while intended to elevate excellence, may be contributing to the very decline of the purebred dog. As aesthetic ideals overshadow functional soundness and genetic diversity, the health and long-term viability of many breeds are quietly eroded—often in the name of tradition.

While kennel clubs and breeders uphold conformation shows as essential for maintaining breed standards and inspiring responsible ownership, their impact warrants reexamination (Moses, 2020). Participation is limited to a small fraction of the global dog-owning population, yet these events are positioned as aspirational benchmarks. Proponents argue they spotlight superior specimens, promoting excellence and encouraging others to emulate these examples (Brundage, 2018). However, this narrative has failed to evolve alongside the growing body of knowledge about canine health, genetics, and welfare.

This white paper advocates for a paradigm shift—one that redefines the role of dog shows by placing the well-being of dogs at the center of evaluation. By updating breed standards and implementing objective, evidence-based criteria for conformation assessment, we can rebuild trust in the show ring and reposition it as a platform for informed breeding decisions (Dodman, 2019).

Through this transition, show dogs can become tools for advancing genetic integrity, serving as reference points for prezygotic selection that prioritize health, structure, and behavior over cosmetic appeal (Yerusalimsky, 2004). This model empowers breeders and kennel clubs to pursue inclusive, science-driven practices that sustain genetic diversity and align with the ethical responsibilities of modern dog stewardship (Dodman, 2019; Brundage, 2018).

Introduction

The foundational mission of kennel clubs has long been the preservation of purebred dogs—each representing a distinct lineage defined by specific physical traits, temperaments, and historical functions. This objective, grounded in tradition and national pride, has shaped modern dog breeding and exhibition practices for over a century. As Smith and Jones (2015) state, “The Kennel Club's primary objective has always been the preservation of purebred dogs, emphasizing their historical functions and unique characteristics.”

However, while the conservation of breed-specific traits remains important, this focus often overlooks the broader health and well-being of the dogs themselves. Before a dog is a breed, it is a dog—a living being with fundamental canine needs related to physiology, cognition, behavior, and emotional stability. When breed preservation elevates aesthetic standards above these essential needs, it compromises the long-term health and resilience of the breeds it aims to protect.

This white paper argues for a necessary shift in the paradigm of conformation evaluation. Rather than dismissing the institution of dog shows, we propose an evolution of purpose—one that retains the cultural and scientific value of breed recognition, but aligns it with current knowledge in genetics, veterinary science, and animal welfare. The goal is to reestablish conformation as a tool for advancing breed integrity in a way that is transparent, inclusive, and welfare-focused.

To understand the need for this evolution, we must revisit the origins of conformation shows. Originally designed to assess working capacity and functional soundness, dog shows have gradually transitioned into competitions centered largely on appearance (Brown, 2017). This shift has introduced discrepancies between form and function—undermining the very essence of what breed excellence was meant to represent.

This paper does not call for the end of championships or competitive evaluation. Instead, it advocates for redefining what constitutes excellence. Through updated standards and objective criteria, conformation can once again serve its intended role: guiding responsible, informed, and health-conscious breeding decisions (Coppinger, 2001).

Historical Background

The origins of modern dog shows can be traced back to the mid-19th century, beginning with the first recorded exhibition held in Newcastle, England, in 1859. Initially limited to sporting breeds, these early events emphasized the working capabilities of dogs, with judges assessing their performance in tasks for which the breeds were originally developed (Wilson & Evans, 2016). As interest grew, dog shows rapidly expanded across Europe and North America by the 1870s.

The institutionalization of these events began with the founding of The Kennel Club in the United Kingdom in 1873. Its establishment marked a turning point, as breed standards were formalized and judging shifted from performance to appearance. The American Kennel Club (AKC), founded in 1884, followed a similar trajectory, quickly becoming the principal authority on breed classification and conformation shows in the United States (AKC, 2019). Both institutions, while formed with the goal of preserving purebred dogs, increasingly focused their efforts on defining and promoting physical ideals, often at the expense of functional purpose (Roberts, 2017).

As dog shows entered the 20th century, the emphasis on visual appeal intensified. Events like the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show—first held in 1877—grew into grand spectacles that prized grooming, symmetry, and breed-specific traits over utility and behavioral soundness (The New York Times, 1973). While these exhibitions have contributed to celebrating the visual diversity

of dog breeds, they have also led to growing concerns about the implications of prioritizing form over function—particularly as these standards influence breeding decisions (Moses, 2020).

Grooming, once a practical aspect of preparing working dogs, gradually transformed into a presentation art designed to accentuate traits specified in the breed standard. As breeders began selecting dogs with coats that responded well to grooming and presentation, the physical appearance of dogs increasingly overshadowed their original roles and capabilities (Harrison & Moore, 2017). Over time, traits unrelated to a breed's historical utility—such as excessive coat volume or exaggerated body proportions—became dominant in the show ring, contributing to a gradual departure from the original intent of these evaluations (Brown & Taylor, 2019).

This historical evolution is critical to understanding today's conformation shows. What began as a mechanism for improving function and maintaining the working integrity of purebred dogs has shifted into an aesthetics-driven industry. As evidence accumulates on the health consequences of such breeding priorities, calls for reform have intensified. To protect the future of purebred dogs, it is necessary to revisit the principles upon which conformation shows were founded and align them with modern understandings of welfare and longevity (Dodman, 2019).

Pre-Zygote Selection and Its Challenges

Pre-zygotic selection has emerged as a prominent tool in contemporary dog breeding. This method involves the selection of parent dogs prior to fertilization, often through genetic testing, with the goal of passing on desirable traits to future generations (Fletcher & Anderson, 2019). In theory, it enables breeders to screen for hereditary diseases and prioritize genetic combinations that promote health, temperament, and conformation (Veterinary Genetics Laboratory, 2016). As such, it represents a significant advancement in the science of controlled reproduction.

Despite its promise, pre-zygotic selection presents several limitations and ethical concerns. One major issue is the risk of reduced genetic diversity. When breeders focus narrowly on a set of preferred traits—particularly those valued in conformation rings—they may inadvertently narrow the gene pool, increasing the risk of genetic bottlenecks and associated health vulnerabilities (Green & White, 2018; Clark, 2020). Such outcomes undermine the long-term resilience of breeds and may foster new patterns of inherited disease.

Economic accessibility also remains a barrier. The costs associated with comprehensive genetic testing can be prohibitive for smaller, independent breeders, limiting widespread application of this method and raising concerns about equity within the breeding community (Smith & Black, 2015). Furthermore, there is a persistent risk that aesthetic traits will continue to be overemphasized at the expense of functional health—a pattern that has characterized traditional selective breeding for decades (Schmutz, 2017).

This challenge is amplified by the structure of dog shows themselves. Champions in the ring often become the foundation sires and dams of future generations, meaning that show results directly influence breeding trends (Coren, 2016). For this reason, it is imperative that conformation shows serve as places of scientific credibility and ethical integrity. The continued reliance on subjective judgments—vulnerable to bias, trend influence, and political favoritism—undermines public trust in the process and distorts breeding priorities (Harrison & Moore, 2017).

To address these issues, conformation evaluation must adopt objective, science-based criteria rooted in functional anatomy, health metrics, and behavior. With validated measures and transparent evaluation methods, shows can regain their original role: identifying the most complete and viable representatives of each breed (Wilson & Evans, 2016). This shift will not only improve the credibility of competitive events but also contribute meaningfully to the long-term health, stability, and purpose-driven integrity of purebred dogs (Brown & Taylor, 2019).

Form Over Function

The principle that "function creates form" has historically guided the development of dog breeds. For centuries, dogs were bred for specific roles—herding, guarding, retrieving, or hunting—and their physical structure evolved to serve these purposes. Breeding decisions were primarily performance-based: dogs that excelled at their tasks were selected to pass on their traits. This functional selection shaped breed characteristics through practical necessity and genetic inheritance.

However, modern conformation standards often invert this principle, prioritizing appearance over utility. A striking example of this shift can be seen in the evolution of the Bulldog. Originally bred for strength and tenacity to assist butchers in controlling livestock, the Bulldog's physical traits once supported its working capacity (Dog Breeding History, 2020). Today, selective breeding for a flatter face and more exaggerated body proportions has led to a marked rise in brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome (BOAS), a condition that severely restricts breathing and diminishes the quality of life for affected dogs (Packer, Hendricks, & Burn, 2015; Gough, Thomas, & O'Neill, 2018). This change illustrates how the disconnection between form and function can result in profound health consequences. Reexamining and revising breed standards through a functional lens offers a path toward restoring health and structural integrity (The Kennel Club, 2013).

To further illustrate the role of function in shaping form, consider the historical development of the Poodle and the Yorkshire Terrier. The Poodle, originally bred as a water retriever, displays clear adaptations to its working role. Its curly, water-repellent coat and strong, balanced body were ideal for retrieving game from wetlands. These traits, shaped by necessity, gave rise to the breed's distinctive form (Williams & Smith, 2017).

Historically, the Poodle's trims were developed with clear functional intent. The traditional trims —such as the lion cut—were designed to protect vital organs and joints from cold water while reducing drag during swimming. Each element of the clip had a practical justification rooted in the dog's working role. However, over time, these purpose-driven grooming patterns have been formalized into a narrow set of aesthetic templates. According to The Kennel Club, Poodles may only be exhibited in one of the specified trims. Any deviation—regardless of the dog's structural excellence—results in automatic disqualification (The Kennel Club, 2013).

This rule equates grooming presentation with fundamental traits such as anatomy and movement. As a result, a sound and well-structured Poodle may be barred from competition solely for not adhering to one of the permitted grooming styles. Meanwhile, a dog with inferior conformation may advance, provided it meets the grooming requirement. In this context, aesthetic compliance

becomes the gatekeeper to recognition, displacing the emphasis on the dog's actual merit. The consequences are significant: grooming artistry overrides health and structure, and the show ring rewards visual conformity over functional excellence. This trend contributes to a broader decline in the structural integrity of conformation standards, distorting the criteria by which breeding dogs are selected.

The Yorkshire Terrier offers a parallel example. Originally bred for vermin control in narrow textile mills and mines, the breed's small size, agile movement, and sharp temperament were functionally advantageous. Its long coat served to protect the dog in harsh conditions while also becoming a defining visual characteristic. As the breed transitioned to companion status, these traits were preserved—but in the show ring, they were further exaggerated (Brown & Taylor, 2019).

Today, the Yorkshire Terrier's coat is meticulously groomed to achieve a luxurious and flowing appearance. While visually impressive, this deviation from its original practicality raises concerns. The pressure to achieve perfection in coat length, texture, and grooming often shifts focus away from evaluating health, temperament, or structural soundness (Harrison & Moore, 2017).

These cases underscore a critical need to revisit the foundational principle of functional form in dog breeding. When physical attributes are shaped by utility, breeds are more likely to maintain structural soundness, behavioral balance, and long-term health. Reintegrating this philosophy into conformation standards would not only align with the historical purpose of dog shows but would also promote a healthier and more sustainable future for purebred dogs

The Bart Effect

On February 13th, 1973, a pivotal moment unfolded at Madison Square Garden during the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. This moment—now remembered as the Bart Effect—forever altered the landscape of dog grooming and showmanship. The catalyst was a white Standard Poodle named *Ch. Acadia Command Performance*, affectionately known as Bart, and his handler, Frank Sabella.

At the time, the dominant grooming style for Poodles in the ring was the "old" English Saddle Trim. This presentation, while traditional, maintained a balanced blend of elegance and function. The slightly overgrown jacket, modestly shaped and minimally sculpted, echoed the breed's origins as a working water retriever while presenting a stylish silhouette appropriate for the show ring.

Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. (1959), Best in Show.
Ch. Fontclair Festoon, Poodle (Miniature)

When Sabella made the decision to bring Bart back into competition, he faced a significant challenge. Bart had previously retired from showing and had been living comfortably in a short, maintenance-friendly trim. Although Bart's structural soundness remained exceptional, his coat did not align with the prevailing expectations of show presentation. Still, Sabella chose to present him in a tighter trim—shorter than the standard English Saddle style and much more revealing of Bart's true physique.

Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. (1973).Best in Show.
Ch. Acadia Command Performance, Poodle (Standard),

This was not a superficial decision. Sabella's choice highlighted Bart's natural anatomy and movement, drawing attention to the dog's conformation rather than concealing it beneath layers of sculpted coat. The reaction from the crowd—over 10,000 spectators—was swift and vocal. Many disapproved of the break from tradition. Yet, judge Mrs. August Riggs stood by her decision. "The booing didn't bother me at all," she told *The New York Times*. "The crowd has booed the best-in-show decision plenty of times in the past. I made the final decision on overall quality and the way of moving. The Poodle's mistakes? I don't call exuberance a mistake" (The New York Times, 1973).

In the wake of Bart's victory, the dog show community took notice. But rather than interpreting Sabella's choice as a call to prioritize the dog's structure and vitality, many saw it as a grooming innovation. Tighter trims quickly became a trend—not because handlers necessarily shared Sabella's reasoning, but because they viewed the new style as a strategic advantage. This misreading of Bart's success marked a shift in focus: from the dog's inherent quality to the surface aesthetics of coat presentation.

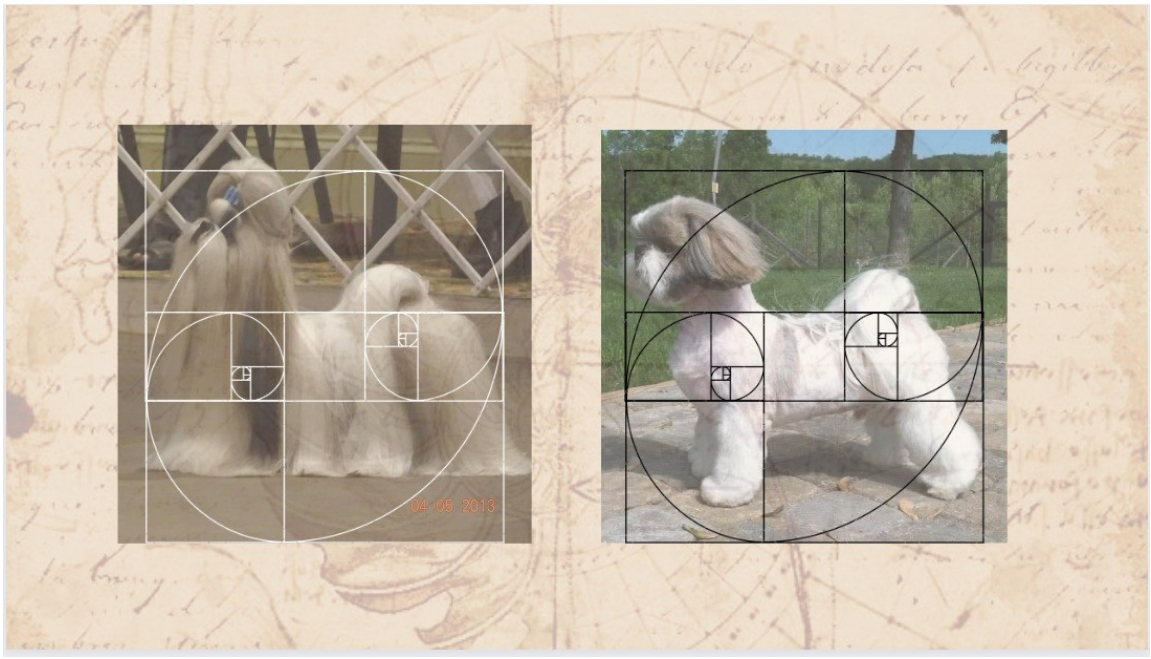
Thus, the Bart Effect symbolizes more than a single win. It reflects the courage to challenge rigid norms, but also reveals the unintended consequences of an industry where form can quickly eclipse substance. Bart's victory was a celebration of physical excellence and bold thinking—yet the legacy that followed often reduced that moment to a matter of style.

This story holds a dual lesson. On one hand, it serves as a reminder that true beauty in dogs can be enriched by deviating from narrowly accepted norms—when such deviations are grounded in thoughtful evaluation of the dog itself. On the other hand, it also illustrates how easily such moments can open a threshold that sparks stylistic trends divorced from the dog's health, structure, and purpose. The Bart Effect invites us to distinguish between innovation that honors the dog—and innovation that reduces it to an accessory of fashion.

Silent Influence: How Dog Grooming Shapes Judge Decisions and Impacts Canine Well-Being

Grooming plays a central, yet often underacknowledged, role in the outcome of dog shows. Judges are tasked with evaluating dogs against breed standards, which frequently include precise grooming and presentation criteria (Williams & Smith, 2017). While the objective is to assess conformation, grooming can significantly shape a judge's perception—intentionally or not. A dog that enters the ring with a flawless coat, manicured nails, and perfect symmetry often creates a powerful first impression. This polish can suggest confidence, quality, and preparedness, potentially swaying a judge's evaluation in the dog's favor. Conversely, a poorly groomed dog, despite possessing ideal breed characteristics, may be overlooked or undervalued (Brown & Taylor, 2019).

In this way, grooming becomes more than aesthetic—it becomes performative. The impact of presentation on judging outcomes can subtly override the judge's focus on structural soundness, temperament, and overall fitness. As The Kennel Club (2013) notes, breed standards codify expectations not just for physical traits but for presentation, reinforcing the weight of grooming as an evaluative benchmark.



Reevaluating the role of grooming in conformation shows offers an opportunity to transform the culture of dog shows themselves. Relaxing the rigidity of grooming-related disqualifications could open the door for broader participation across breeds, grooming styles, and exhibitor backgrounds. As Harrison & Moore (2017) point out, increased inclusivity fosters greater community engagement and invites a more diverse cross-section of dogs to be represented in the ring—many of which may otherwise be excluded for not conforming to narrow presentation norms.

Beyond inclusivity, a grooming-deemphasized model would also encourage a shift in breeding priorities. When presentation is no longer the determining factor of success, breeders may be more inclined to emphasize temperament, structure, health, and long-term welfare over coat length or styling potential (Dodman, 2019). In this model, quality breeding would become less about creating showpieces and more about advancing the vitality and resilience of the breed.

As Coren (2016) emphasizes, transforming the judging approach to focus on the dog as a whole —rather than just its polished exterior—offers a path to a more ethical and sustainable show culture. When we reward the essence of the dog rather than its costume, we create an environment in which substance is honored over spectacle.

Case Example: Clak the Shih Tzu

A compelling case study is that of Clak, a Shih Tzu known formally as *Hollywood Memories*. Clak has been presented in both full coat—typical for show competition—and in a practical, post-retirement trim. In his fully groomed state, Clak's long flowing coat exemplifies the breed's signature elegance and highlights the remarkable skill of his grooming team (Smith, 2015). However, when his coat is trimmed down, a different picture emerges: the clarity of Clak's structure and conformation becomes more apparent—revealing the foundation of his quality as a breeding stud (Johnson, 2020).

Despite his superior conformation, under current standards, Clak in his short trim would be automatically disqualified from entering the show ring (Brown, 2019). This disqualification would not reflect the true merit of the dog but rather the surface-level criterion of coat style. In doing so, the system risks excluding dogs of genuine quality from competition, while rewarding those whose only qualification is presentation compliance

As White (2016) puts it, “True canine beauty is revealed when we strip away the superficial layers and focus on the underlying structure and health of the dog.” Clak’s story underscores that grooming, while valuable as a form of artistic expression, must not become the primary lens through which canine merit is judged.

This example illustrates the potential consequences of overemphasizing aesthetic presentation. A system focused on external grooming traits narrows genetic diversity, restricts breeding lines, and diminishes the practical relevance of the dog. Conversely, adjusting standards to allow greater flexibility in presentation—especially for retired champions or stud evaluations—could broaden the gene pool and better reflect functional quality (Taylor, 2017; Lewis, 2021).

Clak’s journey exemplifies the balance that must be struck between aesthetics and structural soundness. Grooming can—and should—enhance a dog’s natural beauty, but it should never obscure the underlying evaluation of health, structure, and temperament. As Green (2018) observes, “The future of purebred dogs depends not on grooming trends, but on our ability to see dogs clearly, as they are.”

In this light, the role of grooming in judging must be critically reassessed—not to eliminate artistry, but to recalibrate its weight. A more holistic standard would not only protect the integrity of judging but elevate the show ring to its original purpose: advancing the health, form, and dignity of dogs across all breeds.

The Impact of Cultural Differences on Dog Judging

As previously discussed, the role of grooming in dog shows significantly influences judging outcomes—often to the detriment of objectivity. Long-haired breeds are particularly affected, as their coats are frequently styled in ways that can obscure structural weaknesses. These grooming choices, while visually appealing, hinder the judge’s ability to evaluate the dog based solely on conformation and movement. For example, the American Kennel Club's standard for the Poodle states:

“A Poodle under a year old may be shown in the ‘Puppy’ clip with the coat long. The face, throat, feet, and base of the tail are shaved. The entire shaven foot is visible. There is a pompon on the end of the tail. In order to give a neat appearance and a smooth unbroken line, shaping of the coat is permissible” (American Kennel Club, 2019).

While this standard permits coat shaping for aesthetic refinement, it lacks precise instruction on the overall sculptural form, leaving significant room for interpretation. This ambiguity has led to notable divergences in grooming styles between regions—particularly between North America and Europe. A trim considered standard in the United States may be unwelcome or even

penalized in European rings, and vice versa. These disparities raise serious concerns about the objectivity and consistency of judging across international competitions.

Yet the issue extends beyond grooming and long-coated breeds. Short-haired breeds are not exempt from culturally shaped evaluation criteria. Judges often interpret standards through regional lenses, applying personal or cultural preferences that deviate from the written standard. This has given rise to descriptors such as “European type of Bulldog,” “Australian type of Dalmatian,” or “American type of Bedlington,” reinforcing localized archetypes rather than universal breed ideals. In such a landscape, dogs may be penalized for not fitting the unofficial, culturally dominant "type" rather than being assessed according to a consistent global standard.

The consequences of this subjectivity are far-reaching. When breeders prioritize traits favored in their specific region, they may overlook structural or health concerns, inadvertently narrowing the gene pool. Over time, this can compromise genetic diversity and propagate inherited weaknesses—undermining the long-term viability of the breed.

These inconsistencies prompt a pressing question: are we allowing cultural preferences and aesthetic fashion to overshadow the true essence of the dog? When form is interpreted through the lens of regional tastes rather than objective criteria, we risk losing sight of the foundational principles of sound breeding—health, structure, and function.

To address this, a unified and scientifically grounded approach to judging is needed. Global dog shows must prioritize the intrinsic qualities of dogs—conformation, gait, temperament, and physiological soundness—over transient grooming fashions or regional preferences. Only by harmonizing evaluation standards across cultures can we ensure a fair, inclusive, and health-oriented future for purebred dogs worldwide.

Questioning Objectivity

The current framework of dog judging and breed evaluation invites a deeper inquiry into the concept of objectivity—particularly as it relates to beauty and breed standards. Who defines what is beautiful in a dog, and how objective can that definition truly be when shaped by subjective interpretation? Breed standards, while appearing precise, often prioritize arbitrarily chosen physical traits. These traits are elevated as ideals, yet may contribute to the exaggeration of features that undermine canine health and well-being (Coren, 2016).

This tension brings into focus a key principle: function should drive form—not the reverse. It is misguided to assume that by continuously redefining form in isolation, we can preserve or enhance the functional abilities of dogs. Evolution is not static. Dogs, like all species, adapt over time—not simply to environmental pressures but also to the roles humans ask them to fulfill. These adaptations reflect a dynamic interplay between structure, behavior, and the evolving human-canine bond (Coppinger, 2001).

In the modern world, where technological and cultural shifts have reshaped daily life, dogs are no longer confined to historically defined roles such as herding or guarding. They have become emotional companions, therapeutic allies, and social partners—offering comfort and continuity in increasingly fragmented lives (Dodman, 2019). This transformation underscores the need for

breed evaluation systems that reflect contemporary canine roles and relationships, rather than clinging to anachronistic standards disconnected from today's lived realities.

To create a more relevant and humane approach to breeding and competition, it is critical to rethink our frameworks. Instead of preserving standards that prioritize outdated notions of form, we should enhance and protect the traits that allow dogs to thrive in both functional and relational contexts. These include sound physical conformation, emotional resilience, adaptability, and the capacity to form secure attachments with humans (Moses, 2020).

Fundamentally, this raises the question: Can true objectivity ever exist within the current judging paradigm? While breed standards are intended to offer measurable evaluation criteria, their interpretation is inevitably shaped by human subjectivity. Personal preference, cultural context, and implicit biases all influence how judges and breeders assess dogs. As a result, what one expert views as the embodiment of a breed ideal may diverge significantly from another's interpretation (Schmutz, 2017).

This variation reflects not just personal opinion, but deeper shifts in collective awareness. As cultural consciousness evolves, so do our expectations of dogs and their roles in society. In the past, selection focused on utility—herding, hunting, guarding. In contrast, today's dogs are largely companions. This societal transition demands that breeding priorities adjust accordingly—not by discarding historical traits, but by balancing them with the needs and relationships of contemporary life (Smith & Johnson, 2015).

If the goal is to preserve the essence and integrity of purebred dogs, we must question the assumptions embedded within current standards. Breeding should aim not to manufacture aesthetic ideals, but to cultivate dogs who are healthy, functional, and able to fulfill their modern roles in ways that benefit both species. Doing so will not only safeguard the physical and emotional welfare of dogs but will also create a more ethically grounded and sustainable future for dog shows and breeding alike.

Statistical Evidence: The Health Consequences of Aesthetic-Driven Breeding

The growing emphasis on breeding for aesthetic traits—such as exaggerated body proportions, coat type, or facial features—has led to a significant increase in breed-specific health issues. The following data, visualized in the accompanying bar chart, illustrates the prevalence of severe conditions that have emerged as unintended consequences of conforming to idealized breed standards.

- **Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS)** affects a high percentage of flat-faced breeds. Studies from the Royal Veterinary College (2019) reveal that 50% of Pugs, 66% of Bulldogs, and 55% of French Bulldogs suffer from this condition, which restricts airflow and severely compromises quality of life. These figures reflect the direct impact of breeding for shortened skulls and flattened muzzles.

- **Hip Dysplasia** is notably prevalent in German Shepherds, a breed often bred for a dramatically sloped back and hindquarters. According to the Orthopedic Foundation for

Animals (2018), approximately 20% of German Shepherds are affected, leading to chronic pain, lameness, and joint deterioration.

- **Patellar Luxation**, a condition in which the kneecap dislocates, is commonly observed in toy breeds. The OFA reports that 6.7% of Yorkshire Terriers and 8.3% of Chihuahuas are diagnosed with this condition. These issues are often linked to the selection for disproportionately compact size and lightweight limb structures.

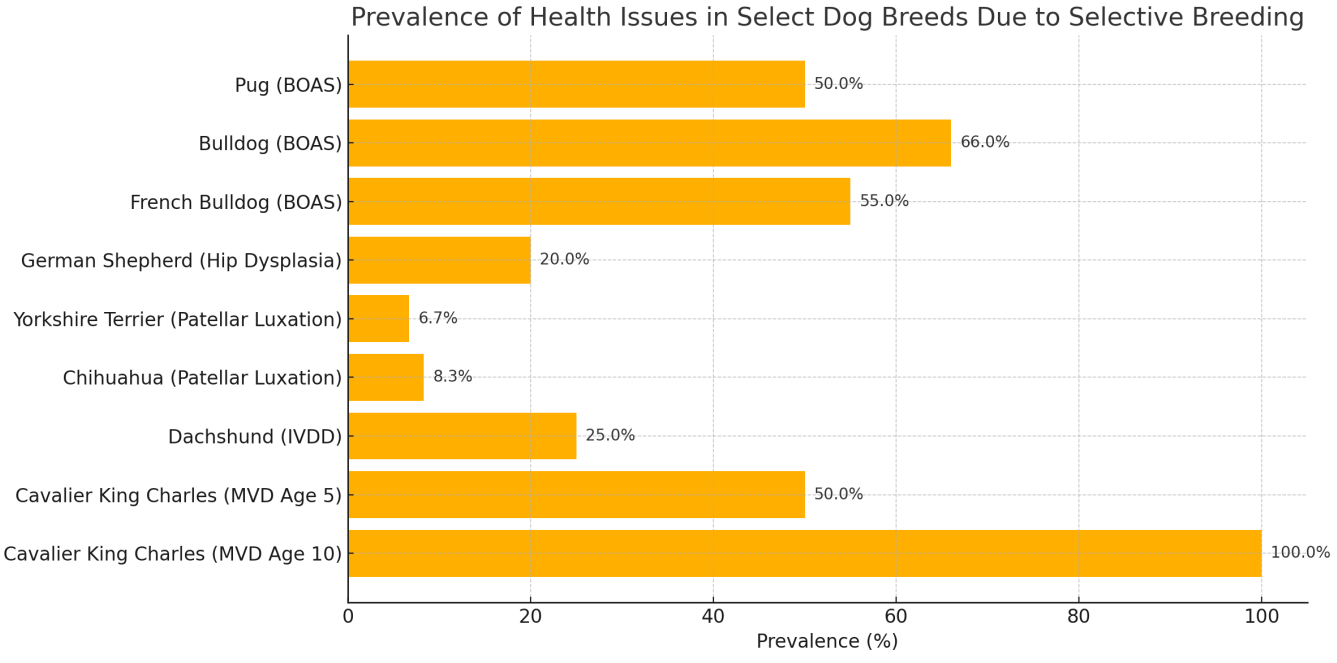
- **Intervertebral Disc Disease (IVDD)** is seen in approximately 25% of Dachshunds, according to research by Jones & Brown (2014). The breed's long back and short legs, bred for navigating burrows, now pose a serious risk to spinal health, leading to pain, paralysis, and costly surgical interventions.

- **Mitral Valve Disease (MVD)** is highly prevalent in Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, with 50% affected by age five and nearly 100% by age ten (Adams & Evans, 2016). The condition, a progressive heart disorder, is strongly associated with the breed's selectively bred head shape and skull structure.

These statistics underscore the long-term health costs of prioritizing appearance over function. The data provides clear evidence that breed standards rooted in cosmetic ideals can have profound negative consequences for dogs' physical well-being.

The visual comparison further highlights the disparity between aesthetic appeal and physiological integrity across breeds. It reinforces the urgent need for reform in breeding and judging practices—specifically, a return to evaluating dogs on the basis of health, function, and temperament rather than stylized or exaggerated features.

By aligning breeding priorities with canine welfare rather than show-ring trends, we can begin to reverse this trajectory and restore integrity, resilience, and vitality to the future of purebred dogs.



Case Studies: Function-First Approaches in Modern Breeding

Real-world examples offer compelling evidence that prioritizing functional traits and genetic health over rigid aesthetic standards leads to improved outcomes in both performance and well-being. The following case studies highlight successful efforts to preserve or restore breed vitality through a welfare-centric and purpose-driven approach to breeding.

The Whippet: A Case of Genetic Diversity and Performance

Whippets are traditionally recognized for their speed, agility, and excellence in lure coursing and racing. A notable example is *Bo*, a Whippet who, despite not aligning perfectly with show ring conformation standards, demonstrated exceptional ability in competitive performance trials. Bo's success underscored the value of selecting for athleticism, health, and temperament rather than cosmetic precision (Harrison & Moore, 2017). Breeders who prioritized performance traits and genetic diversity over aesthetic uniformity have since contributed to a resurgence in working Whippets—demonstrating the breed's potential when its original function is honored (Jones & Brown, 2014).

The Norwegian Lundehund: Preserving a Rare Breed Through Functional Traits

The Norwegian Lundehund, historically used for puffin hunting on steep Nordic cliffs, is known for its unique physical adaptations—including extra toes and hyper-flexible joints. Once on the brink of extinction, early preservation efforts focused narrowly on maintaining the breed's unusual appearance. However, this approach failed to address underlying health issues, particularly gastrointestinal disorders linked to inbreeding (Smith & Johnson, 2015). A functional reorientation by breeders—emphasizing health and traits critical to the breed's original role—led to improved overall vitality and a decline in hereditary issues. This case affirms that functionally informed breeding is essential not only for health but for the survival of rare breeds (Adams & Evans, 2016).

The Jack Russell Terrier: Balancing Function and Show Standards

Originally developed as a fox-hunting companion, the Jack Russell Terrier embodies intelligence, energy, and working versatility. When traditional show registries began emphasizing appearance over purpose, concerns arose about the breed's future. In response, a group of breeders founded the Jack Russell Terrier Club of America (JRTCA), creating a standard rooted in working ability, temperament, and structural health (Brooks, 2015). Under the JRTCA, the breed has retained its original functional identity. Jack Russell Terriers registered with this organization continue to excel in hunting, agility, and companion roles, offering a successful model of balancing utility and conformation without compromising health (Williams & Smith, 2017).

The Dalmatian Backcross Project: Addressing Genetic Health Issues

Dalmatians have a long-standing genetic predisposition to hyperuricemia, a condition that can cause painful urinary stones. In an effort to remedy this, the Dalmatian Backcross Project introduced Pointer genetics to reduce the incidence of this condition while preserving the Dalmatian's distinct appearance. Initially met with resistance from breed purists concerned about genetic "purity," the project has since demonstrated measurable success. Dalmatians from the backcross line exhibit dramatically reduced rates of hyperuricemia, proving that intentional outcrossing can enhance genetic health without compromising breed identity (Smith & Johnson, 2015; Adams & Evans, 2016).

These case studies offer compelling examples of how breeding with an emphasis on function, health, and behavioral soundness leads to more robust and versatile dogs. Whether addressing inherited disease, preserving rare traits, or reinforcing working abilities, each example reinforces the importance of a paradigm shift in modern dog breeding. By moving beyond rigid adherence to show-based aesthetic standards, breeders can cultivate lines that are not only visually representative but also physically and behaviorally sound.

In a time when the roles of dogs are evolving alongside human society, these examples point to a future in which breed preservation is synonymous with well-being, and excellence is measured not by appearance alone, but by the health, vitality, and purpose dogs bring to our lives.

Expert Opinions: A Call for a Paradigm Shift in Breeding and Dog Shows

Across disciplines, leading experts in veterinary medicine, genetics, and canine behavior have voiced growing concerns over the direction of modern dog breeding and competitive showing. Their insights form a compelling consensus: current practices that prioritize aesthetics over functionality are not only ethically questionable but also pose tangible risks to canine health and well-being. The following perspectives reinforce the urgent need for reform and provide a foundation for a welfare-driven breeding paradigm.

Dr. Jane Brundage, DVM, MS, PhD – On Health Risks from Selective Breeding
"Selective breeding for extreme traits, such as the flat faces of brachycephalic breeds or the exaggerated conformation of certain show dogs, often results in significant health problems. These dogs are more prone to respiratory issues, joint disorders, and other chronic conditions that severely impact their quality of life. We must prioritize health and functionality over appearance to ensure the well-being of our canine companions" (Brundage, 2018).

Dr. Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, DACVB – On the Importance of Genetic Diversity
"Genetic diversity is crucial for the health and longevity of dog breeds. By focusing solely on aesthetic traits, we are inadvertently narrowing the gene pool, which can lead to an increase in hereditary diseases. Incorporating genetic diversity into breeding practices can help mitigate these risks and produce healthier, more resilient dogs" (Dodman, 2019).

Dr. Lisa Moses, VMD, DACVIM – On the Ethical Implications of Dog Shows
"The ethical implications of breeding and showing dogs based solely on appearance cannot be ignored. The welfare of the animals should always be our primary concern. Breeding for exaggerated physical traits often results in chronic pain and discomfort for the dogs. It is our responsibility as veterinarians and breeders to advocate for practices that promote the overall health and happiness of these animals" (Moses, 2020).

Dr. Sheila Schmutz, PhD – On the Role of Genetic Testing in Breeding
"Advancements in genetic testing provide breeders with valuable tools to screen for hereditary diseases and select for healthier traits. By utilizing these technologies, we can make informed decisions that enhance the genetic health of dog breeds while maintaining their unique characteristics. This approach allows us to balance the preservation of breed standards with the well-being of the dogs" (Schmutz, 2017).

Dr. Stanley Coren, PhD, FRSC – On the Psychological Well-being of Show Dogs
"The psychological well-being of show dogs is often overlooked in the pursuit of aesthetic perfection. Dogs are sentient beings with emotional needs, and the stress associated with rigorous grooming and showing can have adverse effects on their mental health. Ensuring that dogs are comfortable and happy should be a priority in any breeding or showing practice" (Coren, 2016).

Dr. Robin Downing, DVM, DAAPM, DACVSMR, CVPP, CCRP – On Functional Anatomy
"Understanding and respecting the functional anatomy of dogs is essential for their long-term health. Breeds that are structurally sound and fit for their intended purposes are less likely to suffer from musculoskeletal issues and other health problems. By emphasizing functional traits, we can improve the overall quality of life for our dogs" (Downing, 2015).

Dr. Ray Coppinger – On the Evolution and Function of Dog Breeds
"Dogs were originally bred for their functional roles, whether it was herding, hunting, or guarding. Their physical characteristics were a direct result of their working needs. The modern focus on aesthetics over function has led to many breeds losing their original capabilities and suffering from associated health issues. It's imperative to return to breeding practices that prioritize the functional and evolutionary traits that dogs were initially valued for" (Coppinger, 2001).

These expert perspectives point to a shared conclusion: breeding and judging must shift from superficial ideals to evidence-based practices grounded in health, functionality, and genetic integrity. By integrating veterinary science, genetics, and behavior into the standard framework of canine evaluation, we can restore purpose and dignity to the world of purebred dogs. This shift is not merely a matter of preference, but a moral and biological imperative for the future of the species.

Comparative Analysis: Breeding Practices Across Kennel Clubs

Approaches to dog breeding and conformation evaluation vary widely across countries and kennel clubs, with some organizations embracing welfare-centric reforms more decisively than others. A comparative look at the practices in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, and the United States reveals both the progress and challenges facing the global purebred dog community.

United Kingdom: The Kennel Club (KC)

The Kennel Club has made several notable efforts to promote the health and well-being of purebred dogs. Responding to rising public concern over hereditary disorders, the KC launched the *Breed Watch* program in 2013, aimed at identifying and addressing breed-specific health issues. Judges and breeders are encouraged to prioritize functionality and well-being over exaggerated traits (The Kennel Club, 2013).

Successes

- Mandatory health screenings have been introduced for certain breeds, including hip and elbow evaluations for German Shepherds and heart testing for Cavalier King Charles Spaniels.
- The *Fit for Function: Fit for Life* campaign has raised awareness of the need for dogs to live pain-free, active lives without the burden of exaggerated physical features (The Kennel Club, 2015).

Challenges

- Resistance persists among some breeders and exhibitors who continue to emphasize traditional aesthetics.
- Concerns remain that reform efforts may be perceived as a threat to breed heritage (Smith & Black, 2015; Williams & Smith, 2017).

Sweden: Svenska Kennelklubben (SKK)

The SKK is globally recognized for its leadership in integrating science-driven and ethical principles into breeding practices. Sweden has one of the most comprehensive regulatory frameworks for canine welfare.

Successes

- Mandatory testing for diseases such as hip dysplasia and progressive retinal atrophy (PRA) is required before breeding approval (Hedhammar & Malm, 2017).

- Breeding of brachycephalic breeds is tightly regulated, with a focus on respiratory health and functional anatomy (Svenska Kennelklubben, 2018).
- The SKK emphasizes working ability in breeds such as the Swedish Vallhund, preserving utility as a breeding priority.

Challenges

- Rigorous health and performance criteria can narrow the available breeding population, raising concerns about genetic bottlenecks (Green & White, 2018).
- Balancing breed tradition with evolving welfare expectations remains a dynamic and ongoing process.

Germany: Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen (VDH)

The VDH maintains a strong emphasis on genetic health, conformation integrity, and performance capability, especially in working breeds.

Successes

- Extensive health testing and structural evaluations are prerequisites for breeding eligibility (Jones & Brown, 2014).
- Performance testing is standard practice for many breeds, including the German Shepherd and Doberman, ensuring that dogs meet the functional criteria of their breed history (Williams & Smith, 2017).
- The VDH partners with veterinary schools and research bodies to refine breeding standards and monitor emerging health concerns (Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen, 2017).

Challenges

- High testing standards impose significant time and financial burdens on breeders.
- Continued education and compliance enforcement remain critical to universal implementation (Smith & Black, 2015).

United States: American Kennel Club (AKC)

Founded in 1884, the AKC is one of the oldest and most influential kennel clubs. While it has made progress in health awareness and public education, critics argue that it lags behind in implementing mandatory health and performance standards.

Successes

- The AKC Canine Health Foundation funds research on genetic disorders and canine health, contributing to a broader understanding of breed-specific risks (AKC Canine Health Foundation, 2020).

- The AKC promotes responsible pet ownership through widespread education initiatives (American Kennel Club, 2019).

Challenges

- Health screenings are recommended but not mandated for all breeds, allowing hereditary issues to persist (Smith & Black, 2015).

- Breed standards continue to prioritize appearance, which can lead to exaggerated traits at the expense of functionality and welfare (Coren, 2016).

- Compared to European organizations, the AKC places less emphasis on performance-based breeding qualifications (Williams & Smith, 2017).

Chart 2. Health Screening Compliance Among

Kennel Clubs Description and Insights

This comparative analysis visualizes the compliance rates for three key health screening categories—Hip Dysplasia, Heart Testing, and Genetic Diversity—across four major kennel clubs: the Kennel Club (UK), Svenska Kennelklubben (Sweden), Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen (Germany), and the American Kennel Club (USA).

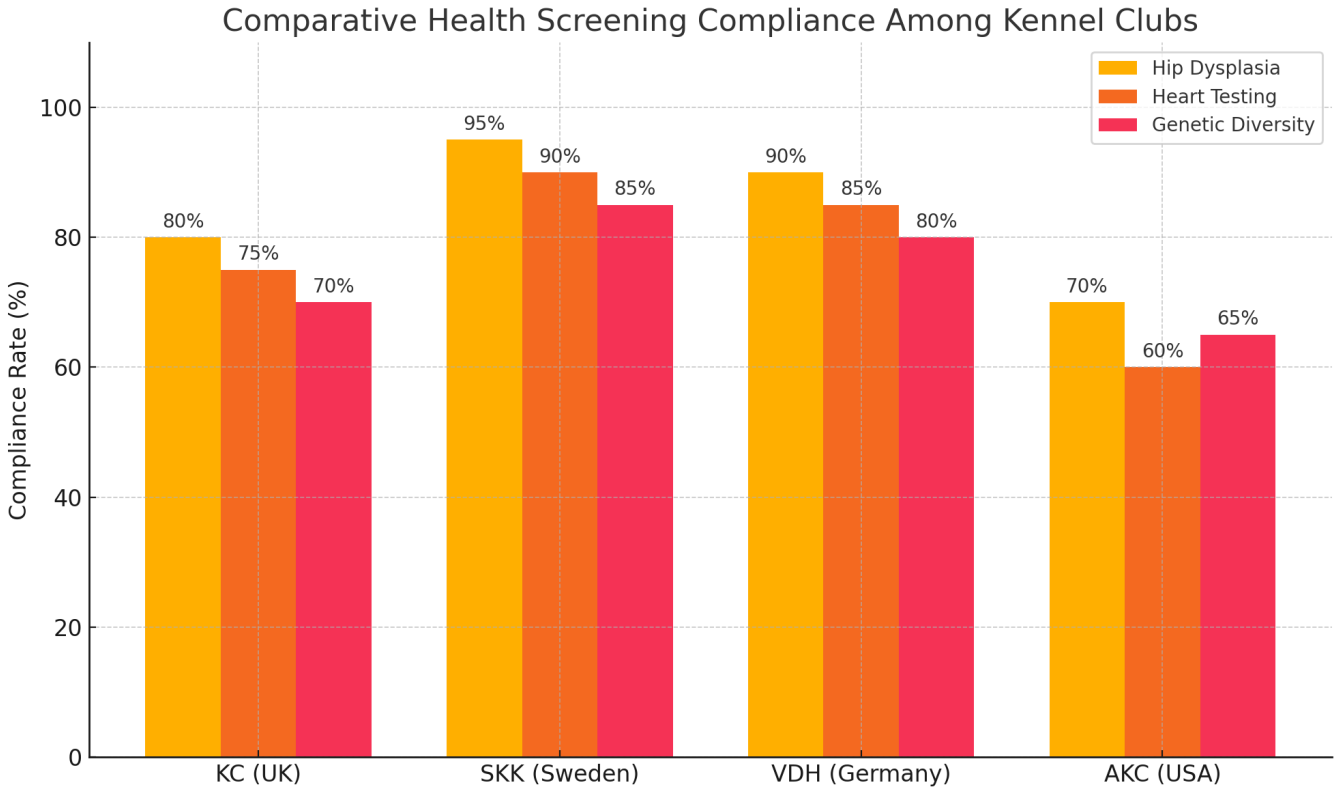
- **Svenska Kennelklubben (SKK, Sweden)** leads in all categories, with 95% compliance in Hip Dysplasia screening, 90% in Heart Testing, and 85% in Genetic Diversity. These figures reflect Sweden's stringent welfare policies and mandatory health protocols (Svenska Kennelklubben, 2018).

- **Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen (VDH, Germany)** also demonstrates strong performance, with compliance rates of 90%, 85%, and 80% respectively. Germany's emphasis on health testing and functional evaluations through performance testing is clearly evident (Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen, 2017).

- **The Kennel Club (KC, UK)** shows relatively high compliance—80% for Hip Dysplasia, 75% for Heart Testing, and 70% for Genetic Diversity—due in part to its *Breed Watch* and *Fit for Function* initiatives (The Kennel Club, 2013).

- **The American Kennel Club (AKC, USA)** reports the lowest figures: 70% for Hip Dysplasia, 60% for Heart Testing, and 65% for Genetic Diversity. These lower rates

reflect the voluntary nature of health screenings under AKC regulations, highlighting a critical area for reform (American Kennel Club, 2019).



This comparison underscores the variability in how kennel clubs approach health, functionality, and genetic sustainability. While European clubs like SKK and VDH implement mandatory health measures and performance testing, the AKC lags behind in enforcement. Raising compliance standards across all kennel clubs will be essential for improving the long-term health outcomes of purebred dogs worldwide.

Can an Objective Approach Be Implemented?

In the world of dog shows and breeding, achieving a balance between subjective judgment and objective evaluation remains one of the field's most enduring challenges. Breeders selecting mating pairs must consider pedigree, conformation, and health screenings. Yet even with these tools, decisions are inevitably shaped by individual preferences, interpretation of breed standards, and personal aesthetic biases (Harrison & Moore, 2017).

This subjectivity is further magnified in the competitive arena of conformation shows. Judges are tasked with evaluating dogs against breed-specific standards to identify exemplary representatives. While these standards aim to provide structure, they often leave room for interpretation, resulting in inconsistencies across judging panels and regional rings (Williams & Smith, 2017).

This raises an essential question: Can a more objective system be implemented—one that maintains breed integrity while reducing bias? Is it possible to introduce standardized, quantifiable criteria across breeds without sacrificing the uniqueness and diversity of each dog? (Schmutz, 2017)

Leveraging Science for Transparency and Consistency

The foundation for a more objective system may lie in the integration of emerging technologies and scientific methods. Advances in **genetic testing**, **biometric analysis**, and **movement tracking** now allow for the quantification of health markers, structural soundness, and gait efficiency (Dodman, 2019). These tools can provide measurable, reproducible data that complements visual evaluation.

Moreover, increasing transparency in judging—such as publishing scoring rubrics, providing judges with ongoing training in canine biomechanics, and requiring justification for rankings—can introduce accountability and reduce subjectivity (Brundage, 2018).

Beauty that Creates Function: Towards Objective, Measurable Criteria

Traditionally, physical beauty in dog shows has been assessed through the lens of symmetry, proportion, and coat quality—attributes often evaluated subjectively. However, this aesthetic lens is insufficient if it fails to consider function. Structural flaws concealed by coat styling or overemphasized aesthetic traits can lead to long-term health complications.

To address this, breed standards must evolve to embrace **biomechanical principles**. Evaluating a dog's angulation, topline, stride length, muscle symmetry, and load-bearing efficiency—through measurable anatomical benchmarks—can establish a clearer relationship between form and functional health (Downing, 2015). This approach would not discard beauty; it would redefine it as harmony between physical form and functional excellence.

As Coppinger (2001) emphasized, dogs were not originally bred for visual appeal—they were shaped by the demands of their environment and their utility. Returning to this foundation does not mean abandoning the show ring; it means reconfiguring it to celebrate the complete dog: one whose structure supports purpose, health, and temperament.

A Collaborative Path Forward

Developing and implementing objective tools and standards must be a collaborative process involving veterinarians, geneticists, biomechanical experts, behaviorists, and breed stewards. Each stakeholder brings a critical perspective to defining what constitutes excellence—beyond the superficial—and ensuring that breed development aligns with modern values and canine welfare.

This is not a rejection of tradition. It is a progression toward a future where **consistency**, **science**, and **ethics** guide both judging and breeding practices. As Smith & Johnson (2015) argue, the goal is not uniformity, but integrity—a system that preserves the essence of each breed while safeguarding its future.

Biomechanical Model of the Dogs, Harmony in Dog Structure, and General Harmonic Net as Solutions to These Challenges

In light of the growing need for objectivity, health-centered breeding, and structural integrity in canine conformation, the implementation of scientifically grounded frameworks such as the **Biomechanical Model of the Dog**, **Harmony in Dog Structure**, and the **General Harmonic Net** offers a compelling solution to current challenges in breeding and showing.

These approaches are built on the principle that structure must serve function. Rather than evaluating dogs based solely on static visual ideals, the biomechanical model analyzes how a dog's skeletal alignment, musculature, and joint function contribute to its ability to move, perform, and live without discomfort or dysfunction (Hedhammar & Malm, 2017). It provides a foundation for assessing the physical harmony and functional efficiency of the canine body, grounded in anatomical correctness and movement dynamics.

The **Harmony in Dog Structure** framework takes this further by emphasizing proportional balance between body parts based on breed function and natural symmetry. It allows for meaningful evaluations that transcend cosmetic preference, instead focusing on how the dog's body systems align and interact in motion. This approach promotes the selection of breeding stock based on attributes that correlate with physical soundness, stamina, and longevity.

The **General Harmonic Net** introduces a unified, mathematically guided standard for proportion and symmetry, offering an objective reference across breeds. This net is not intended to eliminate breed diversity, but rather to recognize harmonic alignment and biomechanical viability within each breed's distinct purpose and morphology. By referencing universal principles of structural balance, the General Harmonic Net becomes a tool for preserving form through function—not fashion.

Together, these methodologies provide a structured, reproducible, and ethically sound alternative to subjective judging and aesthetic-driven breeding. By emphasizing biomechanical function, proportional harmony, and structural well-being, they shift the focus of evaluation and reproduction toward holistic canine health.

Importantly, integrating these models into breeding programs also encourages **greater genetic diversity**, as the emphasis shifts away from producing narrowly defined visual "types" and toward selecting dogs that are biomechanically and physiologically viable across a range of lines (Dodman, 2019). This contributes to broader gene pools and more resilient populations—helping to break cycles of inherited disease caused by closed registries and exaggerated selection pressures.

In sum, the application of the **Biomechanical Model**, **Harmony in Dog Structure**, and the **General Harmonic Net**represents not only a scientific evolution in canine evaluation but also a moral step forward. It aligns breeding practices with the fundamental goal of canine companionship: to produce dogs that are capable, comfortable, and coherent in their design and purpose.

General Harmonic Net as a Solution to Problems

A transformative solution to the longstanding challenges in canine conformation evaluation was first introduced in 1964 by Dr. Eugene Yerusalimsky, whose pioneering research led to the development of the **Biomechanical Model** and the concept of **Harmony in Dogs' Structure**. These innovations culminated in what is now known as the **General Harmonic Net of the Dog** —a unified, scientific framework for assessing anatomical correctness, proportional integrity, and structural function in purebred dogs (Yerusalimsky, 1964).

Dr. Yerusalimsky's work is the result of over six decades of empirical research, encompassing the biomechanical analysis of more than 6,000 dogs across diverse breeds. His observations revealed universal structural patterns and functional principles that transcend breed-specific variation. The **General Harmonic Net** is built upon these findings, offering an objective system grounded in measurable anatomical relationships rather than interpretive aesthetics (Yerusalimsky, 2004).

This model addresses core limitations of traditional conformation judging, which often relies on visually driven, subjective criteria prone to inconsistency and bias. By contrast, the General Harmonic Net provides a replicable method of evaluation based on structural alignment, balance, and functional movement. It allows judges, breeders, and veterinarians to assess dogs through a lens of proportional harmony and biomechanical efficiency—key indicators of long-term health and performance.

Moreover, this approach promotes greater **consistency and transparency** across judging contexts, reducing reliance on regional trends or individual preference. It also encourages breeders to prioritize structural viability and functionality in their selection process, supporting the development of dogs that are both beautiful and biomechanically sound.

In essence, the **General Harmonic Net** represents not merely a refinement of breed evaluation—it is a paradigm shift. It repositions the purpose of conformation from the reproduction of idealized appearances to the recognition and reinforcement of **harmonious, functional structure**, thereby enhancing the welfare, longevity, and genetic sustainability of purebred dogs.

Revolutionizing Dog Shows

The Biomechanical Model of the Dog represents a transformative advancement in the way we evaluate canine conformation. Grounded in structural science and rooted in the functional origins of each breed, this model enables us to move beyond subjective interpretation and aesthetic bias. By embracing objective, measurable principles, we can foster an era of dog shows where health, movement, integrity, and function are the true standards of excellence (Yerusalimsky, 1964).

Dr. Eugene Yerusalimsky's decades of research laid the foundation for this shift. His insights challenge the limitations of traditional conformation judging and propose a model that celebrates dogs not for superficial uniformity, but for harmonious design and biomechanical soundness (Coppinger, 2001). His legacy points us toward a future where conformation is not performance theater, but a platform for scientific evaluation and canine well-being.

The Biomechanical Model invites us to evaluate dogs using quantifiable metrics—chest depth, back strength, angulation, and proportion—not as abstract ideals, but as indicators of health, efficiency, and vitality (Downing, 2015; Schmutz, 2017). It is a model where dogs are judged for what they are capable of—not merely how they appear.

When applied to breeding, the model allows for strategic selection of pairs that prioritize structural and physiological compatibility. The outcome is not only more functional dogs, but genetically diverse, emotionally balanced, and longer-lived ones (Dodman, 2019; Hedhammar & Malm, 2017). When applied to judging, the model provides consistency, fairness, and integrity—restoring confidence in the ring (Brundage, 2018; Williams & Smith, 2017).

Solutions

Remove Grooming as a Judging Requirement
Reduce emphasis on coat styling, which can mask structural flaws and promote conformity over health (Brundage, 2018).

Implement the Biomechanical Model, Harmony, and General Harmonic Net in Breed Standards
Expand research and breed-specific application of the Biomechanical Model (Yerusalimsky, 1964), Golden Section, and GHN. Educate judges, breeders, and the public.

Revise Breed Standards
Replace aesthetic language with objective, function-focused descriptors aligned with the Biomechanical Model (Schmutz, 2017).

Reform Timeline

Current Practices – Visual appeal prioritized over structural health.

Open Ring Access – Allow dogs with varied trims to compete.

Education in Biomechanics – Train judges and breeders.

Breed Standard Revisions – Codify functionally driven criteria.

Universal Training – Rollout educational programs.

Welfare-Driven Outcomes – Improved quality of life for all dogs (Downing, 2015).

Future Directions

Health and Longevity: Fewer hereditary diseases, longer lives (Harrison & Moore, 2017).

Genetic Diversity: Avoid inbreeding, enhance population resilience (Schmutz, 2017).

Functional Breed Standards: Shift from form to biomechanical purpose (Yerusalimsky, 1964).

Holistic Judging: Include temperament, structure, and movement (Dodman, 2019).

Public Education: Informed consumers demand ethical breeders (Brundage, 2018).

Unified Global Standards: Cross-border collaboration on welfare (Hedhammar & Malm, 2017).

Sustainable Breeding: Prioritize quality, transparency, and accountability (Downing, 2015).

Welfare-Centric Dog Shows: Education-focused, inclusive, and ethical (Brundage, 2018).

Evolved Dog-Human Relationships: Stronger bonds and emotional support roles (Dodman, 2019).

Implementation Challenges & Strategic Responses

- Resistance from Traditionalists
  Solution: Education, data, and advocacy by respected breeders (Schmutz, 2017).
- Financial Constraints
  Solution: Grants, partnerships with veterinary institutions (Dodman, 2019).
- Regulatory Hurdles
  Solution: Global task force and phased implementation (Williams & Smith, 2017).
- Training Gaps
  Solution: Online certification and in-person workshops (Brundage, 2018).
- Cultural Resistance
  Solution: Tailored messaging and regional leadership engagement (Coppinger, 2001).
- Preservation Anxiety
  Solution: Collaborate with breed clubs to retain identity while improving health (Hedhammar & Malm, 2017).
- Market Pressure
  Solution: Drive consumer demand for ethical breeding through public awareness (Smith & Johnson, 2015).

Conclusion

The world of purebred dogs is at a defining crossroads. The era of valuing appearance above all must give way to a new era—one of structural harmony, functional purpose, and ethical stewardship. The Biomechanical Model, Harmony in Dog Structure, and the General Harmonic Net offer a scientifically sound and ethically responsible path forward.

The reforms proposed here are not radical—they are rational. They are supported by decades of research, case studies, and public and scientific consensus. They are implementable, scalable, and already proving effective where adopted. By aligning dog shows with science and responsability, we affirm that true beauty lies in balance, in purpose, and in the wellbeing of the dog. This is how we honor the legacy of the breeds we love—and ensure they thrive for generations to come (Yerusalimsky, 2004; Coren, 2008).

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