

## Rhodesian Ridgeback Slovensky Klub - October 2019 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Shows

### Judges overview by Sue Cameron-Codognotto (AU 'Ozrhode')

WOW ... what a wonderful and memorable experience! Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Club, its hard working Committee and its members for the honour and privilege of allowing me the pleasure of judging your 25<sup>th</sup> Silver Anniversary shows in Bratislava with my colleague and dear friend, Dawn Redman (AU 'Shelridge'). We are so grateful for the time and effort everyone employed to ensure the show was a tremendous success. It was so well organised -- what more could any judge ask for? We were spoilt not only with our lovely, competent ring stewards and critique writers, and the friendly exhibitors who win or lose took all our decisions so graciously and sportingly but also with the gorgeous breed typical exhibits entered under us. Simply put, the entire event and the hospitality shown to Dawn and I was second to none and we will be forever grateful for being invited to partake in this special event. A special mention to Alexandra Padiva, who went above and beyond her remit to make our time with you all so memorable and something we will both cherish forever. Thank you so much Alexandra, we really do appreciate all that you did for us.

The horse ranch venue was fantastic, ideal for inclement weather and very fitting for such a special event. Your generous trophy table and the beautiful club backdrops for class placements and photographs just added to the terrific atmosphere. I have always enjoyed the friendly atmosphere of your European shows, as it is much more a social, fun event, where everyone is supportive of each other and so sporting win or lose, so quite the contrast to shows held in Australia.

Over the two days of the show, it gave me great pleasure and genuine confidence knowing that my beloved breed is indeed safeguarded here in Central Europe by a wonderful group of dedicated breed custodians aka breeders. European breeders should be commended on maintaining good breed type and generally speaking, temperaments. I am aware that Dawn had some issues with temperament in her males, but thankfully, I did not experience this at all, and only a handful of young somewhat shy ridgebacks, who could benefit from a little more socialisation to aid their self-confidence. Like fashion, show trends come and go but if we continue to breed having the utmost regard for the breed standard encapsulating the fundamental breed features, the breed as we all know and love it, will prevail. However, breeders need to be mindful that like the rest of the world you are not immune to the universal front assembly or croup problems. Ensuring better pro-sternums, return of upper arms, adequate fill between the forelegs and croups no more than 30 degrees will cement and aid functionality for the betterment of the breed. In terms of comparison with Australia, central European ridgebacks have more uniformity in breed type and less diversity, but in both regions our breed is in safe hounds with some excellent breed examples.

As a judge one must have regard for the breed function and ensure the exhibit is capable of still fulfilling their breed function. The show ring is more than a beauty competition to me and I weigh up all factors when choosing my winners. I want to be reassured my winners could move all day showcasing significant efficiency and endurance as pivotal objectives. Therefore, quintessential to being able to serve their breed purpose is their running gear. Without correct feet, angle of pastern and balanced angulation fore and after, the ridgeback could not fulfil their breed function efficiently. As they say "form follows function" so if a dog is built correctly -- it will move correctly. So, foremost in my mind when judging, is the fact that he or she is a functional hunting hound requiring a balance between body construction, physical condition, sound typical movement, temperament and self-confidence.

I am sure most exhibitors are now aware that I was seeking a breed typical, well balanced, moderately sized Rhodesian Ridgeback, who exhibited the necessary combination of elegance and substance, in good hard condition (musclation) that our breed standard demands. From my

perspective my winners all excelled in breed type, exhibited exemplary balance, good outlines, correct size, effortless movement, good temperaments and acceptable ridges. As an endurance animal, I believe my winners could all perform their breed function well and displayed wonderful sound ground covering movement. I take this opportunity to apologise for running exhibitors probably a little more than they are accustomed to but watching my winners move so effortlessly with good reach and drive was a delight and helped firm up my placings in each class.

My class winners over both days were all super representatives of the breed and a credit to both their breeders and owners. My best female on the first day of the shows possessed excellent breed type. She was a beautifully balanced, moderate in all aspects, mid red wheaten, very elegant bitch with a lovely feminine headpiece. Her movement was sound and effortless, covering the ground well. She reminded me of the typical ridgebacks we all saw decades ago. I was thrilled on the first day of judging when I realised that the majority of my winning bitches were Slovakian bred. From a breeding perspective this is a very enviable position to be in, as it is the bitch who passes on more of their breed attributes and characteristics to their offspring than the dog (up to ~75%). If these bitches prove pre-potent in your breeding programs, it bodes very well in terms of quality for the future of Central European Rhodesian Ridgebacks and more pointedly, Slovakian bred Rhodesian Ridgebacks. So, massive kudos' are due to the Slovakian breeders for their quality breeding programs.

On the second day, I was faced with several dilemmas when choosing my Best Exhibit in Show winner -- I had what most judges would kill for -- two super representatives of the breed in my champion and junior dog, both worthy of the title Best Exhibit in Show and sadly, not enough rosettes and no Runner's Up to Best in Show award. My Best Exhibit in Show winner (*Multi Ch. Villagedogs O'Red October*) was a stunning brown nose with the best pigment I have seen in years that I could simply not overlook. I must admit I am impartial to a good brown nose ridgeback, so love to be able to reward them accordingly and this dog caught my eye the minute he moved into the ring. Excelling in breed type, and so beautifully balanced fore and after with every element just fitting so well and flowing into the next. Good bone, feet and ridge topped off this exemplary dog. He was so sound throughout, particularly on the move where he covered the ground with so little effort. Although, the junior dog really pushed him for Best Exhibit in Show, ultimately, his overall breed qualities could not be denied.

Now for dilemma #2 -- if only my 9 month old junior dog (*Villagedogs Some Like it Hot*) could fit in my suitcase. I loved him and let's face it, there was so much to love about him! Although well up on size particularly for his age, he was simply stunning and everything I look for in a Rhodesian Ridgeback. He oozed excellent breed type, handsome and upstanding, exhibiting so well that unique combination of substance and elegance, with a gorgeous headpiece, balanced conformation, good ridge, bone and feet -- he struck such a lovely picture on the stack. On the move, he filled my eye with his powerful reach and drive, covering the ground so effortlessly, just needing to tighten up a little in front which I am confident will come with age. As stated earlier, he really pushed my brown nosed champion dog for Best Exhibit in Show and I was so, so tempted to award him this, hence the amount of running both exhibits did for Best in Show, whilst I weighed it all up in my head. He is definitely one to watch in the not too distant future, as I am confident he will have a very successful show career in Europe. I will enjoy following both his show and stud career hopefully seeing his qualities reproduced in his progeny.

On a final note, on behalf of Dawn and I, we will always cherish the generous judges gifts the club bestowed upon us and I will wear that beautiful RR brooch with much pride. I really enjoyed finally getting to put names to faces and hope I get to see many of you again in my travels abroad at World Dog Shows and specialities. Thank you once again for a wonderful and enjoyable judging experience.

Warm regards,

Sue