

The Golden Retriever delights fans, as always.

A golden retriever is the central focus, standing on a patterned carpet. A woman in a brown corduroy jacket is petting its head. Another woman in a white shirt is holding a small orange treat. A man in a blue shirt is visible in the background. The setting is a crowded indoor event, likely a dog show.

DOGS by the Dozen

AKC Meet the Breeds returns to NYC.
By Theo Bernstein



In January, Manhattan's Javits Center transforms into a dog lover's paradise as thousands flock to AKC Meet the Breeds, where experienced breeders and fanciers showcase over 150 breeds for devoted fans and curious newcomers. This year, the American Kennel Club welcomed the biggest crowd in the event's history, as 35,000 canine enthusiasts filed into

the convention center on Saturday and Sunday.

With bustling crowds, a steady stream of entertainment in the central demonstration ring, and children burning off energy in the kids' zone, AKC Meet the Breeds grows livelier each year. The focus of the event is to introduce the public to as many dog breeds as possible, making Meet the Breeds a unique, can't-miss event.

If you are lucky enough to spend time at an AKC all-breed dog show, you can cast your eyes on a wide variety of dogs. But to learn about them up close, Meet the Breeds is the top destination.

Learning While Petting

The beauty of Meet the Breeds is that you can discover all sorts of fun facts and quirky characteristics about



Top and bottom left: John Ricard ©AKC; bottom right: Theo Bernstein





A miniature wirehaired Dachshund with owner wearing traditional German dress

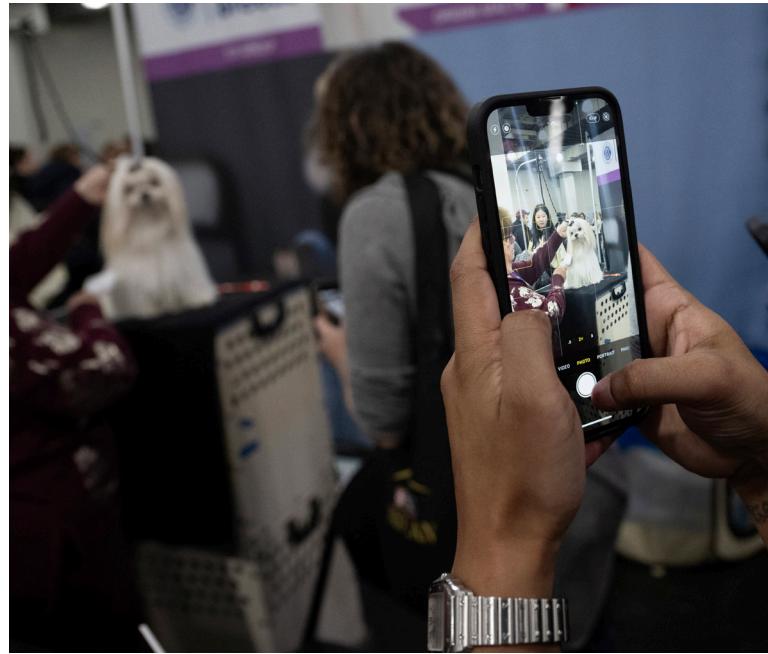
the breeds by interacting with dogs and their devoted owners. I was strolling the floor when the sight of the smooth, caramel-colored coat of the Basenji pulled me toward its table. As I asked its owner what makes the breed unique, the Basenji echoed a bark he heard coming

from down the aisle, emitting a sustained, high-pitched howl in return. The owner laughed, saying the dog “took the words out of my mouth!” She explained that due to the unusual shape of his larynx, Basenjis make a unique “yodeling” type of sound, rather than barking.

Further on in the alphabet, I learned that despite its name, the Pharaoh Hound is from Malta, not Egypt—it gets its name from resembling ancient Egyptian descriptions of dogs. The Pharaoh’s claim to fame is that it can blush—its nose and ears turn a rosy color



Top left and bottom: John Ricard ©AKC; top right: Theo Bernstein



when it is excited. Although I wanted to witness that unique talent, the Pharaoh crew was calm and relaxed (as Meet the Breeds dogs tend to be), so I moved on through the aisles to discover more fun facts.

Many of the breeds offer a glimpse into past ways of life around the world. At the Canaan Dog booth, I learned this ancient breed was known to help shepherds in Biblical times. Later on at

the Xoloitzcuintli booth, I learned that the ancient Aztecs of Mexico believed this hairless dog had healing powers.

The Nederlandse Kooikerhondje helped hunters lure ducks during the Middle Ages, using special water traps before gunpowder was invented. (This small red and white dog with black tipped ears also earned the distinction of being the hardest breed to spell at the event.) Meanwhile, the ever-popular

Dachshund was presented by owners in a traditional dirndl dress, while owners of the Scottish Deerhound came dressed in tartans and Highlandwear.

Providing education about responsible pet ownership is a pillar of the AKC's mission, so it was common to hear glowing accounts alongside caveats from the breed ambassadors. At the Rhodesian Ridgeback booth, a fancier explained that these muscular, athletic



AKC's Gina DiNardo and Pet Honesty's Rich Greenberg introduce AKC-licensed pet multivitamins.



Amber McCune and Border Collie Typo

hounds can be great for owners who like to run, but many can actually be couch potatoes. As I took in the impressive size of the Black Russian Terrier, I noticed an overflowing bowl of kibble with a sign that read, "I eat 7-plus cups of food a day." As I did quick arithmetic in my head to compare the BRT's diet to my Cardigan

Welsh Corgi's daily meals, I confirmed this breed is not for everybody.

Let's See Action

Breed booths kept visitors on the move throughout the day, but the demonstration ring in the center of the venue kept audiences entertained as well. The NYPD K-9 Unit offered a rare

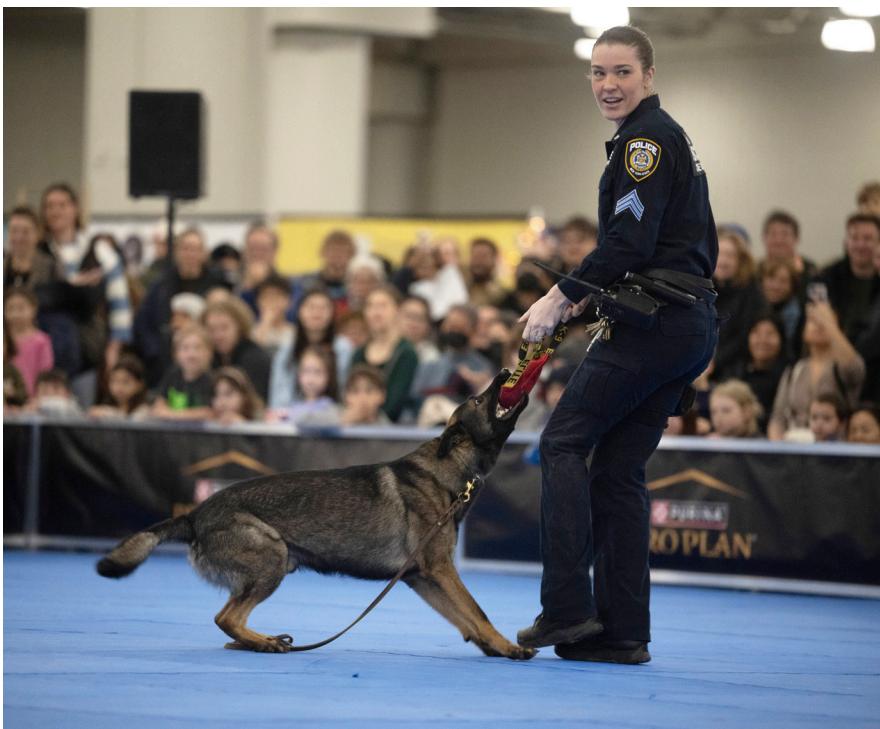
glimpse into the work of some of the most talented and highly trained dogs in the country. Members of the Port Chester Obedience Training Club showcased their tricks, with the star team of Amber McCune and Border Collie Typo showing off their precision and speed in agility.

There was no shortage of action. Hudson-Housatonic Disc Dogs chased down Frisbees in a demonstration of disc dog, the American Chesapeake Club introduced the AKC Fetch program, and Nestle Purina Pet Care's resident senior veterinarian Dr. RuthAnn Lobos stopped by to offer tips on how to help dogs live longer and healthier lives.

Since Meet the Breeds is a family affair, AKC set up its popular kids' zone to give children space to unleash their own zoomies. A kid-sized agility course was busy all day long. AKC's Public Education team offered sticker books for breed scavenger hunts, face painting, and balloons. Winning works from their annual kids' Meet the Breeds art contest were also on display.

Finding Favorites

During the event, Purina Pro Plan's "Battle of the Breeds" allowed visitors to vote for their favorite breed. The



A First-Timer Meets the Breeds

By Phil Dzikiy

As the new Managing Editor of this magazine, it would have been nice, in some way, to not only attend AKC Meet the Breeds, but to offer some sort of deep insight, or a heretofore-unseen angle on the AKC's annual dog extravaganza.

But the truth is, like most dog lovers attending the event—especially for the first time—I honestly just wanted to immerse myself in the experience. And more importantly, meet and pet as many dogs as I could.

A Pembroke Welsh Corgi was placed on my shoulder. A Brussels Griffon gave me a kiss. I rubbed a Bedlington Terrier's belly. A Borzoi snuggled up against my leg. (I'd always wanted to pet a Borzoi.)

Also, as a person who's currently "between dogs," it also may have been a bit of a scouting expedition. Meeting so many breeds makes it easy to picture one or two in your own home, joining your own family.

Now, we all have our favorites. I've always been into Greyhounds. Beagles. Boston Terriers. But most notably, for many years, I was lucky enough to own a wonderful Pug. I will always love Pugs. (What's not to love?) Once you fall in love with a breed, it can be hard to think outside of that box. There's nothing wrong with that at all.



But there's also nothing wrong with opening your mind—and heart—to other breeds. I went in with an open mind, thinking maybe some dogs would surprise me.

The thing is, of course, all the dogs I met were sweethearts. But I did feel some sort of connection with a few breeds I'd never been around before, like the Cesky Terrier, the Entlebucher Mountain Dog, and the Spinone Italiano. Perhaps most of all, I was struck by the Sussex Spaniel. The dog simply charmed me.

Does that mean a Sussex will be my next dog—whenever that happens? Not necessarily. But before Meet the Breeds, I doubt I would have even considered it. —PD

Siberian Husky ended up championing the rankings for the weekend, followed closely by other breeds, including the Finnish Lapphund and the Welsh Terrier.



I asked the team at the Siberian Husky booth what sets their breed apart, and one owner provided a helpful perspective: "They're quite intense and they're very smart. They need stimulation often to keep their brain occupied, so they always need a job." Also, a pro tip: among its fans, the breed's nickname is the Siberian, or even "Sibe," but never just "Husky."

Welsh Terrier representatives were eager to share their breed's story with me as well. "The Welsh Terrier is the oldest English breed, and they are really best for an active lifestyle," one exhibitor said. "I think what makes them so popular is their signature look. Their tan and black coloring definitely makes for one of the most distinct coats in the Terrier group, and their folded ears give them an unforgettable face. They really are best for an active lifestyle, as they're always full of energy."

The young owner-handler was proud to say that her dog, Juni, loves to interact with all kinds of visitors each January: "This is our third year doing AKC Meet the Breeds, and we love coming out and meeting new people every time." For me and thousands of other people, the feeling was mutual. **FD**

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