

**Icelandic Sheepdogs**  
**First AKC-Approved**  
**National Specialty**

**P**assion, diligence, and months of hard work delivered what can only be described as a very successful national specialty on May 3. The excitement of attending the parent club’s first AKC-approved national was evident by the exuberant “hellos” and hugs to friends, with joyous introductions and handshakes between new exhibitors and longstanding members.

Herding tests and trials began on Thursday morning, with generous sunshine and cool breezes. Entries numbered to 21 in both the morning and afternoon events, and with that, came great joy and pride in the high passing rate in the first event of the day: the Herding Instinct Test, Sheep. Sound performances saw numerous qualifying scores in both morning (with 12 qualified) and afternoon (with 13 qualified), with a total of eight dogs earning their Herding Instinct Certificate. The day also offered Herding Test, Sheep; Pre-Trial Test (no boundaries), Sheep; and Course A, Sheep. Another great performance qualified one entry in the Herding Test in the morning.

Although there were no qualifiers at the other levels, judges Jim New and Rebecca Henson agreed that talent, energy, and drive were seen throughout all events. This was the first time that the judges had the opportunity to watch an Icelandic Sheepdog at a herding event, and they were very encouraging to all who participated. A special shout to all those who stayed through the afternoon rains, and many thanks to the judges!

Friday morning saw exhibitors getting ready for conformation, obedience, and rally competition. Smiles were on everyone’s face as we were greeted with a ring set up with beautiful tables and wonderful trophies and rosettes. The day began with Juniors then proceeded into Puppy and Veteran Sweepstakes, both judged by Pat Putman. Her smiles throughout the morning made it evident that she enjoyed the entries being brought to her.

Judge Pat Hastings continued the day with judging of the conformation classes. As with judge Pat Putman, Ms. Hastings worked through her classes with smiles and many congratulations. Beautiful dogs, great movement, and sound type, were the order of the day, and that expectation was met.

I could write so much more about this, our first AKC-approved national specialty, but I remind myself that the GAZETTE as many more columns than the Icelandic Sheepdog’s. Judges Pat Putman and Pat Hastings discussed the day and came to our banquet with words of honor and encouragement. Ms. Putman put it very eloquently for the day:

“The ‘tell’ in the progress of our breed can be seen in our veteran classes. This wonderful Nordic Spitz herding dog that is uniquely the Icelandic Sheepdog has survived near extinction by being so appealing in its function, biddability, and history, that America, Iceland and other countries have embraced its future. This first AKC approved national specialty showed us wonderful type, secured by the Best in Sweeps Veteran, who also qualified in Herding, went RWD in conformation classes, earned a rally placement, and went HIT in obedience—all on the same day. The top winners were all examples of good breeding, utilizing sound engineering in anatomy, character, and hardiness. I am encouraged and uplifted by what we are doing in our homes, yards and breeding programs. The function of our breed is staying true, and I’m seeing better and better type, as well as seeing improvement in balance and movement.”

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