

United Kennel Club Announces Changes for Youth Nationals



Now entering its 15th year, the UKC Youth National Championship is considered as the granddaddy event of the year for many coonhound youth. It's a "World Hunt type event" for kids only, if you will. It draws young hunters and bench show enthusiasts from all over the country. Not only have many of its past champions gone on to win other major events, their kids are now participating at the Nationals.

For the most part, the format for the Youth Nationals has remained the same. Starting in 2015, however, you will see several changes, including a few significant ones. UKC is always

looking on ways to improve on their programs, and we think the changes implemented are an effort in that direction. UKC is excited about it and we hope the kids and parents will agree.

Youth National Championship Nite Hunt

The Youth National Championship Nite Hunt is open to all handlers ages 8 through 17, regardless of whether or not they placed at any other UKC youth event leading up to the event. Any past qualification requirements have been eliminated.

Handlers between the ages of 8 through 12 will be drawn out together, and handlers ages 13 through 17 will be drawn out together. The Nationals always kicked off on Friday with a Last Chance Qualifier, and the National Championship was held on Saturday. Starting in 2015 the National Championship will begin on Friday night. Any youth winning his or her cast with a total score of plus points on Friday night will advance to the Championship Finals.

Championship Finals

Saturday night will feature the National Championship Finals. Again, handlers will be drawn out together within their age divisions. Placements will be determined by combined score of double cast winners first, followed by single high scores. The same dog must be hunted on both nights. The purpose of this change is to give the hunt more of a Championship type feel and added recognition for those that made it to the Finals.

UKC Open Event

In addition to the Finals on Saturday, there will be a UKC Licensed Open Event for all those that did not advance to the finals. This event will also be open to any other kids wanting to enter who may not have hunted on Friday night. The same prizes and trophies will be awarded for the Open Event as in the past. Kids are not required to hunt the same dog as they did on Friday night.

Young Guns

All handlers ages five through seven will draw out in this class. Actually, this class is open to any handler who is at least five years of age. The purpose of this class is to provide a format for those just starting out, as well as for those that might be a little intimidated being required to "handle" (defined as calling their dog) their dog on their own against other kids who may be more experienced. Further, this non-licensed class is designed to allow the handler to be assisted in calling their dogs by a parent or their adult guardian.

This class will be offered on both Friday and Saturday nights. While there will be a winner named in each cast, all handlers in this class will be receive participation awards. The entry fee for this class is free to all participants.

Youth National Championship Bench Show

In an effort to level the playing field in relation to skill levels between ages, UKC has made changes for the National Championship Bench Show. In order for these changes to be possible, the show will now be a non-licensed event. We are confident, however, that the new format will allow a better avenue in an attempt to reach our goals.

The goal is to place more emphasis on the handler's skillset judged within their own age bracket as they move up in age year after year. Handler and hound will be judged more as a team opposed to the emphasis placed on the dog's conformation alone. A good description of our goal may be where the handler is judged on a scale of 1 to 10, and the dog is judged on a scale of 1 to 5. An in-depth clarification of how each individual hound and handler team will be judged will be announced in a seminar prior to the start of the show on Saturday at the Nationals.

Divisions and Classes

There will be two separate divisions. Handlers ages 8 through 12 will compete in the Junior Division. Handlers ages 13 through 17 will compete in the Senior Division. Classes will be determined based on the age of the dog's handler. There will be five classes in each division, provided there is at least one handler entered in each of those age classes. The dogs shown in any class must be six months or older and may be any one of the seven UKC recognized coonhound breeds, regardless of sex or degree. X-Bred coonhounds are not eligible. The same dog may not be shown in more than one class.

Championship Finals

All class winners will advance to the National Championship Finals. The 8- through 12-year-old class winners will compete against each other for the overall Junior National Championship. The 13- through 17-year-old class winners will compete against each other for the overall Senior National Championship. The two division champions will not compete for one overall winner. The Youth National Championship will have two overall winners.

Young Guns

This class will feature handlers ages five through seven, who will all show in the same class. The handler must show a coonhound that is at least six months of age. All handlers in this class will receive a participation award. The entry fee for this class is free to all participants.

The 2015 Youth Nationals Bench Show Judge

Penny Jessup of North Carolina will be judging the Youth National Championship Bench Show. Given her well-rounded history in all aspects of coonhound bench shows, UKC couldn't be more pleased to have her judging this show. Penny is breeder, a very experienced handler, and has won lots and lots of shows with her dogs throughout the years - that includes being a two-time UKC World Champion owner and handler. Penny is also a high school teacher in her hometown where she makes her living working with young kids, which just adds to the equation as a perfect fit. She is very honored to be a part of the Youth National Championship this year, and was even more excited when she learned of the new format, when asked to judge the show. Penny will also play a big role in the seminar explaining the new format on Saturday prior to the start of the bench show.

2015 Youth Nationals Location Announced

The Youth Nationals will be held on Friday, July 24 through Saturday, July 25 in Peru, Indiana. The Western Howard County Conservation Club will serve as Host Club. Further details will be included in the May and June Issues of *COONHOUND BLOODLINES*.

