



VANESSA MOYANO GONZÁLVEZ

AN INTERVIEW WITH A JUDGE

Rhodesian Ridgebacks breeder for 20 years and judge for the breed since 2011

PLEASE INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO OUR READERS.

I am Vanessa Moyano González, I live in a village near Barcelona, Spain. I am Industrial Engineer and I work for a well known car brand. I speak Spanish, Catalan, English and French.

My hobbies... well the main one and the most time consuming is breeding and showing but I also love to sit and read, and listen music, watch films, go for a long walk with my dogs after a hard day at work.

I have bred Rhodesian Ridgebacks for 20 years and I am judge of the breed since 2011. Since then I have been judging all over Europe where I have met a lot of nice Ridgebacks. As I am active in breeding and showing my own dogs, I think I have good experience and I know the current problems in the breed as well as what a dog show means for owners, breeders and of course our principal actors, our loved dogs.

WHEN DID YOUR LOVE OF DOGS BEGIN? PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR PAST AND PRESENT DOGS.

My love for dogs began since I was a child, I think I love them since I can remember.

My first dog was a mixed breed, he was small and fluffy. A friend of my father knew that I was mad about having a dog, his neighbor had puppies and no families for them, and he came to my house with one of the tiny puppies, the puppy had only 15 days! I called him Chusky. He died at the age of 5.

Some months later after the death of Chusky, I went to the local rescue center and I adopted a German x Belgian Shepherd mixed female puppy. She was 2 months old and I called her Neith, she lived until the age of 16 years old.

Just one month after I rescued Neith, I went to a horse competition and I saw a Ridgeback. Luckily, his breeder and owner was there, Teresa Sabater, she was one of the few breeders in Spain in those days. As I already had Neith I could not have another dog at home, as we lived in a flat, but I kept the contact card of the breeder for the future.

It was in 1999 when we moved to a house with garden and Ginsa de Simba Masai Mara came into my life. After her, Vulcan (Ozrhode Dia Hot Prospect) came, he was a magnificent male that I imported from Australia. Some months later I got Hydra de Simba Masai Mara (daughter of a Kimani's import), who came to my home.

Vulcan and Hydra were my foundation and all the Ridgebacks I have had, come from them, Nussy, Gala, Odette, Draco. Currently I have at home Odile, Loa, Zeta, Satara and Mala Mala.

Oops I forgot! Robin, the Basenji, he is now 11,5 years old. I love Basenjjs, but I know I will never breed them.

HOW DID YOU GET INTRODUCED TO THIS BREED?

It is normal that as judge you start with your own breed. Therefore, when I decided to become judge, Ridgeback was my first breed.

But as owner and breeder of the breed, the first time I saw the breed was in an article of a dog magazine. It was love at first sight. That magazine



▲ *BOB MultiCh.Kangelani Gentle Thanzi by Clay and BOS Ridgerules Show'n Tell (Foto is by Anja Rubatscher) - Photo of Club Show of RR Club of Norway in 7-8 June 2014*

it is like a treasure for me, I still keep it. I was 10 or 11 years old and it was clear to me then that my dog was going to be a Ridgeback. I collected all information I could find in those days through magazines and books. There was no internet so it was a really hard work and also considering everything was published in English. Years later, Internet made everything easier.

WHEN DID YOU START WITH YOUR JUDGING CAREER AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO BECOME A JUDGE? PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR JUDGES CAREER AND YOUR HIGHLIGHTS.

I never thought I would become a judge. I started to help in my kennel club as steward at the dog shows. When you have enough experience you can apply to become judge in practice, so the president of our kennel club and some friends encouraged me to try it. I was going to be a judge in Spain that was also breeder of Ridgebacks. I applied and I was approved to write the exam. I passed the exam and everything started, once you are involved the next steps come on their own.

DID YOU EVER HAD A MENTOR? ARE YOU MENTORING NEW COMERS?

Yes, I have had judge mentors, mostly from other breeds because general dog structure and movement does not change.

About Ridgebacks, I have as judge mentors those breeders that have also helped me as breeder.

Yes, I have mentored some new comers in both topics, breeding and judging. But in Spain we don't have the mentoring role in the Kennel Club. Interested people who want to learn, can ask to be mentored by a long time breeder but it's not organized at all by our Kennel Club.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE THE TYPE?

Type is when you can tell what breed of the dog is, at a glance.

I consider the type when a dog fits the standard with no exaggerations, a dog who is sound.

When you start to see some other characteristics that remind you another breed then you have lack of type. Exaggerations also carry at the end, lack of type, for example, when a dog has too much angulation. That also leads to an inefficient dog to work.

IS THERE SOMETHING WHICH YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE IN THE BREED?

Being a judge and breeder of Rhodesian Ridgeback, is a difficult question to answer. I love the breed as it is. I like their morphology and their character.

Breeding for the standard and not for winning in the show rings.

But as breeder I hope that in the future we can avoid all the genetic issues the breed currently has (JME, DM, EOAD..).

EVERY BREED HAS SOME COMMON PROBLEMS. WHICH IS THE MOST COMMON PROBLEM IN RR?

I think that nowadays is bad front. Starting with narrow front, not filled chest, not enough depth of chest, straight angulations, no length of upper arm. Also not strong muzzle or underjaw is becoming more popular.

Lately, I am seeing not very good top lines, they must be straight, not with roach back or sway back and high rear.

Other problems that I have seen is light eyes and also very dark wheaten, may I say mahogany or chocolate.

Breeders must breed to improve the breed and maintain the standard, not for fashion or make easy money. They must study the male and female combination and not only use a male as stud just because he is Champion or World Winner (popular sire syndrome), neither the neighbour male because of proximity, or using a female because you love her but she is not an outstanding specimen of the breed. Breeding using these methods can lead to the loss of type.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT OF WHICH YOU WOULD LIKE A JUDGE OF THE BREED TO BE AWARE?

I think that is important that a judge must be aware of the current problems of the breed and award those dogs that are correct or do not have that problem. For example, if you have a dog with a perfect front but not so good rear and another

dog with bad front and perfect rear and the current problem in the breed are bad fronts, I would go for the first dog with perfect front and not so good rear.

It is also important that judges who judge Ridgebacks know how ridges look like and which patterns are correct. They should also know that the liver nosed variant exists in the breed.

A judge who wants to judge a Ridgeback (it also applies to other breeds) needs to know the right way of approaching. Ridgebacks do not like a rude approach, direct eye contact, front approach. Ridgebacks is a short coat breed, so there is no need of too much touch. (Touch yes, massage no).

WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU ADMIRE MOST IN A JUDGE?

I admire the judges that love dogs first. I mean that they do not mind to play with a puppy if this helps to judge him, they do not mind to finish with some drools over the suit. Judges that still are breeders and exhibitors themselves and still enjoy every role.

I also admire judges that continue learning about dogs and breeds and have a criteria when judging. You can agree or not with their decision but you know what they are looking for.

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS MAKE A GOOD JUDGE IN YOUR OPINION?

A judge with always learning attitude, honesty and love for dogs.

WHAT DIFFERENCES DO YOU SEE IN THE JUDGES TODAY AS OPPOSED TO THOSE IN THE BEGINNING OF YOUR CAREER?

Well when I started, the judges were quite old and a lot of them already had the all-rounder status, but they had good knowledge about dogs, morphology and movement. They were long time breeders and well known in their breed. We have to consider they had no internet, so their learning was through experience and talks with breeders and other judges, books... They became judges because their passion for the dogs. Their knowledge helped the improvement of the breeds.

Nowadays I see younger judges that have also all-rounder status and I do not think they have the same knowledge than the old judges I have mentioned before. Internet is a good tool for learning and keep in touch with people, to look at videos about dogs and learn and share knowledge. Unfortunately, I think this kind of learning it is not widely used..

WHAT IS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE AS A JUDGE?

I have had really lovely appointments, but I still remember with lot of love when I went to judge the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club Show in Norway in 2014. The environment, the dogs, the people, the new way of giving awards as is not like the other FCI countries or like in my own country, I really needed the help of the steward to explain to me how it worked. I still remember my BOB (MultiCh.Kangelani Gentle Thanzi by Clay) and BOS (Ridgerules Show'n Tell), both outstanding Ridgebacks.

And recently, I have judged at the Rhodesian Ridgeback Championship Show of Great Britain, with an entry of 209 Ridgebacks! I had no words when the organisation told me, I had never judged so many dogs in a single day and it was a new system of classes and awards so I really thank the stewards for their help. The place of the venue was magnificent, nice people and lovely dogs. I found that Ridgebacks in Great Britain have slightly different heads from the Ridgebacks in Europe. They were consistent in type, nice colour, correct angulations, good fronts, both males and females had substance and elegance. Really nice ridges with nice width and length.

My BOB was IRCh Walamadengie Coco Chanelle and BOS Ch Sofala Joe the Lion. Really stunning Ridgebacks.

HOW HAS THE DOG SCENE CHANGED OVER THE LAST DECADES?

I think Internet has had a great influence in the dog world.

Thanks to it we can be in touch with people around the world and know what is going on in our breed or others. We can follow in an easy way the achievements of breeders, new litters, possible stud dogs. This enables people to improve their breeding and also improve the gene pool.

But on the other hand, with the appearance of the social networks, people's behaviour has gone for worst.

I am a lover of the websites, where you can read about the kennel, the dogs, the litters, achievements... Now those websites no longer exist but only Facebook pages which I don't like because it is more difficult to see pedigrees, information about the dog.

For me the dog scene years ago was more glamorous, more passionate, people had to really work to learn about the breeds, compete in the rings, organize meetings between breeders. There was more collaboration between breeders to improve their stock. Now there is lot of com-

petitivity. People think that champion titles make the dog better but we are mistaken. I have seen stunning Ridgebacks that don't go to any show and they can offer a lot to the breed. It is true that if they don't go to shows nobody knows about them, but you can always ask the breeders, I am sure they know about their rough diamonds and will share it with you.

HAVE BREED STANDARDS CHANGED VERY MUCH SINCE YOU BEGAN YOUR JUDGING CAREER? DO YOU SEE ANY DIFFERENCE IN RR OF TODAY COMPARED TO RR OF 10 YEARS AGO? IF SO, WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCES YOU SEE?

No, the standard of the Rhodesian Ridgeback has not changed.

Basically the breed has not change in 10 years, maybe I can say that I see taller Ridgebacks now than before, there are also less and less wheaten in the European rings, which is a pity. I know that dark red are more spectacular and people ask for this colour, but wheaten is in the breed standard and breeders must breed to maintain the breed and not for make money or win at dog shows.

WHAT IS THE GREATEST THREAT TO RR TODAY?

To not become a trend breed (unfortunately in some countries already is). That means less quality and more quantity. I would not like to see mediocre dogs in the rings winning and then used for breeding.

IT'S INEVITABLE THAT BREEDS WILL EVOLVE AND CHANGE SOMEWHAT AS NEW GENERATIONS OF BREEDERS TAKE CHARGE. HOW CAN THE ESSENCE - OR TRUE BREED TYPE - BE MAINTAINED?

Breeding for the standard and not for winning in the show rings.

It's necessary to maintain the functionality for what they were created. They were hunters so let them hunt and try to maintain this instinct.

I know lot of people is against hunting, I don't

*BOB Wa
Kishujaa
Dakari and
BOS Aminiafu's
Hishima
Henorr -Photo
of 25 years
Anniversary
Club ELSA
Show and
Specialty on
11th and 12th
of July 2015 in
Germany*



hunt but I love Ridgebacks, they are hunting dogs, so I must accept that they need to keep this instinct, something that goes also with type. It is not necessary to go hunting but it would be nice to train them in scent and then go for scent trials.

WHAT WOULD BE THE MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WOULD GIVE TO ALL SERIOUS YOUNG BREEDERS?

To observe, listen and keep quiet.

To have a mentor who has years of experience, mentor in the own breed and also in other breeds.

I am going also to give the same advice that I was given by an old breeder. Choose the image of the Rhodesian Ridgeback you think is the standard and attach to it. Don't breed by fashion, breed only by having in mind that image of the breed.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADD SOMETHING?

Dog shows is just another dog activity, have fun with it. You have the best dog and companion at the end of the show.

Enjoy, make friends, learn about the breed talking with other breed lovers.

Championships are nice for you, your dog doesn't mind about it, they go to dog shows because

they do everything we ask them. Let them enjoy themselves at shows but also with long walks in the forest, country, let them hunt, let them be just dogs!



INFO

Name **Moyano González**

Country **Spain**

Affix **Molema Mua Rôo**

www, Email

www.molemamuaroo.com
info@molemamuaroo.com