



**By Orit Nevo**

*Rich-Rach Rhodesian Ridgebacks*

The editors of The Ridgeback Register tell me that I probably traveled the longest way to attend this year's National Specialty in Lansing.

And in a way, this doesn't just apply to geography. Coming from an FCI country like Israel, my main reference point is Europe, and beyond that maybe the UK. The American system is somewhat alien, and that's why it is so exciting to experience its great annual event.

I have always felt that for the benefit of our breed, which we all love equally, the global Ridgeback community should "mingle" more. My first chance to experience the RRCUS National was in 2004, in conjunction with the World Congress in Texas. Five years later, I felt it was about time to see what was going on "across the ocean."

I think the major impression was the volume. Israel is a very tiny country with an even tinier dog scene. Even at larger European shows we are not accustomed to single-breed shows with 700 or so exhibits – and certainly not for a week-long event. The biggest club show in Europe takes two days (or one day with three rings). The big World or Euro shows might have some satellite breed specialties that are as big as the main show itself, but it is definitely not the same as a National Specialty.

On the first evening of the Specialty, it was such a pleasure to watch the veterans. And it was heartwarming to see how the audience showed its appreciation to those old nobles.

Needless to say, the Top Twenty competition was a *unique* experience. It is pure pleasure to watch those fabulous specimens, in great condition and with even greater show

# Lost in Lansing

## An Israeli fancier shares her impressions of the Specialty

attitudes, with their very skilled – and very well-dressed – handlers. Not to mention the unique selection of judges (one all-breed judge, one breeder-judge and one handler) and the way they and their assistants were dressed. The ballroom was the right place for this event – what a show!

The breeder seminar, with its three-generation demonstration, was educational and stimulating. It was very interesting to hear the considerations that led the breeders at their work, as well as the doubts that we all experience. As a member of the Education Committee of the Israeli Kennel Club, I have already seen to it that we will institute the same idea at our advanced kennel-club seminar. So thank you, Barbara Rupert, for a great educational event.

The reproductive and genetics seminar was another enjoyable event. Dr. Robert Hutchison is not only a skilled and knowledgeable veterinary surgeon, but a fascinating lecturer and performer. I can't recall any other time I found myself so swept up during a medical lecture ...

Unfortunately, Agility and Obedience were the only working trials I had a chance to see. Being a novice Agility participant myself (well, actually, Chetz, my youngest bitch, attends – I'm only trying not to be an obstacle ...), I was relieved to see that a Ridgeback is a Ridgeback wherever it is and the peculiar way they act isn't different overseas ... the same goes for Obedience.

And then there was the shopping. Yes, I know we come all this way for serious reasons like watching the progress of the breed and discovering new bloodlines. But, well, RRCUS shows have the best shopping opportunities when it comes to Ridgie merchandise. What a paradise!

Overseas visitors are always intrigued by the professional handlers and how they show their "clients" to perfection. No matter how many times I watch them, I always feel I can learn more about the craft of showing.

In the end, the winning dog really captured the eye and was a great ambassador for our breed. I really enjoyed watching him in the ring all the way to BISS. No doubt this dog could win anywhere in the world.

Which brings me to my final point. I'm not sure what should I call it, but perhaps the closest term is ... separatism. I feel that for such a huge show, with such a huge entry, and with so many breeders who care about the breed, there was a surprisingly limited number of imported dogs ... only a handful, really, from other continents. In FCI countries, you can find more curiosity regarding foreign bloodlines, new "resources" and an interest in what is going on overseas. Dogs from overseas, such as imports from Africa, America and Australia, are a center of interest.

To sum it up, I had five great days in Lansing. I met so many new friends, had a chance to talk to many breeders, had a proper look at so many dogs I didn't know, and celebrated a great Ridgeback event. I would like to thank everyone who was so kind to me, and I'm hoping to see some of you at the World Show in October in Bratislava.



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