

THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN'

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This world, off on its mad race, going faster and faster, and without a “stop” button, was suddenly brought to a halt by a microscopic virus. So here we are, forced to stay put and not to come within 2 metres of each other. Borders are closed, and, here in Quebec, where the virus has hit hardest among the elderly, even circulation between regions is constrained. Being confined is relatively easy. Restricting travel for essential supplies (dog and human) is fine too, but what will the return to normal look like? In the absence of a vaccine or remedy, will we be ready to face a world where the contagion will be with us indefinitely?

These upheavals will affect our economic and social activities, and it is not yet known how long the economy will take to recover. Will we witness a major recession? It seems that we are not ready to see a world before the pandemic.

Covid-19 and Wolfhounds

How will all of this affect the activities related to our dogs, our club and our breed?

The world is currently on “pause;” no more shows, lure coursing, or trips to visit dog friends; problems with exports or imports of puppies, and of frozen or fresh semen. Some breeders, who had booked plane tickets to worldwide destinations for their puppies, have had to stay home and wait weeks for borders to reopen. When international flights do resume normally, they will surely be fewer, more expensive, and still dedicated to the essentials. “All-breed” clubs will not be able to restart their activities before borders open, since judges, including regional and national specialty judges, most come from outside the country. As well, these events are typically held in arenas (currently a no-no). The situation I am describing now in mid-May could be completely different when you read these lines, but I hope that my thinking holds water and sparks yours. As I write this, dog competitions are very far down the list of essential services!

In the short term, after confinement ends and the borders reopen, will we be confident enough to show our dogs at indoor shows, where the safe distance of 2 meters can hardly be respected? One after the other, judges touch all

the dogs, and while we know that if dogs test positive for the coronavirus they cannot transmit it to humans, but they can be vectors (carrying the virus on their fur). This would be risky for judges and exhibitors. Outdoor shows, with a strict protocol to respect the recommended distancing, might be safer.

If the economic situation is as dire as economists and financiers predict, the world in a recession may no longer

be able to afford giant dog breeds. Will we see more wolfhounds in shelters for economic reasons? Planning litters will be all the more critical, and a litter of 10 won't necessarily be good news in the months to come.

What if, in the Long Term, Things Change for the Better?

What if telecommuting or online college and university learning persist beyond confinement? Will it allow people to stay at home more and use

freed commuting time for family and pets? What if confinement allows more people to know or rediscover simple pleasures like taking a walk? It's so much better with a dog! What if the cruel lack of contact with our friends and canine acquaintances makes competition in the ring, although always serious, less important than the pleasure of seeing people with similar passions?

Should We Rethink Canine Competition?

Should we rethink the role of our club in safeguarding our breed? If there are fewer litters of puppies for a while, due to health and economic uncertainty, should we encourage the freezing of semen from the best males at home and around the world, while waiting for free movement between countries?

We can hope that budgetary constraints will reduce puppy mill litters, which have greatly contributed to the number of dogs in shelters or in need of relocation.

In the absence of large and determinant kennels, should we be watching for the risk of a “bottleneck” in the gene pool, much like what happened during the great European wars?

As you can see, confinement allows time to question.. 😊

