



Sheepdog Wins America's Top Dog Model Contest

Old English Sheepdog becomes the first large breed to win the nationwide competition.

By Stephanie Brown

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The results of America's Top Dog Model 2009 contest are in, and for the first time in the contest's five-year history, the winner is a male and a large breed. Dudley, an [Old English Sheepdog](#), has taken the title after a five-month-long nationwide search.

Owner Stephanie Klein of West Palm Beach, Fla., says she isn't exactly surprised that 15-month-old Dudley was named the contest's winner. While she acknowledges that most people think their dog — or child for that matter — is "the cutest," when it comes to Dudley, she says it just might be true.



Dudley's winning photo
Photographs courtesy James Young

More than 100 other dogs joined Dudley to vie for the title of America's Top Dog Model 2009. The contest invites all dog owners who think they have "the cutest" dog to submit a professional photo of their pooch depicting a particular theme. A total of 12 finalists are chosen, some at live "casting calls." From that pool, a winner is selected.

This year's theme was "Go Gorgeously Green," and dog owners had to submit a photograph that illustrated what their four-legged friends are doing to reduce their [carbon "pawprint."](#)

"There are so many aspects of going green," says Jo Jo Harder, author and creator of America's Top Dog Model contest. "I just thought this would be a great opportunity to get that message out there and let dog owners know that they can also include their dogs in going green," Harder says.



Dudley with his owner, Stephanie Klein

Dudley was spotted at the Worth Avenue Pet Parade and America's Top Dog Model Casting Call held on March 14 in Palm Beach, Fla. The parade's "Best in Show" winner in each of the three size categories (small, medium, large) was named an America's Top Dog Model finalist. A panel of four judges selected Dudley, dressed in a black- and white-striped prisoner costume, as the winner in the large-breed category.

"He stole the show," Klein says.

Finalists selected at the live casting calls were still required to submit a photo in order to be considered in the running towards becoming America's Top Dog Model 2009. In May, a panel of three judges from the pet, fashion and photography industries selected the remaining finalists and then the winner.

Harder says Dudley won the title because, as a larger breed, he stood out among the other contestants. Judges also appreciated how he represented this year's "Go Gorgeously Green" theme, she says.

"The judges noticed him from the very beginning," Harder says.

In his winning photograph, Dudley is wearing a green neckerchief while sitting next to a green tote bag full of recyclable plastic bottles. Klein says she came up with the idea because Dudley likes to follow her when she takes the recycling out.

As the winner, Dudley's photo will be featured on the cover of America's Top Dog Model 2011 calendar. Additional prizes include a custom Austrian crystal crown, link collar, collar charms and an assortment of [eco-friendly products](#).

The eleven finalists receive an Austrian crystal collar from Buddy G's and will also be featured in America's Top Dog Model 2011 calendar and on the [website](#).

Winning the contest has encouraged Klein to pursue show business opportunities for Dudley. Klein, who insists she is not a "stage mom," says Dudley is already slated to appear in movie called "A Dog-Gone Tail: Destiny's Stand."

"It's almost as if all of these are indicators that it should be something we should pursue," she says.

And if it makes people happy to see Dudley either on the silver screen or say, on a bag of pet food, Klein says that would make her happy.

As for the future of America's Top Dog Model contest, Harder says she plans to stay with the green theme for next year. She is also shopping the contest around as an idea for a reality television show.