

With tremendous regret we must announce the cancelation of the 2020 Winter Blast Cluster. It was the unanimous decision of the board of Valley Forge Kennel Club with concurrence from South Jersey Kennel Club to take this step. Our perseverance to date was out of a sense of duty to the exhibitor community and a strong desire to provide an opportunity for those who rely on dog shows for their livelihoods, but recent events (detailed below) became overwhelming. This move was not made on a whim; it was well-considered and accepted only with great reluctance.

The Clubs have agreed to absorb the sunk costs of the Cluster (over \$12,000) in order to give **100% refunds of entry fees**. All payments for crating and RV reservations will be refunded (for credit orders) or shredded (for check orders). Rau Dog Shows anticipates completing the entry refunds by the end of the year.

There may be some who claim this was somehow planned in advance. We can assure them that the hundreds of volunteer hours that the committee members of both Clubs have invested in planning (in October and November alone, to say nothing of the work wasted in the early part of the year) as well as materials purchased in preparation of the cluster are not figments of our collective imaginations. The announcement of this decision after entries closed is the result of the time needed to work through our options – after recognizing that the cluster was in jeopardy – with the cluster committee, the Expo, MontCo OPH, Rau Dog Shows, and the boards of the Clubs. This much coordination took time to accomplish.

The reasons for our decision are pretty straightforward:

- With COVID-19 spreading in an uncontrolled manner in so much of the country and the increasing restrictions in many states, our judging staff began melting away Tuesday morning. Rebuilding the panels yet again in time for publication and mailing of the judging program would be completely beyond our capability.
- Assuring that out-of-state judges and staff could comply with the new 72-hr negative test requirement is beyond our ability to control. With more states requiring tests, the backlog and test result time will grow. Even if we could rebuild the panels there is a high risk that one or more judges would not have results in time to perform their assignments.
- Our security staffing would be less than ideal. Assuring everyone's safety is of utmost concern and to take risks in this regard is unacceptable.
- The likelihood of infections occurring at a Thanksgiving meal with incubation time causing individuals to become highly contagious during the cluster seems significant.
- The increasing levels of infection risk to our more senior club members has become unsettling. Pennsylvania reported more than 6,000 new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday with coronavirus hospitalizations nearing pandemic highs. The Secretary of Health warns that the state could run out of intensive care beds in December.

We wish you and yours a Happy Thanksgiving and look forward to a happier 2021.