

The benefits of using the electronic ballot

Work was done over the last few years by members of the Australian Terrier Club of America (ATCA) board of directors to modernize the by-laws to allow for, among other changes, use of email for official communication between the members and the board, as well as the ability to hold member votes using an electronic ballot. The changes to our by-laws were just approved by the AKC and ATCA membership earlier this year. This is exciting, as we now no longer need to rely on the US Postal Service (USPS) for the physical delivery of documents between members and the board. The procedure for handling documents (for example: membership applications) has been simplified, as they can now be emailed between our members and the corresponding / recording secretaries. This saves time and money (for paper, shipping, etc.) for both the member and our secretaries.

The change in our member voting procedure is even more exciting. Previously, our recording secretary would create the ballot and have enough copies printed so that each member would receive one. Three times as many envelopes would have to be used. A third of them would be labeled with the firm's name that would receive the votes and count them for the club. These envelopes were then stamped and placed in a second envelope. A third blank envelope and the ballot were also placed in the second envelope, which was then labeled with a member's address and stamped. When the member received their ballot, they would mark their choices on the ballot. The ballot was then folded and put into the blank envelope, and the member had to write "ballot" on the outside of the envelope. This envelope was then folded and placed in the stamped envelope that was labeled with the firm that was to count the ballots. If the member did not place their name on the outside of this envelope, normally as a return address, their ballot could not be counted. Once the ballots were counted, an official report was created with the number of ballots returned and a count of the results of the votes. WHEW! That was a lot of paper products, stamps, and time expended for each election or member vote!

Now let's talk about how an electronic ballot will be conducted. First, and this is done only once for each member, an electronic ballot (eBallot) authorization form must be filled out and signed. The signature can be done electronically, and the form, which was sent to the member via email, can be emailed back to the recording secretary. Once the authorizations are in place, an electronic copy of the ballot and a member list, including the members' email addresses, are provided to an electronic balloting firm. The firm sets up the ballot and emails a link and a unique code to each member. The member clicks on the link in their email, and it opens the firm's webpage and asks the member to enter their email address and unique code. Once these are typed in, the ballot opens. The member makes their choices and clicks SUBMIT. At the end of the voting period, the firm creates an electronic report that will be emailed to the recording secretary so they can inform the membership of the results. No Paper, No envelopes, No stamps, No USPS, and Very Little Time and Effort for everyone. Considering that only one of our 163 current

members doesn't have an email address, and I am sure that everyone that has an email has used their browser to shop online, there should be almost no one that cannot vote via an electronic ballot. It is a WIN-WIN for the club and its members alike!

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