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Montgomery County Kennel Club—the name conjures ideas of the cream of the terrier crop. It's a kennel club whose show has been restricted to terriers since the first show in 1928.

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## The Final Piece of the Week's Event: early October for Terriers at Montgomery

It's no surprise that the club's reputation for all-terriers-all-the-time has attracted the national specialty shows for numerous terrier breeds and multiple supported-entries in other breeds. The working class is offered more often in the terrier breed rings at MCKC than any other conformation show in the country.

Parent clubs and breeders see more than the beautiful dogs in competition at the show on that Sunday in October; they also see the function behind the form. Many of those same dogs who strut on Sunday participate in performance and companion sports beyond the breed ring. For the past decade or so agility, obedience and tracking have been offered by various organizations in the week preceding the conformation shows and more recently barn hunt



1997 Awards Presentation



1997 Master Earthdog Hunt



1997 Master Den Entrance

competition has been available. The Montgomery Terrier Agility Cluster was organized to coordinate the popular agility events during that pre-MCKC week.

But after the show-- that's when the terriers and their owners get down and get dirty. With the primping over the terriers are in their glory as functional underground workers, and their owners can dress down to their dirt-dog duds. Rain or shine, the terriers work in the dens and the owners get them there.

The concept of combining the weekend dog shows with the earthdog event is an old one, dating back to the early 1980's. Before there were AKC earthdog tests, there were American Working Terrier Association Den Trials, but in 1995 the purebred terrier fancy got serious about their working dog titles and the post-Montgomery AKC Earthdog Test began on an October Monday. It was so popular, that many people unofficially dubbed it "the National Earthdog Test".

The Monday earthdog tests were held in Central New Jersey, less than one hour from the current MCKC location in Blue Bell, PA, and barely more than 30 minutes from the earlier MCKC site in Ambler. They were popular from the start. The earthdog site was set up and provided by Village Green Farm Earthdog Center, Crosswicks, NJ, and the sponsorship of the test rotated from one parent club to another as each supported their members' participation and that of the other breeds, too.

Over the 20 years of annual support, the AKC parent clubs for the following breeds hosted this annual test day: Bedlington, Border, Cairn, Fox, Lakeland, Norfolk and Norwich, Parson Russell, Scottish, Welsh, and the West Highland White Terrier, plus the local earthdog club, the NJ Beanfield Earthdogs. Some of the parent clubs have done it multiple times with the West Highland White Terrier club leading.



1997 Resting and Crating Area

And the terrier fanciers responded! That first year, in 1995, the West Highland White Terrier Club, attracted 137 entries in just two regular classes: 101 in Junior Earthdog and 36 in Senior Earthdog. In that year no dog had yet become eligible to enter the Master Earthdog class. An unknown number of dogs entered the Introduction to Quarry non-regular class, but recollection has it that at least 40 dogs tried that beginner class. Often hot and tired after a long week of traveling and shows, terrier owners reveled in the concluding day of competition when 36 dogs took home qualifying scores. Among those breeds were Westies, Borders, Fox Terriers, Lakelands and one each Cairn, Norwich and Scottie.

That first year the post-Montgomery earthdog test attracted by far the largest earthdog entry in the U.S. and that massive support continued for the entire 20 years. Judges were hired from all over the country and from the background of many breeds and venue terrains. It was a huge melting pot of serious earthdog folks and new people from everywhere in the US. Many times foreign breeders who had come for the MCKC show spent one more day discovering how we Americans celebrate the working abilities of our terrier breeds.

Unfortunately, the Village Green Farm Earthdog Center closed and the last October earthdog test there was in 2014 and terrier fanciers mourned the loss. Other sites were considered, but none were located as conveniently as the NJ site. The Norfolk Terrier Club sponsored a post-Montgomery test in 2015 at Cove Spring Farm in MD, but that site terminated earthdog events in 2016 and no one sponsored a test in 2016 due to lack of a suitable location. The terrier community noticed and missed that closing event of their MCKC show week experience.

Fortunately for all terrier exhibitors, Ev-Ry Place in Mt. Laurel, NJ, is the newest earthdog venue and it is open for October earthdog testing! Located just a little more than an hour from the MCKC Blue Bell show site, Ev-Ry Place is a beautiful horse facility with wooded earthdog tunnel placement and plenty of parking. The West Highland White Terrier Club of America is once again leading the program by volunteering to sponsor this once-a-year special event on Monday, October 9, 2017. Plan to attend – if not to participate at least to watch!

