

2010 National Specialty Selection

On July 29th, the NEAA Board voted to select Kalamazoo, Michigan as the 2010 National Specialty site by a vote of 5-2. The site is well-suited for our needs, with plenty of room for conformation, social activities, and vendors all in one air-conditioned building. Since many members have voiced a desire to have multiple opportunities for points/majors at the specialty location, the specialty will be immediately followed by the Kalamazoo 4-day cluster where NEAA will support the elkhound entry. The board is also evaluating reducing the number of days for the National Specialty from 5 to 4 days. This provides 5 chances for points for every dog along with our usual specialty activities, while cutting down on expenses for everyone involved.

As many of you know, the selection process for this event has been long and tough for all of us responsible for making the final decision. President Schokker assembled a task force with members from across the country to create an improved process for future NEAA National Specialties at the Board meeting in May prior to the general meeting. Unfortunately, this year there was excessive speculation and misinformation “through the grapevine” concerning the selection process used for 2010. For the information of all NEAA members, a timeline and selection summary is given below. In addition to this information, the Board considered site layouts, contacted representatives of Breed Clubs that had previously used the sites, and had reports from members who visited the sites in person. The Board discussed these options in person, via two conference calls, and via email. All Board members presented valid and thoughtful reasons for their final votes. During the selection process, your Board members received a large number of hostile and sometimes threatening emails based on false and incomplete information obtained “through the grapevine”. I hope we can move beyond this and toward a positive future with our elkhounds. In particular, the NEAA, *your* organization, needs help from all members to put on an outstanding show – this duty can no longer rest on the shoulders of one person.

Selection Process

The NEAA Bylaws and Working Rules are available online at www.neaa.net. These documents form the basis of the governance of NEAA and guidance for the Board, and were followed for the selection process where they gave specific guidance.

The National Specialty is the responsibility of the NEAA (facilitated through the NEAA Board). All other surrounding shows, including Regional specialties, are the responsibility of the sponsoring organization (not NEAA). While having an event in conjunction with the National Specialty may be preferable to a portion of the membership, the job of the Board is to pick the location that is most appropriate for the National Specialty. During the last several National Specialties, the board has invited regional clubs to participate. In 2006 in Ohio, GCNEC held a regional specialty. In 2008, in Minnesota, NEAM chose to stay with their standard specialty dates and not attach a regional specialty to the National Specialty. For 2010, the board gave extra consideration into choosing a feasible location that also included an opportunity for additional shows. In the case of the chosen location in Michigan, NECSEM felt that the

hostility surrounding the selection process for 2010 would reflect badly on their club if they put in a bid and held a regional specialty in conjunction with the National Specialty. The final bid from Michigan was presented by individual NEAA members rather than NECSEM. Any member or club can submit a bid for the National Specialty.

Timeline

May 2006 – NEAA Regional Clubs are notified in writing of the rotation of the National Specialty with preference to the West in 2010 and are asked to consider submission of a bid. The request is also published for the general membership in the *NE News* in 2006 followed by articles about how to find a good site by the National Specialty Coordinator, Carol Slattery.

December 2006 – The NEAA Board begins to search for possible Western sites, with a focus on sites near the eastern edge of the regional in order to facilitate travel for all members. (note: the Ohio location was the Eastern location for 2006 – it was chosen on the western end of the region to facilitate travel for the central and western regions even though it significantly extended travel time for East coast members). NEAA was contacted by a facility in Utah that was encouraging use of their site for National Specialties. Carol Slattery began to accumulate information on this site with help from Milt Munson.

April 2007 – During travel to Sacramento for the 2007 National Futurity, several NEAA members visited the Utah site to report back to the board (reports were very positive). Director Milt Munson also is familiar with the site.

January/February 2008 – Carol Slattery is contacted by a California NEAA member about putting together a bid for the 2010 National Specialty at a location in California. Director Slattery provides the list of needed information and reiterates that the Board needs the information prior to their meeting in Minnesota in May 2008 where the National Specialty site for 2010 would be chosen.

April/May 2008 – No bid had been submitted by California prior to the Board meeting, so Director Slattery emailed the California contact (with follow up discussions by phone). The California contact then requested an additional few days for submission of their bid. The Board discussed the Utah site at their meeting, but agreed to allow California until the end of the week to submit their bid since this would still allow a vote prior to the banquet at the National Specialty.

During the general meeting held one day after the Board meeting, NEAA member Mary Albee voiced concerns over the board not choosing California for the specialty. This was supported by several others in the audience from the west coast. President Schokker responded that a bid must be received before the Board could select a location. Albee said they needed more time. Schokker extended the bid window for California and additional two weeks past the Friday of the National Specialty.

June 2008 – The Utah bid was retracted due to the considerable number of emails the board received saying that a California site should be chosen. No bid was received from California by the second extended deadline. As per the Working Rules, President Schokker then opened the bids to all locations with no further preference to a western location. Schokker contacted the California members involved in the formation of a bid to alert them that the bid was now open to all areas with a deadline two weeks later. A standardized form was sent to California and posted on the NEAA site. The notification was put on the NEAA website and sent to the enews member list (including regional club secretaries). Board members each began investigating a number of possible sites across the country. A number of these had high prices, or no longer had dates available during the National Specialty window for 2010. The final three bids are given in the next section for comparison.

Selection Summary

California bid

After full review by the Board, several board members brought up the question of the feasibility of the proposal from California. While certain aspects were very encouraging (shared cabins available, beautiful hotel, costs within reason for the area), several critical items were an issue. The California bid was discussed via conference call by the full board and was determined that it would not be a feasible alternative for the following reasons:

- **Show facilities:** The indoor facility size did not meet the minimum requirement of 7000 ft². Thus, the ring size and spectator space would be limited. Vendors would be located along an outdoor walkway. Obedience and agility would be held about a mile away. No other details were provided about the performance class requirements other than that California members could shuttle performance exhibitors to the ring locations.
- **Management/rooms:** References from another club holding a specialty at the grounds experienced serious problems with double booking of the cabins that resulted in exhibitors being without a room, or in a room that someone else had already been given a key to use. These conflicts were not resolved for 72 hours. The cabins are spread out and not air conditioned (temperatures can be quite warm in this area during the proposed dates). While the exhibitors liked the option of their dogs being able to have a private yard, they felt that there was not the usual common gathering place associated with their typical events. The walk from the cabins to the ring was also mentioned as a considerable distance.
- **Attendance:** With the bids opened up to all regions of the country, all had to be compared on equal basis for the number of likely attendees (and thus likely financial success). The California bid proposed a cluster of three regional specialties with the National Specialty. While this may help draw entries from a larger part of the country, it was felt that entries would be down overall. Many from the middle and eastern portions of the country would not be able to attend due to gas prices, or would only be able to attend with a limited number of dogs.
- **Cooperation with local members:** Local member help for coordinating with facilities is crucial for the success of the National Specialty. Hostile emails from

some of the local members to the Board were ongoing from May through July, even when a bid had not been submitted. The Board had serious concerns will the local members being willing to work with the NEAA Board for a successful show.

Final selection

A bid was received from individuals in Michigan (not from the regional club). The Utah bid was resubmitted when the bids were reopened since the Board considered it a viable option from the west. Both locations have large (on the order of 20,000 ft²) facilities where all NEAA events (including social events) could be held under one roof. Hotel choice could be left up to the exhibitors or as a reserved block if a hotel is used for the banquet. Items are summarized in Table 1 for areas where the two proposals differed. Both facilities offered free use of tables/chairs to help cut cost.

Table 1: Comparison of selection criteria

	Utah	Michigan
Building rental/day	Max. \$425 (without tents) outdoors and indoors	\$500 (all indoors and air conditioned)
Hotels	\$89-\$111 (no restaurants but continental breakfast); banquet on show site	\$80 without tax. Full service Holiday Inn. Awards banquet can be on site or at Holiday Inn
Agility	No local judges for agility or obedience; local club with equipment	Kalamazoo training building - \$90 for 4 hours; local equipment rental; many judges in the area
RV Parking	\$25 per day/on grounds	\$15 per day on grounds
Associated shows	None, but potential for regional specialty	4-day all breed same sight after National. Michigan club has option of regional
Member help	One non-member near site (attended MN national) and Board member within driving distance	Regional club plus individual members that put together proposal; several newer members involved
Secretary	needed	Needed, but local inexpensive options available

Respectfully submitted by Andrea Schokker and the NEAA Board