

## **European Puppy and Handler contest - Terms & Conditions 2024**

(Issued December 2023)

### **Title Expectations**

There are a few rules we've set, and a few expectations we've established, in order that the European Puppy And Handler Contest (EPAHC) be fair, and that the title be meaningful. It's a fantastic opportunity, and we want to make sure you're set up to make the most of it. These expectations are meant to help us help you.

### **Becoming a Titleholder**

Being a titleholder is a big deal. It's a chance to be something greater than yourself: to be a representative and advocate for the community you belong to. In holding a title, you join a large and growing global community of titleholders who share a common belief in the power of the individual to effect positive change and a common vision for a better world through the enjoyment of kink and fetish. That's why the title is bestowed by a community, and that's why the award ceremony includes other titleholders. The International Mister Leather and Mister International Rubber contests are the inspiration on which we drew.

The title isn't about you. It's about what you can offer to the community, and about what you can do for others. You never actually own the title. What you own is what you do with it, what you accomplish, and what you give. That's why when titleholders step down after a title year and hand the title over to their successor, it's done with ceremony: the community celebrates them and their accomplishments and welcomes new titleholders and their visions.

There is no fixed way to conduct yourself as a titleholder. There's no fixed look, or set of actions, or body type, or anything like that. Your projects are your own, and what you make of it is up to you: we want to see what's pawsome about you, and we want to see you shine as yourself. And more than anything, we want to see you step on stage at the end of your title year feeling exhilarated from having had an absolutely great time of it! However, there are minimum standards and expectations which we have set to help you throughout your year.

EPAHC is a platform which you can use to support and grow our community, and being elected provides you with that platform.

### **Election**

The election is held at the Darklands festival, the largest European indoor fetish festival, which takes place in the city of Antwerp / Antwerpen in Belgium annually with the day festival and markets open to all, and evening parties restricted to men. The election comprises different sections which are judged by a panel of community members, as well as voting online and at Darklands by the community. The sections include an interview in private with the panel, speeches and questions on stage, a demonstration of your pup / handler persona, and a performance.

Points are gained from our judges and the in-person voting at the election. The jury vote will comprise a minimum of 50% of the total score for the interview. The total received by each candidate will be

the total of all judges. The final scoring mechanism and tie-breakers will be determined by the head judge. Whilst the team appoints the judging panel, no members of the EPAHC team is allowed to be a jury member.

The voting process may contain an online vote prior to the contest, and will contain an in-person vote on the day of the election. Members of the community will be able to vote for their chosen candidate, with the exception of the judging panel and the EPAHC team. Candidates may wish to vote if they wish, but not themselves.

Results of the in person voting will be added with the online vote, if taking place, and added to the final total. Total votes are added as a percentage, in Eurovision style, to ensure fairness. Where an online vote is taking place, duplicate votes will be discounted. The EPAHC team reserves the right to cancel any online vote at any time if necessary. Such decision will not impact the final scoring.

In case of extreme and special circumstances, the in-person vote may be cancelled. If the decision is made to do so, the final scores will be based solely on the jury results.

### **What's expected from you**

You'll need to be a pup or handler, at least 18 years of age as of the day of the contest, living lawfully in the continent of Europe (as geographically delimited), Malta, Cyprus, or Israel throughout your title year. You do not have to be a current national (or regional) Puppy or Handler titleholder. You will be representing your country at the contest! You can be any kind of pup or handler you like – we welcome everyone of any gender! - please note that due to restrictions in stage timings, we may need to preselect. If so, current titleholders will be given priority, with only **ONE** contestant per country. Preselection will be determined by the Team if necessary, and after exhausting the criteria mentioned previously.

You'll need to commit to ten to twelve months of supporting the pup and handler community. This will include a lot of publicity, which will include your face, and lots of public events. We'll give you the support we can, and the rest is up to you. Not to worry, though, the events are a lot of fun!

You'll be encouraged to enter an international title contest at the earliest the year after your title year is over (i.e. you are elected in 2018, you will enter the international contest in 2019): International Mister Leather, Mister International Rubber, or the International Pup and Trainer Contest etc. This latter's important – it's your chance to shine across the world! You'll be expected to hold at least one fundraiser to raise funds for this trip, which you'll do with our help and support. We'll help you get there, and we'll help ensure you're well supported to do your best.

You'll be encouraged to support our sponsors. They donate their time and resources to the pup community and to creating and maintaining the title and its relevant events. Show them plenty of love. Should there be an issue with ethics, please contact the team directly.

You'll need to welcome and encourage other pups and handlers out onto the scene and into the community. This will range from the experienced pups and handlers who may appreciate new events and places to play, to the new pups or handlers who may be shy about appearing in public as pups / handlers and may need a friendly face and a helping paw to take their first steps.

These are just an overview of our broad expectations. They're meant to help us deliver a focused and exciting contest, followed by a year of supportive encouragement and leadership by the titleholders. And there's room for discussion in many areas – they're guidelines that are meant to help, and when in doubt, talk to us and we'll see if we can sort something out. Full terms and conditions are available below.

Get in touch with us if you'd like to chat about what's required. And beyond that, just be out there, be awesome, and be pup, be handler, be you!

### **Terms and Conditions**

These are the full terms and conditions for entering the competition and holding the European Puppy or European Handler title. Please note that we reserve the right to amend these terms and conditions as necessary, and that any current titleholder must agree to them in order to retain and use the title.

These terms and conditions apply to the 2024 title year onwards.

### **About Yourself**

You are at least 18 years of age as of the day of the election, and lawfully resident on the continent of Europe as geographically delimited, or Malta, Cyprus, or Israel.

You must participate in the full extent of the EPAHC which is held during Darklands festival in Antwerp, Belgium.

You are not a current titleholder of any type of fetish title (leather, rubber, fetish club, kink and fetish scene, etc.), with the exception of holding the national title for your country of residence (e.g. Puppy UK) which is permitted.

You have not previously held the title of Puppy Europe including Mr Puppy Europe.

You have not entered the contest already at least twice, and in consecutive years.

You identify publicly and willingly as a human puppy or a human dog or are a handler.

You are aware that in the contest and as European Puppy or European Handler, you are obliged to appear as yourself. Any clothing or gear worn must be able to reveal your identity. You, and images of you, will be publicised, and the candidate elected will be obliged to appear publicly as themselves. This includes your face.

You have a demonstrated interest in being a pup and in pup play (e.g. handler, dom, etc.), and an interest in working with and advancing the pet community, as determined by the judging panel.

You agree to appear on stage as your authentic self, minimum requirements are safety gear, pup mitts, kneepads, and appropriate footwear.

You will be living in Europe (or Malta, or Cyprus, or Israel) throughout your title year.

### **Your Title Year**

Your title year, if elected, will cover the period of the election at Darklands until the next election at Darklands.

You agree to represent Europe overseas at events where you appear as European Puppy or European Handler.

You are encouraged to wear your title regalia whenever appropriate, and to present yourself as a titleholder whenever relevant.

You agree that, if elected European Puppy or European Handler, you will return to the next EPAHC election the following year to hand over your title to your successor, and you agree that if asked, you may host, judge, or otherwise will take part in the administration of the contest.

You agree to permit on stage photographs and video recordings to be taken and used for any purpose deemed fit by the EPAHC Team, including Darklands as the host of the election.

You agree that, if elected, you are required to appear at relevant events, in gear and in role, and in a manner reflecting well on the title. At a minimum, you must attend five relevant fetish events across Europe during your title year, with relevant events determined by EPAHC Team.

You are required at all times to support our sponsors as they are aligned with our values and agree to refrain from supporting competing or conflicting events during your title year. Please check with the EPAHC Team.

If elected, you are expected to conduct yourself in a manner appropriate to the title, as determined by the EPAHC Team, throughout the subsequent year whilst you hold the title. You are expected to be a positive, active, and visible role model for the pet community.

If elected, you may not compete in any other title contest during your title year, though you are encouraged to attend other title contests in a supportive and non-competing capacity.

Being a titleholder can have an impact on your finances, you should be mindful of this. The EPAHC team is happy to assist you organise fundraisers.

### **Expectations of the titleholders**

Whilst the team believes that the elected titleholders should be running their title year as they wish, there are some guidelines which should be adhered to, as you will be in the spotlight throughout the year.

Communication is key! The team is there to support and assist you in your endeavours

1. The title, the team, and the community should not be brought into disrepute at any time.
2. You should follow the aims of the contest and title at all times.
3. You should act with integrity, openness, and accountability. Whilst we encourage titleholders to stand up for their beliefs, support for current issues should be in line with our ethos and values.
4. You should collaborate with your counterpart titleholder wherever possible, including but not restricted to hosting at least one joint event such as a class (online or in person), and/or, if possible host the annual Pup and Handler Fetish social, held during Fetish Week London.

5. Best efforts should be made to complete your project, which you would have presented at the election. The team is aware that things may change, so showing where you have made a clear and identifiable impact to the community will count towards this effort.

6. You may not enter any other title throughout your year such as IPTC, or any other titles around the world.

7. The sash and other items deemed part of the regalia are to be handed over upon stepping down.

8. The team is on hand to answer any questions you may have relating to your duties and how these are carried out. We ask that any decision made by the team is final.

### **Handover, Accession, and Vacancy**

During a title year, the title may be vacated under one of the following circumstances:

You are elected to another title contest during your title year, in which case the Team may decide at their discretion to ask you to vacate the title if they determine that holding the two titles simultaneously is impractical or undesirable.

You decide, or the Team determines, that you are unable or unwilling to fulfil the duties and expectations of a titleholder, in which case the Team may decide at their discretion to ask or allow you to vacate the title.

The Team determines that your conduct is unbecoming of a titleholder, in which case the Team may decide at their discretion to revoke your title or ask you to step down.

Should the title be vacated during a title year, the Team has the right to appoint a successor or caretaker to accede to the title. This will generally be done according to the following principles:

The runner-up and second runner-up from the previous election may be asked to accede to the title, in which case, upon mutual agreement between them and the Team, they will accede to the title.

Other contestants from any previous contest who placed or performed well may be asked to accede to the title, in which case upon mutual agreement them and the Team, they will accede to the title.

The Team may at their discretion appoint a person of their choice to accede to the title, in which case, in which case upon mutual agreement them and the Team, they will accede to the title.

Though in general the preferred order of succession will be the first and second runners-up, previous contestants with good placement or performance, and others chosen by the Team, it will not always be possible to follow this order and the final decision rests exclusively with the Team, who will always act in good faith and for the good of the title.

There is no automatic order of succession for the title, neither is there automatic entitlement for runners-up or second runners-up in the contest. All cases of vacancy are resolved at the discretion of the Team on a case by case basis. Whilst they will take into account all relevant circumstances, theirs is the final decision on the matter.

The handover of a title from one who vacates it to one who accedes to it will occur upon announcement by the Team. Where possible, the Team will arrange the regalia and applicable prizes to be handed over as well. Where possible, the Team will also arrange a handover ceremony. It may

not always be possible to conduct a handover ceremony or to hand over the regalia and all applicable prizes. In any case, the official handover is effected at the point of official announcement.

If you accede to the title during a running title year, you are entitled to use it and to present yourself as if you were the original elected titleholder, and the same expectations will apply.

Upon successful completion of a title year (or remainder thereof), you will thereafter be entitled to refer to yourself thereafter as previous titleholder Puppy Europe 20NN or Handler Europe 20NN. Though you may no longer present yourself as a current titleholder, you may thereafter present yourself as a previous titleholder.

A former title holder is not permitted to compete in a subsequent EPAHC elections, but is welcome to join as a spectator, host, judge, or in another non-competitive capacity. We do recommend previous titleholders join the team to run future contests at the discretion of the President and their senior team.

### **General**

The EPAHC Team and Darklands team retain the rights over, and responsibility of maintaining, the title. They maintain the title and contest at all times.