

Holyrood Dog of the Year – and the winners are...

Christine Grahame won the coveted title with her borrowed dog Mabel. Pam Duncan-Glancy and Tony were in second place and in third place was Clare Adamson MSP accompanied by her Dogs' Trust rescue dog Ollie the Cockapoo.

Mark Russell MSP with Bluesy won the Paw-pular vote open to the public.

A panel of judges including Jeremy Balfour MSP, whose dog won the title in 2019 when the event was last held, decided on the winner of the hotly contested title outside The Scottish Parliament on Monday morning. The competition is organised by the two dog welfare charities, The Kennel Club and The Dogs' Trust, who also hold the same competition in Westminster.



Holyrood Dog of the Year 2022 – won by Christine Grahame MSP with her borrowed dog Mabel PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter



Holyrood Dog of the Year 2022 – won by Christine Grahame MSP with her office manager's dog Mabel PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh

Reporter

Mabel is a one-year-old German Shorthaired Pointer owned by Ms Grahame's office manager, Emma, and the dog regularly joins Teams meetings "whether invited or not". Her photo is shared among the parliamentary family on WhatsApp offering regular updates on her latest antics. Ms Grahame explained that she is "Auntie Christine" to Mabel and has watched her progress even before she came to live with her owner as they had photos and video direct from the breeder.

Ms Grahame said: "Mabel has had the best start in life – but of course she is now in charge."

It is Christine Grahame who has introduced the Welfare of Dogs Scotland Bill in The Scottish Parliament. This legislation will require anybody acquiring a dog to pass a kind of legal test confirming their family circumstances and home arrangements before buying a dog. She hopes it will also include an affordability test. She said: "Remember this could be 15 or 16 years of your life but you will be wholly rewarded if you build the right relationship. Don't buy puppies from the internet, or from puppy factory farms. All that happens there is that the poor bitches are made to breed over and over again and the dogs are not well."

The bill is only a proposal at the moment, but Ms Grahame believes she has enough signatures to proceed with the new legislation to regulate and promote responsible dog ownership. She already had the bill prepared during the last parliament which did not proceed due to lack of time, so this one is ready to proceed quite quickly. She hopes to have it passed within a year, but meantime she warns against buying a dog without a lot of thought and planning. She said: "There are too many Covid puppies being returned to rescue centres now."

Lothians MSP Miles Briggs had borrowed his sister's rescue dog Tomás which came to Scotland from Spain. He said: "I would love to have a dog but I live in an apartment, and doing this

job I just don't think it would necessarily be fair. Anyone who owns a dog sees the love they bring – especially when you are stressed they help to take that away. I am his favourite uncle and he knows when I come to visit that I will bring a toy or a bit of chicken.”

Sue Webber MSP has a four month-old Hungarian Vizsla puppy called Alfie and she shares the doggy daycare with her partner. She said: “Parliament can make some days particularly challenging, but when you come home to this you can imagine the energy and love in the house. It makes it so much easier to switch off. My sister comes to puppy school with Alfie and me – she is a great help and it makes a big difference when there are so many people on hand. It has become a bit easier in the last few weeks but it has not been the easiest few months what with an election campaign on top, but Alfie is loving it this morning – he is very sociable and friendly.”

With the boom in dog ownership during the pandemic, this year the event focused on promoting responsible dog ownership, making sure that, alongside the joys of having a dog, owners recognise the responsibility they have to ensure that their pet is a positive member of the community and is able to live a happy and healthy life. Additionally, the competition encourages an open dialogue on dog welfare issues, as well as providing an opportunity for MSPs to meet with experts to discuss all aspects of the canine world.

Owen Sharp, Dogs Trust Chief Executive said: “With the last Holyrood Dog of the Year taking place in 2019, it is wonderful to be back in Edinburgh to celebrate our canine companions. Choosing a winner is never easy as there is no doubt all the dogs are winners, but congratulations to Mabel and Christine Grahame MSP who stood out because of their great work in Parliament together. Thank you to all the MSPs and their devoted dogs for taking part and for making this year's event so memorable.”

Bill Lambert, Health, Welfare and Breeder Services Executive at The Kennel Club added: “Congratulations to Mabel and Christine Grahame MSP for winning the crown of top dog and their companion at Holyrood today. It was a difficult choice as all the MSPs and their dogs were worthy winners and the competition is a fantastic way to raise awareness of the issues currently affecting man’s best friend.

“We were delighted to meet Mabel, who was a great example of a dog that has been responsibly sourced through a Kennel Club Assured Breeder, and she wowed us with her friendly and affectionate temperament.”



Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP with Tony who won second place in the Holyrood Dog of the Year 2022 PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter











