

Parson Russell Terriers 'Go to Ground' for Purina Event Center

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Befittingly, Purina turned to the experts -- a team of Parson Russell Terriers - to help break ground today on a \$10 million, world-class indoor dog show facility being built at Purina Farms in Gray Summit, Mo.

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20090430/CG09192-a>)

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20090430/CG09192-b>)

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20090430/CG09192-c>)

The highly-energetic, enthusiastic terriers joined Nestle Purina PetCare President Terence Block at a groundbreaking ceremony near the future home of the 84,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility. Following their instincts, these terriers "went to ground," digging furiously in a sand pit strategically placed at the construction site.

"Today, we're excited to celebrate an important investment in Purina's future and another long-term commitment to the breeder-enthusiast community," Block told about 100 people attending the event. "I'm proud to say that Purina will be the first pet food manufacturer to provide an indoor venue that can fully accommodate the range of requirements necessary for a national specialty."

On hand for the ceremony were members of the St. Louis dog fancy: Barnstable Norwich Terrier and Norfolk Terrier breeder Sandra Stemmler, Broughcastl Pug breeder Doug Huffman, and Gaylord Pembroke Welsh Corgi and Norwich Terrier breeder David Guempel. Barbara McNabb, Director of the AKC Museum of the Dog, also attended the ceremony.

About 50 owners and handlers, who had come to Purina Farms for the Gateway Cluster, which begins Friday, May 1, watched the ceremony from bleachers with their purebred dogs. The three-day cluster, made up of the Spirit of the Heartland Kennel Club, Jefferson County Kennel Club of Missouri and St. Louis Dog Breeders, is the first all-breed dog show to be held in 2009 at Purina Farms' outdoor venue.

Brock Fitzgerald, Director of Purina Farms and the new Purina Event Center, said, "As many of you know, we've hosted outdoor dogs shows and events for about 15 years - as many as 70 each year. I've been privileged to meet and work with a lot of dedicated people in the dog world - many of whom are here today. To say we're thrilled about the fall 2010 opening of our world-class indoor Purina Event Center is an understatement."

Cledith "Clete" Wakefield, President of the Spirit of the Heartland Kennel Club and Delegate to the American Kennel Club, said, "As our first Gateway Cluster of the year gets under way this weekend, we are expecting about 1,200 entries. In two years, when the spring show moves indoors, we expect that number to increase to 1,800 to 2,000 entries. We are very excited!"

Following the groundbreaking ceremony, visitors toured the grounds of the future home of the Purina Event Center and attended a dog show at the Purina Arena at the Purina Farms' Visitors Center. Three hundred schoolchildren had come on field trips to see the Pro Plan Performance Team perform agility and flying disc, and debut a new dog diving facility.

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The Purina Event Center, scheduled to open in fall 2010, will accommodate thousands of dogs and their owners and handlers at conformation dog shows, obedience and agility trials. The facility will complement existing venues at Purina Farms for outdoor dog shows, lure coursing, agility, obedience, herding and earthdog trials. Purina Farms is located about one hour from downtown St. Louis and the Lambert-St. Louis International Airport.

To learn more about the Purina Event Center, please visit www.purinafarms.com or contact Brock Fitzgerald at 1-888-688-PETS (1-888-688-7387), or by e-mail at brock.fitzgerald@purina.nestle.com.

Nestle Purina PetCare promotes responsible pet care, community involvement and the positive bond between people and pets. A premier global manufacturer of pet products, Nestle Purina is part of Swiss-based Nestle-S.A., the world's largest food company.

First Call Analyst:

FCMN Contact:

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SOURCE: Nestle Purina PetCare Company

CONTACT: Keith Schopp of Purina PetCare Company, +1-314-982-2577

Web Site: <http://www.purinafarms.com/>
