

Evaluation of Breeding Stock

When I am asked what judging purebred dogs is all about, my answer is always: judging is, purely and simply, the evaluation of breeding stock.

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So today we find smaller kennels, mostly as part of the household which is great for the young dogs being produced. They are socialized earlier and can therefore be placed in homes at a younger age. Testing for heritable diseases has become the norm, and what a blessing has come to us from the veterinary profession! Our dogs are healthier and live longer because of these changes and then we have dog foods that are designed for the above-mentioned longevity and health.

But I digress. The purpose of dog shows is to evaluate breeding stock, and that is what we judges attempt to do, week in and week out.

The game for me is, will the next class produce the once-in-a-lifetime dog? It's like questing for gold, or a pearl in an oyster. Finding those specimens that exude breed type that is, they mirror beautifully what the breed was bred for, have superb temperaments and are strong where the breed needs help at this point in time.

Many of these pearls, discovered in the past, went on to great show records, but more importantly went on to great producing records remember, "evaluating breeding stock!" We had the great Boxer, Ch. Bang Away of Sirrah Cresta great producer. We had the Dobe, Ch. Rancho Dobe's Storm. We had the lively Toy Poodle, Ch. Wilber White Swan, top-producing Poodle for all three varieties for some time. In later years we saw the likes of Ch. Ttarb the Brat, the Smooth Fox Terrier a top BIS winner who still holds the breed record for champions produced. Also there was the Pointer, Ch. Marjetta's National Acclaim, and the Springer, Ch. Sailyn's Condor all of these with show records and producing records.

And what of today? We have perfectly wonderful dogs that win many shows but either they do not produce the quality that won them the top spots, or are they are not being given the opportunity to prove their worth for the generations to come. What could be the reason for this? Are the owners unwilling to share their top specimens with others of like interest? I cannot believe this to be true. Because of the heritable diseases that abound in purebreds, are owners unwilling to take the responsibility of standing a dog at stud?

Are the persons in charge of conditioning and showing these outstanding dogs unwilling to have the dogs used at stud for fear of upsetting the dog; having it go "off his feed?" I do think that this is a possibility, but also feel that the dog can be trained into a mindset where he will take his duties as a matter of course. White Swan, the Toy Poodle, always won at least one Best in Show that weekend if he bred a bitch on the way to a weekend of shows (we did not have clusters then). For him it was luck! Has the urge to have the top-producing dog of your breed become something that people can take or leave? Is it too much trouble, too much responsibility, or not worth the time and effort?

It makes my job look hollow. I am evaluating breeding stock that no one is going to use. What a bummer.

I'm glad that Mick's (Ch. Torum's Scarf Michael, the great Kerry Blue Terrier) owners don't feel that way.

Till next time... Comments and questions welcomed.