

## Evaluation of Breeding Stock

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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.

This is a wonderful way to start a good, in-depth discussion of the purpose of our sport that has grown and prospered for many, many years. Remember that the Westminster Kennel Club is the second-oldest sporting event in the U.S., topped only by the Kentucky Derby.

Originally the sport was dominated by men who gathered together, with their dogs and with knowledgeable persons on hand who provided the judging duties, in order to improve their stock, exchange ideas and knowledge, and generally participate in a day of sport and companionship. The idea caught on, all over the world, and more and more the interest deepened, the competition became tougher and ladies entered the sport.

Sporting dogs were bred for bird-finding abilities, structured suitably for hunting in deep cover, light cover, open fields and lakes, streams and waterways, and colors appropriate for being seen as they worked. Guard dogs and shepherds were bred along their working lines, Hounds the same, and Terriers for their varmint-dispatching ability. Toys were bred for their temperaments and use as housedogs and pets. While Non-Sporting was a catch-all word for those breeds that did not fit the template of the others, they still were bred to conform to the written word of their standards of excellence.

Time marched forward; large kennels were dedicated to the various breeds for which they were noted.

Dog shows became a way of life for man and beast. They prospered through good financial times and not so good and they survived wars. Today the sport continues, at least as far as its popularity is concerned. Gone, for the most part, are the large kennels who can find the help to run them? And what a pity this is, as the large kennels produced more dogs than they needed, in order to hold sway in the rings and in the hunting and herding trials.