

Breeding Dogs in the 21st Century

Today's dog breeder faces more obstacles than ever before.

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Sometimes several of these step breedings were made in order to arrive at a point where the individuals that were eventually produced could be brought together to accomplish a particular goal. The show ring was usually far from consideration for those breedings. If something appeared in the resulting litters that merited being shown, fine, but that was not the goal. The aim was to make the individuals that would produce what was being sought. Space and number considerations are obstacles for today's breeder doing likewise, but I fear lack of patience is an even greater handicap. I fear the more typical scenario today is more apt to be: breed what you have, keep what you get, show what you keep, regardless. In case no one has noticed, it is a great deal more difficult to accomplish one's goals by breeding a single litter every year or two than it might be if the breeder has access to a number of brood matrons of high quality and complimentary but diverse bloodlines.

But as is so often said, all that was then and this is now. How, then, do we achieve goals under the restrictions that the outside (and inside!) impose upon us? The answer is relatively simple every breeding must follow careful analysis of what has and has not worked. Mentor those who have tried and tested bloodlines are more important today than they have ever been.

Admittedly, I have in the past betrayed my own experience and made a breeding or two simply "because." And in some respects, at least on one occasion, the results brought success, but the success began and ended right there. I had given myself no stepping stone for the future.

Contemporary breeders progress much more slowly if establishing a reliable breeding program is their goal. Those who breed simply to produce something they can win with do not operate under the same handicap. The real breeder sees results of lesser quality than previously attained as a loss. It really doesn't matter to the "win at all costs" fellow whether the new dog is less than or better than what he had before is of little consequence, just as long as what he has can win.

What's Good For the Goose...The old adage "What's good for the goose is good for the gander" implies that what works well in one instance is going to work in all others. Was that always the case in breeding dogs? Some combinations work for one breed and not for the next. Even within a breed what may not work in one line may work in another.

My first breed was the American Cocker Spaniel. The breeding programs I constructed for myself and others were pretty much consistently based on two combinations half-brother and sister breedings, and grandson or granddaughter bred back to grandparent. From these combinations came offspring that went on to found several highly successful breeding programs that produced quality for generations to come. Because of the early success I had I never really stopped to consider specifically which of those combinations was most successful in the long run.