

## Dog Fanciers in Europe

**European registries insist on soundness as well as beauty in breeding stock.**

*Alison Strang*

Posted: Thu Apr 1 00:00:00 PST 2004

In these three Scandinavian countries, along with Denmark (membership 26,000 in the Dansk Kennel Klub, or DKK, in a population of 5.2 million), one can find superior specimens of many dog breeds. International dog shows in this region routinely draw 8,000 entries.

In 2002, the first year that dogs from the European Union competed at the British canine showcase Crufts, the ultimate Best in Show winner was a Norwegian bred and owned white Standard Poodle, Nord. Ch. Topscore Contradiction. The 2003 Crufts Gundog Group winner was a Flat-Coated Retriever from Sweden, Int. Ch. Inkwells Named Shadow.

Germany is a law unto itself in many ways, dogs included. The German system of clubs is mind-boggling, but suffice it to say that the German Kennel Club (Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen, or VDH) is the overall governing body for Germany, but does not maintain breed records. The VDH is an organization of groups of dog clubs, both for conformation and working ability. No individuals are members of VDH, but belong to some of the many German clubs, which exercise strict regulations for all aspects of purebred dogs, including which animals may be bred.

Litters are inspected by a Breeding Committee (Zuchtwart) appointed by umbrella clubs for groups of dogs. For instance, all retriever affairs are governed by the German Retriever Club (Deutscher Retriever Club), which issues pedigrees for all retrievers, with each breed having a specific Zuchtwart.

Toller breeder Silke Sandberg, of Kaufering, Germany, says: "To register a litter the breeder has to be a member of DRC with dogs whose pedigrees are accepted by FCI. The dogs have to go through tests for temperament, obedience, conformation, and retrieving, and health checks for hips, elbows, and eyes are required. The breeder has to attend two breeder seminars and his premises are inspected by the Zuchtwart. Special conditions may be specified, e.g., if the bitch has not passed a hunting test, the breeder must choose a stud dog with a hunting title. No breeder is allowed to have more than two litters within one year, and no bitch is allowed to have more than three litters unless the litters are very small. Age limits are also set for breeding stock." France, Switzerland, and Italy also have large canine populations with corresponding kennel clubs, and many other European countries also support active clubs. The German dog fancy is not the only one in Europe with controls exercised either by the national kennel club, or some of the group breed clubs working under the national umbrella.