

Dialogue with Breeders

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Temperament Selection in Pups

(Don Turnipseed, Hunting Airedale breeder)

“I don't handle the pups until they are four weeks old and getting their legs under them. By not conditioning them from day one, I can tell, in order, the most confident to the least confident. Conditioning is of little benefit to a confident pup. It is everything to less confident pups. After I have figured out which are which, I spend my time with the less confident ones. Mind you, they will “always” be less confident. Actually, it is these pups that work the best in 95% of the home situations. Most homes have something of a routine. After a very short time, a pup is familiar with the home and yard and can appear very confident. In an unfamiliar place, such as a dog park, it just takes them more time to feel comfortable again. They make great pets. They are far less likely to want to roam the neighborhood and will stay at home. We just don't want to confuse less confident with spooky. Spooky can be in a class of it's own. The ultra confident pup that come right to me and enjoy being with me (more dependent) at 4 weeks are the ones that go to things like protection, retrieving, and other heavily trained activities. The ultra confident ones that come up to me, say hi, and are off and running (more independent) are the true fur hunters that will range out on their own and get the job done because there is little training involved. These independent dogs are great for things where little or no training is the key.....but they are not likely to stay home without an electric fence!”

Working Selection Simplified, Old School Approach

(Al Kranbul, hunting Airedale breeder)

Airedale performance breeder selection summary:

Overly aggressive toward other dogs, OUT!

Overly aggressive toward people, any tendency to bite a person, OUT!

Scatter-brained, mentally retarded, can't sit still for a minute, too hard-wired, OUT!

Shy, skittish, afraid of their own shadow, OUT!

The Hump. When it comes to a hunting dog, I will assume nothing. They will have to show me! I have seen far too many dogs with supposedly can't miss pedigrees that ended up being sorry. First I introduce to game and check for bred instincts needed by a hunting dog and to see if there is enough

potential to mess with. I look for a desire to hunt, good nose, tracking, locating and treeing, grit, etc.

Ability. For the ones that get over the hump, I get them in the woods on wild game and hunt them hard. I let them have a chance to show what they are made of. You then can separate the pretenders who want to be and think they are a hunting dog, from those that ARE hunting dogs and do good work on a consistent basis by putting game in the bag. The ones that show they can get it done, are the ones that get bred. Nothing revolutionary here, old school stuff that I learned through experience and from picking the brains of old timers that produced winners. The key is sticking with it. Evaluating pups is not a heck of a lot different than a little league coach looking over a bunch of 10 year old boys playing ball for the first time. If you know what to look for, it's easily seen. The talent will rise to the top with time and it will be apparent who can throw, hit and run and stand out doing it. I evaluate pups much the same, I will take them afield at ten to twelve weeks old and set them up to show me what they were born with. I always use real animals to test dogs, either fresh intact dead, or live in roll cages. I will lay simple short scent trails, put out live animals, put them up in trees to check treeing, etc. I will walk the pups through these setups without doing or showing them a thing myself. I am looking at how they react naturally. After doing these types of drills for many years and watching hundreds of young dogs, I know what kind of reactions I am looking for. Like the young ball players, there will be those that will stand out and you know with the right kind of experience and work, they will be good. By the same token, there will be some that all the coaching and training in the world is not going to help a whole lot."

When I contacted Al to get permission to quote him here, he mentioned a poll of dog oriented hunters (all breeds) that he had conducted on the Internet regarding the one worst fault a hunting dog could have. Of the responses, 1973 listed aggressiveness as the worst, 1528 listed shyness/timidness, 688 listed poor nose/inability to track, and all other responses 598.

On soundness selection

(David Post, Texter Terriers) One of my pet peeves as a breeder is the apparent lack of understanding by some breeders of the genetic nature of fundamental characteristics. "Lack of understanding" is a better explanation than "win at all costs" which is the other potential explanation for the decisions of some show breeders. When a dog has an obvious fault, one that a complete novice can identify from across the room(!), and yet it is routinely "fixed" or hidden in order to compete at dog shows, breeders do the

breed a great disservice by using such dogs for breeding. Gay tails, bad ears, bad bites are now routinely “fixed”. Yet, the next generation has those same problems. And worse, when one of the next generation becomes a big winner, he is widely used at stud, and the whole breed has the same problem, again, one that the complete novice can identify without help. “Fixing” hurts the breeding program and the breed. A corollary to this is the direct selection for characteristics that are fundamentally unsound or that lead to such characteristics. Show- bred Scotties, like Bulldogs and many other breeds, now routinely require c-sections for pup delivery. Breeders haven't seemed to have discovered that uterine inertia is a genetic trait. So is too big heads, too small hips, and males that require help to copulate, and lack of milk, and small litter size. Breeders should be selecting based on reproductive and other soundnesses, not just conformational traits. Puppy mill breeders select for reproductive soundness, do you? (See “Methods for Breed Associations”, above).

Twenty Basic Breeding Principles By Raymond H. Oppenheimer

(Ray Oppenheimer was a widely respected and outstanding breeder of Bull Terriers. His list of 20 breeding principles has been widely reprinted due to its fundamental wisdom. This version is reprinted from Ernest Eberhard's The New Complete Bull Terrier, 1971,1959)

“There are a vast number of different breeding methods, some good, some bad. I should never presume to try to tell fanciers what is the right method because there is no such thing. Outstanding success can be achieved and has been achieved in a variety of different ways, so all I am going to do is to make some suggestions which I think helpful and to warn against certain pitfalls which trap too many of the unwary.

- Don't make use of indiscriminate out-crosses. A judicious out-cross can be of great value, an injudicious one can produce an aggregation of every imaginable fault in the breed.
- Don't line breed just for the sake of line breeding. Line breeding with complementary types can bring great rewards; with unsuitable ones it will lead to immediate disaster.
- Don't take advice from people who have always been unsuccessful breeders. If their opinions were worth having they would have proved it by their successes.
- Don't believe the popular cliché about the brother or sister of the great champion being just as good to breed from. For every one that is,

hundreds are not. It depends on the animal concerned.

- Don't credit your own dogs with virtues they don't possess. Self-deceit is a stepping stone to failure.
- Don't breed from mediocrities; the absence of a fault does not in any way signify the presence of its corresponding virtue.
- Don't try to line breed to two dogs at the same time; you will end by line breeding to neither.
- Don't assess the worth of a stud dog by his inferior progeny. All stud dogs sire rubbish at times; what matters is how good their best efforts are.
- Don't allow personal feelings to influence your choice of a stud dog. The right dog for your bitch is the right dog, whoever owns it.
- Don't allow admiration of a stud dog to blind you to his faults. If you do you will soon be the victim of auto-intoxication.
- Don't mate together animals which share the same fault. You are asking for trouble if you do.
- Don't forget that it is the whole dog that counts. If you forget one virtue while searching for another you will pay for it.
- Don't search for the perfect dog as a mate for your bitch. The perfect dog (or bitch) doesn't exist, never has and never will!
- Don't be frightened of breeding from animals that have obvious faults so long as they have compensating virtues. A lack of virtues is far the greatest fault of all.
- Don't mate together non-complementary types. An ability to recognize type at a glance is a breeder's greatest gift; ask the successful breeders to explain this subject—there is no other way of learning. (I would define non-complementary types as ones which have the same faults and lack the same virtues.)
- Don't forget the necessity to preserve head quality. It will vanish like a dream if you do.
- Don't forget that substance plus quality should be one of your aims. Any fool can breed one without the other!
- Don't forget that a great head plus soundness should be another of your aims. Many people can never breed either!
- Don't ever try to decry a great Bull Terrier (or Airedale). A thing of beauty is not only a joy forever but a great Bull Terrier (or Airedale) should be a source of aesthetic pride and pleasure to all true lovers of the breed.
- Don't be satisfied with anything but the best. The second best is never good enough.