

SPORTING GROUP

Brittanys

WHY?

Do you want a Brittany? Do you want to raise a litter of Brittany puppies? Let's look at these questions with the welfare of the breed in mind.

Why get a Brittany?

- Because it is a nice, medium size. True, but it is far less restful than many dogs twice its size.

- Because it will be good with the children. More or less, but it will get bored with repetition, won't dress up in doll clothes and can knock a toddler over on its way to a bird.

- Because it will be a guard dog. Wrong! It will *never* be a guard dog. Perhaps a watch dog; it will happily watch most things.

- Because it is a low maintenance housedog. True, a Brittany loves being in the house and its coat care is minimal, but without adequate (meaning a lot of)

physical and mental exercise, it is a bundle of nervous energy.

- Because it will be a

great show dog. Maybe, if you are lucky and it cares to be a show dog; most do not. It may tolerate showing enough to finish, but the quintessential Britt does not find showing challenging enough to keep it amused.

- Because it will be a great field trialer. Hopefully true. At least you and your Britt will have a wonderful time trying. .

- Because it will be your very own hunting

companion. Now you're talking their language! All Brittanys agree that hunting is fun, be it grouse in New England, bobwhite in Illinois, pheasant in Kansas or chukar in the Northwest.

Hunting is why a Brittany is.

We do not have, as do other breeds, show puppies and pet puppies in a litter. All Brittanys are and should be pets. Some may be field trial or show prospects, but all are hunting dogs. They belong with people who feel and think, as they do, that the great outdoors is truly great and is the best place to spend a good part of one's life; between hunts, a soft couch or an owner's bed is acceptable.

Do you still want a Brittany? Great! On its terms, a Brittany wants you. Now about that litter you want raise. Why?

- To make money? Wrong! Brittanys are notoriously low-priced, which is at least good for the breed, if not your pocketbook. When someone pays too much

they expect too much and fail to give the pup a chance.

- To get a dog just like Dad's? Unlikely! Go back to the breeder and get one from the same bloodlines. Your dog may be the apple of your eye but—a big but—may not pass on its qualities. Outcrosses seldom do.

- To have fun raising puppies? Think again! Sure puppies are cute, but equally sure they are a lot of work. Even after all the work, you are not through with the headaches. Brittanys have six to 12 puppies. Even if you plan to keep a couple, that leaves four to 10 to place. You and maybe even your hunting companion know the worth of your Brittany but the world will not beat a path to your door.

Finding *good* homes for puppies from well-known sires and dams is not easy. From relative

unknowns, it's extremely difficult. If they are all well placed, remember that as a conscientious breeder you stand as their godparent for their entire life and must be willing to take back and place anew (if you can) any dog in need of protection.

Maybe you have a show champion. This should make it easy to place the puppies. Wrong! Unless they have a proper field background, the market is not there. Don't feel bad; it is one of the best protections of the breed.

Time and again people say. "I admire the Brittany. It is not a split breed. The dogs in the show ring, the dogs in the field trials and the hunting companions are all from the same source." It is indeed true and to the credit of Brittany owners and breeders, but requires eternal vigilance to maintain.

Field trial dogs must still be bred to meet the conformation standard. Show dogs should not exist just to get the most BISs or group wins. Going Group I by beating a Lab or a Cocker does nothing for the welfare of our breed. Being the best Brittany is what it is all about—show, field and *dual*.

Buy a Brittany or raise a litter, but don't do it lightly or for the wrong reason. A great breed deserves great devotion to its welfare. The Britt is truly a great breed.

Don't forget the American Brittany Club national specialty. The National .Amateur starts November 21, the specialty is November 26 and 27 and the National Open starts November 28.
—*Dorothy Macdonald.*
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