

## **IS THE BRITTANY A DUAL-PURPOSE DOG?**

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Guest Editorial

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My original interest in the Brittany Spaniel developed from an impression that they could do more things easier and quicker (with less training!) than any other breed. This early impression has proven to be a fact. During the post-war years we have enjoyed many a meal of quail, duck, goose, rabbit and dove, all secured with the help of the Brittany. One Brittany has become such an excellent guard dog for the children, that Barbara and I do not even enter their room at night without first calling the dog.

Whenever Brittany people gather, the discussion invariably includes "dual purpose dogs." The dictionary states that dual is, an adjective meaning, "composed or consisting of two parts; twofold." Then the dual purpose dog is one that is proficient at two different things. We are now the proud owners of the greatest "dual champion" of all times—she can eat more and sleep more than anything on four legs! However, this is not the twofold purpose we usually desire. Rather it is that the dog has the ability to perform well and also looks good. The dog's general appearance should appeal to the owner's eye for canine beauty. Not many of us would desire a sway back, bowlegged dog. Neither would the hunter knowingly purchase a blinking, trailing or gun shy dog. So the dual dog we desire is one that looks good, or has the proper conformation, and can also do a creditable job in any type of field work for which we wish to train him.

In order to test these two phases, different types of trials were devised. To test the dogs' hunting ability, put him in the field and let him show what he can do. When field trials were originally started in this country, two dogs were run together and a winner selected. Then the next two were run and a winner selected. The winners were then placed against each other until eventually one dog emerged victorious. From this beginning our present field trial methods have developed.

Breeders soon noticed that the winners of these trials had many characteristics in common. Open nostrils were necessary for adequate inhalation. The chest should be large enough to permit the ventilation running demands but not so large that it interferes with movement of the forelegs. Well angulated hind legs aided propulsion. Naturally the breeding programs would then be directed toward the development of these desirable traits. These include both physical and mental characteristics. As the breed developed, only those animals that fulfilled the desired requirements would be used to propagate the species. Thus the breed becomes a pure breed—one that will reproduce its own kind. Soon some industrious individual undertook the gigantic task of putting in print these desirable features and after much discussion, correction

and re-correction, a standard was developed. Now neophyte breeders can by simply reading a few pages, profit from the experiences of many breeders over a period of many decades.

How many breeders take the opposite view point in regard to this standard. If their dog doesn't shine brightly under the light of this standard, then the standard is wrong. How much better it would be if we re-validated our own attitude to accept and use the standard as a guide and aid rather than piece of paper on which we may hurl our criticisms. If each Brittany breeder and owner, realizing how our standard originated, would use this standard as desirable goal, then two very pleasant results would immediately occur.

First, our bench shows would be filled with Brittany's. The owner would welcome the opportunity to officially compare his dog's characteristics with those of other dogs. In this way the owner will increase his knowledge of the breed and his broadened outlook will materially aid in his future breeding and purchases. Nothing could be more disastrous to the individual and the breed as those results obtained by the breeder who has that narrow "one dog" outlook; i.e., "since this dog points, all other dogs should be like him."

The second desirable result would be the elimination once and for all times of this ridiculous talk about "bench type" and "field type" dogs. These only exist in the mind of those owners whose dog competes in only one type of trial. If the dog cannot compete in both field and bench trials that does not mean he is a "field type" or "bench type." It means that somewhere along the way the breeding program has fallen down and the standard has been lost sight of. Let the breeder go back and instill more hunting instinct into the line of statue models or more conformation in those hard hitting, hard punching hunting dogs. It can be done without sacrificing the conformation or without sacrificing the hunting instinct. The result—a more nearly perfect Brittany—a truly dual purpose breed—a breed of puppies that any breeder can sell with the guarantee—show him in any bench show—he'll stand up with the best of them; or put him in any field trial, he'll give a hunt worth watching!

Not every dog should be expected to "do it all." Not every owner will train a dog to do it all. But in the breeding program the potential dual-purpose ability should be there to be developed and trained according to the interests of the owner. The Brittany owner and breeder should forget the terms "bench type" and "field type", remembering there is only one standard, and work toward that goal—a perfect Brittany,

How do we know whether we are attaining that goal? By entering in competition—bench competition and field competition with other dogs whose breeders and owners are working toward the same goal. Only by taking advantage of every opportunity to compare, to compete, to obtain new impressions, new criticism from new and different judges, can we

continue to grow and to improve. Only by taking advantage of the opportunity to look at our dog through the eyes of several impartial judges can we see that dog as it really is. In that way we crystallize our standard and keep the goal clearly in sight.

The bench show judge can only judge those dogs shown. Perhaps the judge would prefer a more *leggy* dog than the one he placed first, but there was none in the ring. Don't mark the judge as an individual who prefers short, cobby dog. Be fair—give him a chance by entering the dogs that you think should place. Remember, the owners and breeders determine the course a breed will take—not the judges of field or bench. We have one standard-one breed. Let's keep it that way by entering the same dogs in both bench and field competition, proving to one and all the dual abilities of the Brittany Spaniel.