

Brittanys – PRESENTATION of the BRITTANY

The Brittany is not and should not be a glamour dog. Bred to work, not parade, it does not have, does not want, does not need excessive coat and feathering. It is an all-purpose hunting dog.

Cleaned and tidied up, it makes an attractive but not fancy show dog. (Incidentally, the current fad of shaving a Brittany's neck does little to improve its looks, often making it look ewe-necked when it is not. A tidied neck is one thing, a shaved neck another.)

The Brittany is an upland game bird dog and as such the trot is not its natural gait. Unfortunately, the show ring does not allow it to run free so it is shown at a trot, but the method handlers are now using, the faster the better, causes nothing but trouble — high-stepping fronts, side-winding rears — all in all the loss of the true moving Brittany.

Few if any breeds look their best at excessive speed, certainly not the Brittany. Why then do judges allow this presentation? Perhaps they get tired of saying, "Slow down please," only to be ignored. However, a dog is seldom if ever put up because of speed; maybe sometimes in spite of it.

Speed for speed's sake is not productive in show or field. Nobody loves a great All-Age dog more than I do, but not a dog that runs like a Greyhound and is so hardheaded it totally ignores its handler.

In its early days the Brittany was popular with poachers in Brittany because it was biddable with a good nose and a 'quick, easy way of going. A big running All-Age is truly exciting to ride behind and to judge, but using a fast horse to push a dog to greater speed does not show the dog to its best advantage. It often results in flat running, not hunting.

If you want an American Field Longtail, they make excellent dogs but they are not Brittanys. A good Brittany covers a lot of ground at a fast clip, hunting all the time. It's a truly beautiful sight.

The Brittany is first and foremost a bird dog. The greatest national winner should enjoy hunting season. Show and field, the Brittany should be without excesses, a practical dog, a lifelong hunting companion, with you in the field, in your home, in anything you care to undertake. It is never exotic, extreme or sensational.

To present a Brittany, show or field, remember its purpose and the standard. Yes, it must have the look of a Brittany, but it must also have the mind of a Brittany. It hunts because it wants to; it has a burning desire to hunt and run. A good breeder breeds for this desire. A good field handler develops and controls these instincts without trying to force the dog to be something it is not.

A good breeder also breeds for the correct structure that will help the dog run and hunt more easily. A good show handler trains and presents the dog to show off its correct structure, not by setting every leg and holding muzzle and tail in a death grip, but by training the dog to free stand correctly and to move easily on a loose lead.

A Brittany is above all independent. Show and field should never be separated in the owner's mind. Both are necessary to the future of our breed. Forcing a Brittany into the role of generic field trial dog, where run is blessed above all else, will just as surely ruin our breed as making it a generic show dog where speed and flash reign supreme.

The Brittany is a moderate dog: moderate size, moderate speed, moderate coat. Its only extremes are Intelligence, independence and desire to hunt. Since this is why we got Brittanys in the first place, let's not try to change them, but rather nurture their true essence and keep the dual Brittany unchanged for future generations of hunters and fanciers.

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