

G7 BREED COLUMNS

hounds

the frontier days.

When I realized that Amber was breed-worthy, I went in search for the more angular Mallorcan type of Ibizan that so moved me. I found the last Belmonte male and have linebred on him ever since. I have bred conservatively about once in every five years. I am currently retired from breeding.

I enjoyed all the shows, loved meeting all the dog people, and especially loved the lure coursing. What keeps me in Ibizans, however, is their unique qualities. Their effervescent beauty that must be seen in action. There is nothing that moves me or moves quite like an Ibizan. The magical floating movement, the awe-inspiring leaps. The airs above ground! They leap so effortlessly and appear to hover. They are also loving (if somewhat distracted) companions. They make wonderful housedogs if given plenty of time to exercise in a large, safe space.

Ibizans get along with other dogs in general, but particularly they love each other. I generally keep five or more at any time. They play nicely with my Pugs, as with my large hound-Shepherd mix. They love people, sometimes too much!

I am not the best of trainers. Ibizans can be naughty, especially when young, but they are generally so good-spirited about it that you cannot get angry.

It takes a special kind of person to live with the sighthounds, especially Ibizans. They consider themselves your equals. There is never a dull moment with them around.

I cannot imagine life without an Ibizan Hound. —Nan Kilgore Little, NanKilgore@amberlithe.com; Ibizan Hound of the United States website: ihcus.org

Irish Wolfhounds

This month we revisit the following column on the importance to the breeder of establishing an excellent female line.

*Beginner's Luck

"You should really give some thought to adding compost mix and

making the holes larger," I advised my neighbor, who had bare-root roses still in their colorful boxes strategically placed up and down her driveway. "Oh, I only have an hour before I leave for an engagement," she replied, as she proceeded to drop each rose, box and all, into its hole. Imagine my surprise next spring to look out my kitchen window and see a display to rival the famous Huntington Gardens.

Most of us who have been in dogs for any length of time can tell a similar story of the novice breeder who manages to come up with the coveted Best in Show dog in their first litter. Upon careful study, however, it becomes apparent that their success is due not to beginner's luck, but to the work of those who have gone before them—no different than my neighbor, who just happened by chance to select plants from one of the great nurseries.

When pursuing success in breeding dogs, there is no substitute for hard work, and there is nothing more necessary in that endeavor than establishing a great female line. "Great bitches come from other great bitches" was the advice of my mentor, Alma J. Starbuck. And she knew of what she spoke, having produced one famous brood bitch after another that left an enviable record for Ambleside, both in the show ring and whelping box.

Mrs. Florence Nagle, of England, whose Sulhamstead Irish Wolfhounds held a unique place in the Wolfhound world, had this to say in an article on breeding:

"Having obtained a well-made bitch, absolutely sound, with good powerful hindquarters, whose dam and grand-dam are, if possible, the same, mate her to the best dog you can find who is particularly good in any points in which your bitch is a bit weak. I like to line-breed to any really good hounds, as a violent outcross is not so likely to be satisfactory, as one brings in unknown factors. In my opinion, the bitch is by far the more important, though one does get some outstanding sires that produce good stock from almost any

bitch. However, if your bitch comes from a good line of first-class hounds, you cannot go far wrong."

In the selection of a foundation bitch, it is better to take a companion puppy from an outstanding, established line than a show prospect with a pedigree containing nothing but a mix of unrelated individuals. To do so allows the amateur, with limited resources, to profit from the arduous study and research already done by the breeder of that line, whose intimate knowledge of the ancestors and family characteristics allows him or her to make skilled decisions in the selection of breeding stock. For the novice to be able to build upon such a breeding program leaves little to chance in his first generation.

Dr. Braxton B. Sawyer, in his seminars, always suggested careful selection when choosing a brood bitch, and listed three points of investigation: the individual herself, her pedigree, and the progeny (this is where the "horizontal pedigree" of siblings, aunts and uncles gains importance). Because the brood bitch's window of opportunity to demonstrate what her bank of genes will produce is so much more limited by the number of offspring as compared to the stud dog, great care should be taken in her selection.

A great brood bitch becomes the jewel in your crown. She carries your hopes for the future, nourishes and cares for the puppies upon their arrival, and during those early, critical weeks she imprints them for a lifetime as she teaches them how to live in the world they will inhabit. The dam may only contribute one-half of the chromosomes, but her influence is far more reaching when you consider that she helps shape the puppies' character. This is why it is so critical to breed only from bitches with solid temperaments, as the puppies take their cues from their mother as she interacts with humans.

Down through history, great importance has been laid on the selection of the bitch. Over 100 years ago, the "father of the breed," Captain Graham, said much the same in *The Kennel*

Encyclopedia, when he wrote:

"In the breeding of Irish Wolfhounds, the same principles apply as in the breeding of all other dogs, namely, only to breed from the best possible strain available, and from only the soundest of the breed. As regards the bitch, the writer is strongly of opinion that only bitches of well-matured age should be used, as Wolfhounds do not reach maturity till two years old; also they should only be bred from once in the year, and, for choice, a spring litter should be aimed at, so that the whelps may have all the summer before them, to enable them to get through all their puppy ailments with everything in their favor; as once over the first six months they are strong and hardy and better able to withstand any disease such as distemper."

Regarding the choice of the bitch, he continues:

"The writer believes, with Colonel Garnier, that the following rules are the correct ones to recognize, that quality (nervous development, vigour, energy and character) is very much more dependent on the dam than on the sire. Bone or size, on the contrary, is far more dependent on the sire."

After listing color and coat under the sire's influence, Captain Graham concludes: "Muscular development and general form is chiefly dependent on the dam."

After observing the resulting progeny from hundreds of matings in the past 60 years, I would acknowledge that the "rules" set forth are surprisingly accurate more times than not. Great size and bone will be found carried down in a strong tail-male line of ancestors with great size and substance, while outstanding-quality puppies are sure to have behind them a tail-female line of grand, first-rate bitches. —Lois J.

Thomasson, *LJTroses@aol.com*; Irish Wolfhound Club of America website: iwclubofamerica.org

Norwegian Elkhounds Best Friends

A man named Baldr and his best friend, Takki, were hiking in the

beautiful mountains of Norway. Takki, a Norwegian *elghund*, occasionally raised his head, sensing an *elg* nearby. The dog's outstanding hunting instinct was apparent, but so was his dedication to his beloved master.

All of a sudden it occurred to Baldr that he had died, and that Takki had been dead as well for several years. However, he had no choice but to keep on trekking. As he and his dog reached a clearing in the forest, he saw a building, all aglow with shining lights and glitter. A man dressed for battle was standing in front of the building.

"We're lost," Baldr said to the man. "Where are we?"

"This is *Valhalla*," said the man.

"Come on in and rest. But leave your dog outside."

As tired as they were, Baldr was not going anywhere without Takki. So he nodded to the man, and he and Takki continued their hike up the mountain.

Just when Baldr thought he could not take another step, the most beautiful building he had ever seen came into view. A beautiful tree, *Glasis*, revered among gods and man, stood alone in front of the edifice. The roof of the building was tiled with gilded shields. The inside was ornately decorated with shields and an unbelievable wainscoting made of spears. Shining swords provided a golden light for the banquets held in honor of the fallen heroes in their afterlife.

There were 540 doors, each one wide enough for 800 heroes to march through—something they did each morning, reliving their heroic battles. After a hardy breakfast, the heroes trained until midday and then returned to the building to rest.

As Baldr stood gazing at the beautiful building, a man came running, apologizing for not being outside to greet Baldr and Takki when they first arrived.

"We're lost," said Baldr. "Where are we?"

"This is *Valhalla*," said the man.

"Odin is inside, leading us in our daily sword practice. We're almost finished."

Baldr was confused. "But on our way

up here, we passed another building that a man said was *Valhalla*."

"Oh," said the man. "That wasn't *Valhalla*. That's where Odin sends those warriors who died but who had not lived according to the word of Thor. Some call it *Helvete*."

"My name is Baldr, and my best friend here is Takki," began Baldr, with his dog sitting obediently beside him. "We're tired, and we need something to eat and drink."

The man motioned for one of the *valkyries* to tend to the needs of Baldr and his dog. After they ate, drank, and rested a bit, Baldr went out to thank the man who was so kind to them.

"Excuse me!" he called to the man.

"Doesn't it upset you when those people down there use the name *Valhalla* when they are really living in *Helvete*?"

"No," said the gatekeeper. "Actually, Odin is very pleased, because it helps us when they detain those folks who would leave their best friends behind."

Farvel. —Dr. Nina P. Ross, ninaross@bellsouth.net; Norwegian Elkhound Association of America website: neaa.net

Otterhounds

In the guest column that follows, Reed Pomeroy describes a census project for the breed. Reed may be reached via e-mail at reed50p@gmail.com.

Something Wiki'd This Way Comes

Around the time of the 2012 Westminster Kennel Club dog show, the online Otterhound community was in the midst of discussing the endangered status of the breed. This became further discussed after the broadcast, when the Otterhound's scarcity was mentioned during on-air commentary.

One of the questions central to the discussion was, "Just how many Otterhounds are there?"

The Otterhound Club of America (OHCA) maintains on its website (clubs.akc.org/ohca) a pretty good database of past and present hounds. But