

Ibizan Hound—a very rare breed at the time—or a white Bull Terrier.

Well, I wrote to one of the few breeders of Ibizans, Mrs. Bobbee Preu in Maine, and to a Bull Terrier breeder in Pennsylvania. I did not hear back from the Ibizan inquiry, but I did from the Bull Terrier breeder. I bought a lovely little white Bull Terrier bitch and thought myself lucky. I was looking for a pet. No thoughts on breeding, and I had never seen a dog show.

When all seemed settled, I got a letter from a nephew of Mrs. Preu. She had died and left him with 20-some Ibizans. He offered one to me for free. I just had to pay shipping, which at that time was about 30 dollars.

The little pinto bitch arrived, pretty but a bit frightened. I had never seen a sighthound before. This bitch Amber gave her name to what would become my bloodline.

I had a list of dogs and new owners from the estate of Mrs. Preu. I contacted the owners and the Ibizan Hound club. I was invited to a club meeting and a match. The first Ibizan Hound Club of the U.S. met in my living room.

This was a bright new world for me. I have always loved dogs. Long story short, I became a member of the club and starting showing my dog in the AKC's Miscellaneous class. There were also rare-breed shows that I attended with the other Ibizan owners. These were 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 line-bred 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, are their unique qualities and 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 house-dogs 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,
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Ibizan Hound of the United States
website: *ihcus.org*

Irish Wolfhounds Temperament, Again

One of the strongest characteristics of the breed is its uniform gentleness of manner. This gentleness is the natural complement of a brave and fearless nature, and it qualifies the Irish Wolfhound as an ideal family member. They are intelligent and levelheaded, with a sense of humor—and gifted, as Phyllis Gardner put it, with a magical “second sight.”

This is the Irish Wolfhound who has been handed down to us, so perhaps that is why it was distressing to read on the Internet several years ago occasional reports of owners dealing with shy or aggressive dogs. Some of the advice that was given was just as disturbing, and a young hound with aggressive tendencies toward both people and other dogs should not be “forced out in public to get used to crowds.” That is idiotic, and a tragic situation waiting to happen; all

the socialization in the world cannot change a genetically poor temperament.

When you keep a giant breed, you have a responsibility as an owner to know the character and dependability of that animal so that you may assist him to interact in the situations he finds himself, making sure he will not be a danger to either himself or the public. Things can happen, and in a split second a life can be changed forever.

Temperament must remain a foremost consideration in selecting breeding stock, and all the physical beauty and perfection of form are worthless if the hound does not possess the intelligent and gentle nature for which the breed is known and cannot meet one of the prime requirements of the standard, which calls for a “commanding appearance.”

Breeders have an obligation to produce puppies who are going to be stable, well-adjusted members of the society in which they find themselves.

I cannot help but wonder if some new owners gave a great deal of thought to how acquiring an Irish Wolfhound, or any dog for that matter, would affect their lives, and to how much time would be involved in shaping the puppy's character so that he will reflect well on them and the breed. You get out of a relationship what you are willing to put into it, and dogs reflect their owners' care. I sometimes hear of far too much time spent in crates, which hardly allows a young mind and body to develop to its potential. For an athletic breed like the Irish Wolfhound, this seems a crime. Perhaps some breeders need to do a better job educating prospective owners.

The Irish Wolfhound is not for everyone, but for those who have the space and time, the rewards are many, and the innate gentleness of manner is what has endeared the breed to his owners and admirers through the centuries.

As the late Kelly Fox, past president of the IWCA, wrote, in part:

“We, as breeders, have a duty to make the primary objective of our

breeding the preservation of the temperament which is the Irish Wolfhound's greatest asset."

—Lois J. Thomasson

Irish Wolfhound Club of America
website: iwclubofamerica.org

Norwegian Elkhounds

The following was written by Dr. Nina P. Ross.

Best in the Ring

The perfect Elkhound has not yet made an appearance in the show ring. Or, perhaps, we did not recognize it. There are some undeniably good dogs being shown. Visualize the Elkhound with dark ears of good leather, a tightly curled, center-set tail, strong, arched neck of good length, short loin, and movement correct coming and going as well as viewed from the side. Ask yourself if the dog's true beauty and character would shine through without the bait thrust in front of him. Take a good look at the dog who was placed at the end of the line because he was so different from the others; maybe that was the perfect Elkhound.

Elkhounds are sometimes judged against the winning dog, not the breed standard. Too often a bitch is bred to a winning dog with total disregard for the standard. Success breeds success—or does it? For the most part, the winning dog is the best dog. The point remains that the standard for the breed—the blueprint for the perfect Elkhound—is the basis for the ideal breeding plan. A discerning breeder takes into account the possibility or probability of unforeseen factors that exists in every breeding. Breeding based solely on show wins can be venturesome.

On the flip side of the coin, the original standards were descriptions of the best dogs available at the time—or of dogs owned by those who were writing the standard or by breeders who dreamed about the one that got away. Breeders may have etched in their minds the ideal Elkhound and interpret the standard to match what they are producing. As long as breed characteris-

tics are preserved, with emphasis on structure and function, there is no requirement that every Elkhound must fit into the same cookie-cutter mold.

The Elkhound is foremost a hunter, a multipurpose dog endowed with stamina, athletic prowess, and intelligence. Even though he often is bred for other purposes, his breed characteristics must be maintained. Leg length is important for providing the agility to maneuver rocky terrain and to outmaneuver the moose or other prey. Elkhounds tend to become couch potatoes and put on more than the suggested weight for their frame. Ideally, they are kept in lean, hard condition, ready for the hunt.

The Elkhound breed is not immune to trafficking. An occasional Elkhound gets into the wrong hands and is used to produce puppies for dog traffickers. There are enough reputable Elkhound breeders that it is not necessary to buy from or supply puppies to a pet store. It is sad and embarrassing when the pedigree of a pet-store puppy includes the name of an honorable, well-known breeder who had no intentions of being involved in such a situation. It is advisable to use judgment in placing Elkhounds with unknown buyers.

There is no unwritten rule that implies all Elkhounds must be shown. However, they do need the tender, loving care of their owners. After all, you may have the perfect Elkhound. — N.P.R.

Norwegian Elkhound Association of America website: neaa.net

Otterhounds

Why Save the Otterhound?

As an ancient breed that exists in the ancestry of other breeds, can the Otterhound have lost its relevance for today? According to the Otterhound Club of America (OHCA) database, there are now approximately 900 Otterhounds *in the world*, with fewer than 400 currently living in the U.S.

Our world survey tells us the average life span of an Otterhound is 10.8 years. Assuming we lose 10 percent of our

dogs each year, it is critical that we produce at least 90 pups annually to sustain our current numbers. In recent years it has been clear that we are not doing so.

At a recent meeting of Otterhound breeders, we discussed our fears about the very real possibility of the breed's extinction in the next 30 to 40 years. Breeders worry in case there aren't enough proper homes for puppies. This is a large dog requiring a fenced yard. He often has a wet beard and makes housekeeping challenging. Most people are unfamiliar with them so are not actively looking for Otterhounds. Low numbers mean a low gene pool, and decreasing numbers will make the gene pool even smaller. Though most Otterhounds are quite robust, we have health challenges with cancer and epilepsy, like many other breeds and mixed-breeds today.

In light of this discouraging trend, we have to ask ourselves if the breed should be saved. My answer is a resounding *yes*. Although Otterhounds can no longer be used for the purpose for which they were originally bred, since hunting otters is banned, most of us wouldn't want a to keep large pack for hunting anyway! They are successful in the conformation ring, considering the numbers of the breed. More people are participating in tracking, search-and-rescue, and agility with their hounds as well.

Another role where Otterhounds play successfully is therapy work, whether reading with children, entertaining elders, or supporting servicemen and women upon their return home. The breed is loyal but surprisingly adaptable to new environments, making friends with everyone they meet. They are renowned for their affectionate and humorous nature.

Every Otterhound is unique, but there is a *secret* about Otterhounds that only Otterhound people know. I call it the empathy factor. Empathy is defined as the ability to identify with and understand somebody else's feelings or difficulties. Otterhounds are usually discovered by people after experiencing