

## **20 Principles of Breeding Better Dogs**

**by  
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**There are a vast number of different breeding methods, some good, some bad. I should never presume to try to tell fanciers what is the right method because there is no such thing. Outstanding success can be achieved and has been achieved in a variety of different ways. So all I am going to do is to make some suggestions which I think helpful and to warn against certain pitfalls which trap too many of the unwary.**

**(Note: Oppenheimer was a great Bull Terrier breeder. But one can apply it to other breeds as well.)**

**Remember that the animals you select for breeding today will have an impact on the breed for many years to come. Keep that thought firmly in mind when you choose breeding stock.**

- You can choose only two individuals per generation. Choose only the best, because you will have to wait for another generation to improve what you start with. Breed only if you expect the progeny to be better than both parents.
- You cannot expect statistical predictions to hold true in a small number of animals (as in one litter of puppies). Statistics only apply to large populations.
- A pedigree is a tool to help you learn the good and bad attributes that your dog is likely to exhibit or reproduce. A pedigree is only as good as the dog it represents.
- Breed for a total dog, not just one or two characteristics. Don't follow fads in your breed, because they are usually meant to emphasize one or two features of the dog at the expense of the soundness and function of the whole.
- Quality does not mean quantity. Quality is produced by careful study, having a good mental picture of what you are trying to achieve, having patience to wait until the right breeding stock is available and to evaluate what you have already produced, and above all, having a breeding plan that is at least three generations ahead of the breeding you do today.
- Remember that skeletal defects are the most difficult to change.
- Don't bother with a good dog that cannot produce well. Enjoy him (or her) for the beauty that he represents but don't use him in a breeding program.
- Use out-crosses very sparingly. For each desirable characteristic you acquire, you will get many bad traits that you will have to eliminate in succeeding generations.
- Inbreeding is a valuable tool, being the fastest method to set good characteristics and type. It brings to light hidden traits that need to be eliminated from the breed.
- Breeding does not "create" anything. What you get is what was there to begin with. It may have been hidden for many generations, but it was there.
- Discard the old cliché about the littermate of that great producer being just as good to breed to. Littermates seldom have the same genetic make-up.
- Be honest with yourself. There are no perfect dogs (or bitches) nor are there perfect producers. You cannot do a competent job of breeding if you cannot recognize the faults and virtues of the dogs you plan to breed.
- Hereditary traits are inherited equally from both parents. Do not expect to solve all of your problems

in one generation.

- If the worst puppy in your last litter is no better than the worst puppy in your first litter, you are not making progress. Your last litter should be your last litter.
- If the best puppy in your last litter is no better than the best puppy in your first litter, you are not making progress. Your last litter should be your last litter.
- Do not choose a breeding animal by either the best or the worst that he (or she) has produced. Evaluate the total get by the attributes of the majority.
- Keep in mind that quality is a combination of soundness and function. It is not merely the lack of faults, but the positive presence of virtues. It is the whole dog that counts.
- Don't allow personal feelings to influence your choice of breeding stock. The right dog for your breeding program is the right dog, whoever owns it. Don't ever decry a good dog; they are too rare and wonderful to be demeaned by pettiness.
- Don't be satisfied with anything but the best. The second best is never good enough.

### **The Extended Version**

- Don't make use of indiscriminate outcrosses. A judicious outcross can be of great value, an injudicious one can produce an aggregation of every imaginable fault in the breed.
- Don't line breed just for the sake of line breeding. Line breeding with complimentary types can bring great rewards, with unsuitable ones it will lead to immediate disaster.
- Don't take advice from those who have always been unsuccessful breeders if their opinion were worth having they would have proved it by their successes.
- Don't believe the popular cliché about the brother or the sister of the great Champion being as good to breed from, for every one that is, there are hundreds that are not. It depends on the animal concerned.
- Don't credit your own dogs with virtues they do not possess. Self deceit is a stepping stone to failure. In other words don't be kennel blind.
- Don't breed from mediocrities, the absence of a fault does not in any way signify the presence of its corresponding virtue.
- Don't try to line breed two dogs at the same time; you will end by line breeding to neither.
- Don't assess the worth of a stud dog by his inferior progeny. All stud dogs sire rubbish at times; what matters are how good their best efforts are.
- Don't allow personal feelings to influence your choice of a stud dog. The right dog for your bitch is the right dog whoever owns it.
- Don't allow admiration of a stud dog to blind you to his faults. If you do you will soon be the victim of autointoxication.
- Don't mate together animals which share the same faults. You are asking for trouble if you do.
- Don't forget that it is the whole dog that counts. If you forget one virtue while searching for another you will pay for it.
- Don't search for the perfect dog as a mate for your bitch. The perfect dog (or bitch) doesn't exist, never has or never will!
- Don't be frightened of breeding from animals that have obvious faults so long as they have compensating virtues. A lack of virtue is far the greatest fault of all.
- Don't mate together non-complementary types. An ability to recognize type at a glance is a breeder's

greatest gift; ask the successful breeders to explain this subject - there is no other way of learning. (I would define non-complementary types as ones which have the same faults and lack the same virtues.)

- Don't forget the necessity to preserve head quality. It will vanish like a dream if you do.
- Don't forget that substance plus quality should be one of your aims. Any fool can breed one without the other.
- Don't forget that a great head plus soundness should be one of your aims. Many people can never breed either!
- Don't ever try to decry a great dog. A thing of beauty is not only a joy forever but also a great price and pleasure to all true lovers of the breed.