What part, if any, do you think exhibiting dogs has in a breeding program and why?

Cindy Huggins
Courtlore Cavaliers

Ideally showing and breeding go hand in hand. The show ring is the only place we have for showcasing what our individual breeding program is producing. Often dog shows are the only time you can see dogs from other parts of the country. This is the opportunity to see what consistency a particular dog or breeder is producing. On the other hand exhibiting dogs has evolved into a competition for the sake of winning, not showcasing a breeding program. Often we get so caught up in winning that we lose our objectivity. There is a difference between breeding and a breeding program. Always breeding to the “flavor of the moment” or a winning dog is not a breeding program. A breeding program must have goals and a clear plan of how to achieve those goals.

If a breeder shows their dogs with an open mind, then dog shows can be a valuable tool for honestly evaluating your dog’s qualities with other breeder’s dogs. Whether I am watching or showing, I try to honestly evaluate the strengths of those dogs against my own. We all know that with perseverance we can make a champion of most dogs. Also we have all known great winning dogs that were never able pass along their qualities.

Winning in the ring shouldn’t influence a breeding program but enable one to make comparisons and evaluations.

Stephanie Abraham
Trefoil Cavaliers

When we breed a litter my husband and I are hoping to keep something for ourselves, a puppy that represents the epitome of our idea of breed type. To that end, it has to have it “all.” It must have a melting expression, excellent bite, correct coat, and quintessential happy Cavalier temperament. There must be enough bone and substance to allow the mature dog to “go all day behind a horse.” It must have adequate angulation and balance front and rear, a fine topline and proper tail carriage, and be soundly made all over. No weedy ones here!

While we like attractive markings as well as the next one, I would forgive a mantle coat or a less than well broken coat in favor of everything underneath if the puppy was lovely. And we will not compromise on temperament, believing it to be the hallmark of the breed.

The show ring teaches us how the pup reacts to strange environments and hands, and is an indication of his adaptability to new situations. Hopefully, we respect the opinion of the judge if we cared to enter under him/her—but sometimes we just chalk up wins and losses to the vagaries of subjective opinions on the day. Consistent success is nice, but not the most important measure of quality in our eyes.

While I would like to think that our own ideas of perfection might steal the show here in the East, that is not necessarily the case. To that end, we breed to satisfy ourselves, and are very happy when our own ideas and those of judges coincide. But I hardly think that either the notions of judges, or our own perceptions, are without flaw—so we just breed the best to the best and hope for the best (as the horsemen say). We will probably always have a dog or two about the house that sports a title in our eyes only.

Carla Mathies
Creekside Cavaliers

Exhibiting is an essential element and in my situation, the “driving force” behind my breeding program. At this stage of my life, exhibiting my own dogs is a hobby that offers an outlet for my competitive drive and an opportunity to socialize with life-long friends. I can “play” a little or a lot according to what my personal life dictates. I also believe judges (I’m an AKC licensed judge too) and breeders alike need the continuing education of the dog show and its related activities like exhibiting to help them achieve expertise in their chosen breed(s).

We should remind ourselves of the true reason why participating at dog shows began—for breeders to take their best dogs and compare them with...
CONVERSATIONS CONTINUED

the best of others in an ongoing effort to select THE BEST breeding stock. If one is truly dedicated to the sport of purebred dogs, better breeding will always be the "driving force" as one seeks dog show and club awards (i.e. the ACKCSC ROM award) The resulting championship titles and records achieved are rewarding, but their true value is not in the "snob factor", but in the fact that they prove your breeding stock has been compared with other dogs by people who know the breed and have been found to be good representations of their breed, of good temperament and intelligence. In essence, exhibiting at dog shows should and does encourage breeders to breed better dogs.

WEB SITE MILESTONE

BY JACKIE FARRELL
WEB MISTRESS

The Web Site is fast approaching the half a million mark on the web counter. We started using the counter on the site in August of 2001, so that's a lot of hits! I'm also always open to suggestions for improvements and/or new additions to the site. Members – please make a visit to the web site and give us some feedback! Thank you!

www.ackcsc.org

RING SPACE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

about showing at Westminster where our breed ring at “The Garden” is small for the relative size of our breed entry?

Regarding the former, large classes, even when in sufficiently large rings, it is my personal feeling that Cavaliers are not well served by exhibitors who expect their dog to be “on” for great lengths of time. At some point I try to use the “crowd” in the ring to my dog's advantage by finding a relatively quiet spot—usually a corner of the ring hidden behind the lineup—to sit on the floor with my dog to give it some “down” time. You don't have to get out of line to do this, but if you choose to, just make sure you remember where you are in the lineup and prepare to get your dog “up” in time to show again!

Regarding the latter, small rings, one must hope that the judge's experience will anticipate this issue and that they choose to divide the class into manageable-sized groups based on what the ring can comfortably accommodate. It is their ring to run as they choose, but what a difference their choice makes! Living on the West Coast, I had never been to Westminster before showing there, so I had no idea how small the breed rings are – only how LARGE the group rings are from television! Nearly as small was the breed ring at Progressive

3 days before, where that judge chose not to divide the BOB class of approximately 30. It was very exciting, very hot and very crowded in that ring with little space to show one's dog, and later that day when I communicated this to a more experienced exhibitor I was informed to anticipate an even smaller ring at Westminster. This really “shook” me, and I spent much of the rest of that weekend visualizing how I was determined, somehow, to back away from my dog, giving him “room to show himself”. Fortunately, as it turns out, for that breed judge at Westminster “giving a dog room to show itself” was essential. The class of approximately 30 was divided into 4 groups of 7 – 8, and I learned a huge lesson about the responsibility of managing space in a ring as an exhibitor and hopefully one day as a judge.

Now, for several moments visualize yourself as that confident, calm exhibitor in your mental picture, and your Cavalier as the dog standing calmly and confidently a couple of feet away at the end of the loose lead, gently wagging its tail and looking adoringly into your eyes. If you are asking yourself, “But can this really happen?” , let me assure you that if you have truly visualized this picture, you have just taken the first—and perhaps, most important—step in making this a reality!

BOARD MINUTES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

2006 National – There was a request from the Cavaliers of Greater Atlanta to host the 2006 National at Calloway Gardens, south of Atlanta. After looking over and discussing the presentation the Board voted unanimously to approve the request.

2007 National – The Board approved the 2007 national to be held at the Lancaster Host Hotel in Pennsylvania on the Bucks/Trenton weekend.

Robbins Judging Application – There was further discussion about this and the Club will be in contact with the AKC Board to see what action can be taken.

The next Board meeting was set for 20 September 2004, usual times and arrangements. The meeting was adjourned at 9:49 PM PDT.