

WHY FIELD TRIALS?

By Dick Reinhardt DDS

Vizsla breeders must have a goal. Let us assume for the moment that this goal for which we are striving is a super gun dog with range ideally suited for the foot hunter; An attractive, driving dog that intelligently reaches out to the objectives, a nose that will allow him to locate accurately without crowding his birds, stamina to withstand a hard day's hunt, and a biddable dog that is easily handled and trained. Immediately the average sportsman-hunter with his good shooting dog will exclaim, "...then why fool around with field trials and breed for these wild-running, All-Age dogs?" There are several reasons why field trials are essential in the development and protection of a hunting breed. First, it is a sport unto itself, a source of enjoyment to those who participate (both man and dog), and it stimulates interest in bird dogs and bird dog training. But, much more important, field trials provide a means of comparing bird dogs in the field – thus giving proof (or disproof) to our breeding theories and practices.

The high-class, running field trial performer exemplifies desire, ambition and courage. He displays speed and stamina in covering the maximum amount of ground in a given time. He must show a natural intelligence in his ground pattern and his olfactory powers must be of high order or he would be unable to handle his game at this speed. Style and dash go hand in hand with conformation as does the ability to run fast with the least possible exertion. A dog that is not put together right cannot go the distance and look good doing it! True, these so-called "class" dogs are not at all times also ideal for all hunting excursions, but, to quote from W.F. Brown's book FIELD TRIALS: "There is a tendency toward average in any long-established breed, and outside of a very few individuals which inherit to a marked degree the intensified qualities of a prepotent sires, the majority of a dog's get will grade down from high-class performer through all the intermediate grades to that of the rank duffer. The records of prepotent sires reveal the fact that they sired scores of ordinary shooting dogs to one really high-class performer. Consequently, what would be the ratio if we were to breed from individuals of ordinary quality; or, in other words, from such as are common consent considered "ideal shooting dogs" by the rank and file of American Sportsman?

This "Drag of the Race", or tendency within purebred varieties, when artificial selection is not employed, to revert to the norm of the species, can be simply stated as follows: a dog of field trial caliber will throw possibly one pup like himself in a litter and the rest will be good to excellent hunting dogs. A good to excellent hunting dog may through one or two dogs like himself and the rest fair hunting dogs. A fair hunting dog will produce a few like himself and the rest potterers. This is true of any breed – and this is – Why Field Trials.

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