

®

# PURINA

## *Today's Breeder*

A Nestlé Purina Publication Dedicated to the Needs of Canine Enthusiasts

Issue 76



### BREEDER PROFILES

BlueRose Kennels

Gray's Beagles

**Top Breeder-Veterinarians  
Getting Serious About SAS  
Obedience at Purina Farms**

# The READERS' PAGE



A recent German Shorthaired Pointer litter bred by Leslie Olson of Hiccup Hill Kennels was raised on *Pro Plan* Chicken & Rice Puppy Formula.

We especially enjoyed reading "Warming Up Winter" in Issue 73 of *Today's Breeder*. The article had many helpful hints.

Pictured here (above) are Hiccup Hill's Verona Angel ("Angie") and her beautiful litter by CH Roscommon at Birchwood, JH ("Spencer"). This was a *Pro Plan* Puppy Chicken & Rice litter, which they all loved and thrived on. I have fed *Purina* for over 20 years and even have a senior diabetic dog doing very well on DCO (*Purina Veterinary Diets Dual Fiber Control Formula*).

Thank you so much for your great

dog foods, *Pro Club* and your fun and informative magazine!

Leslie Olson  
Hiccup Hill Kennels  
Tewksbury, MA

Since 1971, I have fed *Purina Dog Chow*, and since 1991, I have been a member of *Purina Pro Club*. I want to tell you how much I enjoy *Today's Breeder* magazine and thank you for your dog food.

In the 1970s, *Dog Chow* powered my Labrador Retrievers while we duck hunted along the Atlantic Flyway off the shore of Martha's Vineyard. From the mid-'70s to mid-'90s, *Dog Chow* fueled several generations of my Blue-tick Coonhounds in the White Moun-



Three generations of Shady Grove Beagles are, from left, R CH Shady Grove's Whistlin' Dixie, Shady Grove's April Rain and R CH Shady Grove's Sassy Sierra.

tains of New Hampshire. For the past 16 years, *Dog Chow* and *Puppy Chow* have helped me raise five generations of AKC-registered Shady Grove Beagles here in Tennessee. My Beagles are field-trial and rabbit-hunting companions.

Thanks, *Purina*, for making such a quality and affordable dog food as *Dog Chow*.

R. Dana Robinson  
Shady Grove Beagles  
Madisonville, TN

My wife, Linda Marden, and I have been members of *Pro Club* since 1994. Our breed, Finnish Lapphunds, recently

received full recognition by the American Kennel Club. We are so pleased. We, along with many other Lapphund fanciers, have worked for almost 25 years to accomplish this.

We have 24 Lapphunds at our kennel. We have always fed only *Pro Plan* products, including Puppy, Performance, Adult and Sensitive Skin & Stomach formulas. We also from time to time feed *Pro Plan Canned Entree's*.



"Bruce," the first Finnish Lapphund Grand Champion, wins a Group First at the Greater Emporia Kennel Club Dog Show. Posing with Bruce are, from left, judge Dale Simmons, handler Kelly Denton, Karen McFarlane and *Purina* Consultant David Crump. The Lapphund was bred and is owned by Sugarok breeder Linda Marden.

Our show dogs look great, thanks to *Pro Plan*.

Steven Cohen  
Sugarok Finnish Lapphunds  
Millington, TN

We enjoy hearing from our *Pro Club* members about their dogs. Please send your letters and photos to: *Today's Breeder*, c/o Editor, Nestlé *Purina PetCare Company*, 2T Checkerboard Square, St. Louis, MO 63164 or via e-mail at today'sbreeder@purina.com. *Today's Breeder* retains the right to edit and publish letters, including names and addresses, and photos, to a worldwide audience.

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Issue 76

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## 4 THE MARRIAGE OF BLUEROSE

Passionate owner-breeder-handlers Amy and Phil Booth bring complementary talents to their partnership in life and in the show ring. From notably different beginnings, the Booths arrived at the same destination, creating BlueRose Kennels, from which they have achieved No. 1 rankings, record Bests in Show and international success.

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Veterinarians bring unique qualifications to their breeding programs. As they juggle busy clinical practices with breeding and developing top competitors, their knowledge and experience play vital roles in shaping their efforts. Their love and dedication to their respective breeds are reflected in their accomplishments.

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A life-threatening condition, subvalvular aortic stenosis (SAS) is the most common congenital heart disease in Golden Retrievers, Newfoundlands and Rottweilers. Recent advances include a new surgical treatment and genetic discovery that potentially will lead to identification of the gene mutation.

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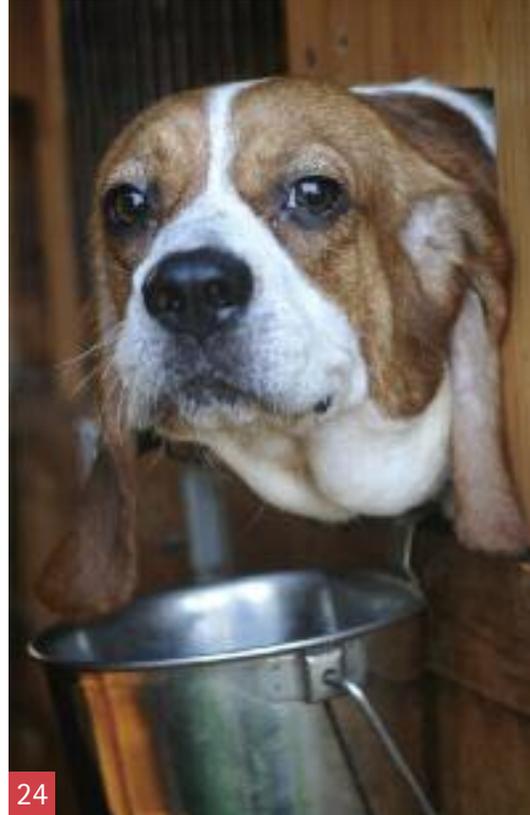
Brace beaglers Ron and Doby Gray wholeheartedly breed and develop field trial Beagles. Their love for the sport comes second only to their love for their hounds. Over the past 42 years, their Gray's Beagles have won two National Field Championships and nine Pennsylvania State Championships, and earned 1,440 placements in derby, licensed and sanctioned trials.

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#### On Our Cover

CH J'Cobe Broxden Danea is a 20-month-old Smooth Fox Terrier bitch co-owned by Phil and Amy Booth, Victor Malzoni and Bill Dalling. She was co-bred by the Booths, Dalling and Stacy Turner. "Nea" finished her championship in October. Cover photo by Adam Williams. See story on page 4.



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Amy and Phil Booth, who created BlueRose Kennels in 2006, are shown with CH J'Cobe Broxden Danae ("Nea"), a Smooth Fox Terrier, and Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CH Beaubriar's Exposé of Kinloch ("Aria"), an Irish Setter.



# The Marriage of BlueRose

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ADAM WILLIAMS

**T**he driveway to Amy and Phil Booth's home and BlueRose Kennels outside Fowlerville, Mich., stretches past a flock of wild turkeys, slopes and bends between thickets of trees, and emerges in a wash of sunlight. In the clear early morning that hints at impending autumn, the 13-acre, partially wooded property is soaked in dew and tranquility, but for the excited energy of 18 dogs getting turns in outdoor runs and the nearby exercise yard.

The rural location in central Michigan is an hour's drive from Detroit and half as far from Lansing, where airports serve as the hub of activity for BlueRose, as do the

RV and hitched camper trailer sitting next to the Booths' circle drive. When not at home grooming and training dogs, and organizing show schedules, breedings and client visits, Amy and Phil are on the go.

It's been this way for Amy since she began exhibiting Brittanys at 6 years old. Her first big winner was CH Greenfield Le Duc De Cannelle, who Amy handled to win the American Brittany Club (ABC) National Specialty when she was 9 years old. The dog was only a month older than Amy.

It's been this way for Phil since working as a teenager in the pit for his pro stock car racing dad, Wally Booth, and later when he became hooked on conformation as a reluctant first-time handler who won a five-point major with a Gordon Setter, Balmoral's Couthie Queen ("Queeny").

"We ended up at the same place as pros," Amy says, "but we came to it from totally different directions."



### A Change in Course

Amy grew up in San Pedro, Calif., loving the ocean and being surrounded by Brittanys, breeding, shows and mentors. Phil grew up in Trenton, Mich., surrounded by stock car racing gears,

grease and Gremlins, and came to dogs as an adult whose life course was about to shift.

While watching the Sporting Group compete at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show on television in 1986, Phil was inspired by the grace and beauty of a Gordon Setter, CH Gordon Hill's Alabama Slammer.

"I found a Gordon Setter breeder the next weekend," Phil says. "I went to her house with no intention of getting a show dog. I wanted a companion."

The breeder had separated the show dogs from those she was selling as pets. When Phil gravitated to the pen with show puppies and insisted on buying the one he would name Queeny, the breeder made Phil agree to finish the bitch's championship. Though reluctant about competing in conformation, Phil went to handling classes held by the breeder. Then, he entered the Detroit Kennel Club Dog Show. The five-point major he won there sowed the seed for his future.

Having enjoyed some success handling his and friends' dogs at shows for 10 years,



Standing in their circle drive, Phil holds Multi-BIS CH Waybroke Broxden Turning Tanner, while Amy holds Kemosabe Broxden Yippy Ki Yo Ki Yay. Their custom RV, hitched with their camper trailer, is in the background.

Phil became a professional in the mid-1990s. He bought a boarding kennel in 1995 in Troy, Mich., a business he would own for 10 years. He ventured into handling Irish Setters and other sporting breeds and large dogs, for which he has built a reputation and nearly a 20-year professional career as a sought-after handler.

Though Phil came to the sport unwittingly and did well, he credits two mentors with giving him needed guidance. He watched Tom Glassford of Ashtabula, Ohio, and the late George Ward of Constantine, Mich. Glassford was a standout with Irish Setters. Ward was an excellent terrier

handler. Phil sought their advice and cultivated lasting friendships around the show ring and on the golf course.

"Tom and George were two of the best in their era," Amy says.

"When you talk about dog handlers, those two guys are in the Top Ten of all time," says Phil. "George was a general mentor to me. He taught me about the sport, how to care for the dogs, to be the first one at the show in the morning. Tom taught me about Irish Setters and showing sporting dogs and how to groom them for the natural, not overly sculpted, look I favor."



Amy poses with, from left, CH Shelttany Against All Odds ("Chance"), Nea and Easthill Broxden Woodland Eleanor Figsby ("Eleanor"). Long known for breeding under the Broxden prefix, Amy created that name for her three breeds of passion: Brittanys, Smooth Fox Terriers and Golden Retrievers.

## A Life in Dogs

Steeped in knowledge about the show world, its history and participants, Amy's education in dogs began early. Her parents, Joseph "Joe" and Agnes Rodrigues of Roja Kennel, bred Brittans and competed with them in obedience and conformation. Amy's sister, Linda Langford of Pelham, Ala., continues to breed Brittans under the Roja prefix. Langford produced the family's first Master Hunter, CH Roja's Ante Up, MH, in 1995, and Dual Champion and Amateur Field Champion, DC/AFC Roja's Gambling Chips, in 1998. Langford also is an American Kennel Club field trial judge.

Amy, her mother and sister are members of the ABC Judges Education committee. Joe and Agnes were honored in September with the Santa Barbara (Calif.) Kennel Club Breeders Showcase Award for their lifetime contributions to the Brittany breed.

Amy's education broadened when she started apprenticing at the age of 12 with top handlers, including Dany Canino of Simi Valley, Calif.; Pam Stage-Shea of Riverside, Calif., and her late husband, Mike Shea; Bill Shelton of Pomona, Calif.; and Susan "Sue" Vroom of Denton, Texas, and her late husband, Corky.

"When I was a little girl, my parents gave me a chair and told me to sit and watch," Amy says. "So I did. I took that chair everywhere. I watched all the great California breeders and handlers in the ring, and I dreamed of becoming one someday. The wealth of talent in breeders in California includes too many people to list, but I always wanted to work for the Vrooms. They were the last handlers I worked for."

By the time Amy was an adult, the practicality of earning a living pushed her love of breeding and conformation to a part-time endeavor. She took an interest in Golden Retrievers and, at the suggestion of professional handler Gabriel Rangel of Rialto, Calif., she bought her first Smooth Fox Terrier from Virginia O'Connor of Laurelton Smooth Fox Terriers. Amy created her Broxden Kennel name in 1996, combining letters of her three breeds — **Brittany**, **Smooth Fox Terriers** and **Golden Retrievers** — and wished she could devote more time to what she loved.

That opportunity came in 2000 when Sandra Kim Hoffen of Easthill Kennel in New York asked Amy to campaign her Golden Retriever, Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CH Teran's Impeachable Offense, SDHF. Success with "Monica" and other dogs owned by Hoffen led to a breeding partnership that has produced stellar Goldens, such as Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CH



From left: Amy gaits with her first Brittany, CH Greenfield Le Duc De Cannelle ("Duc"), who she would handle to win the American Brittany Club National Specialty at 9 years old. Amy, her sister, Linda Langford, and their mother, Agnes Rodrigues, stack, respectively, CH Be-Line's Le Duc Sky Diver, CH Roja's Ante Up, MH, and CH Roja's Diamond In The Sky.

Easthill Broxden The Fig Is Up, SDHF ("Newton") and BIS CH Easthill Broxden Pop Star, SDHF ("Nick"). Both Goldens, like their dam Monica, Amy's foundation bitch, are in the Show Dog Hall of Fame. Newton received an Award of Merit at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in 2008, when Nick won Best of Opposite Sex. Nick received an Award of

Merit there in 2009. Monica, now 13 years old, is retired and lives with Phil and Amy.

Hoffen also has co-owned top Smooth Fox Terriers that Amy has breeder-owner-handled with great success, including GCH J'Cobe Kemosabe Vigilante Justice. "Dodger" won Best of Breed at Westminster in 2008 and 2009 and took a Terrier Group Second in 2010, behind eventual Best in Show winner CH Roundtown Mercedes of Maryscot ("Sadie"), handled by Rangel.

Still, Dodger was the No. 1 dog in the country in 2010, winning the most Bests in Show — 74 — and finishing his U.S. career with 105 wins. In six months of showing this year in Brazil, where he is the No. 1 all-breed dog, Dodger, who is 4 years old and co-owned by Victor Malzoni of Sao Paulo and handled by Daniel Beloff of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, far surpassed the career record there for wins with 66 Bests in Show.

Dodger's grandsire, Multi-BIS/BISS CH Broxden Rio Oso Best Dressed ("Tux"), who Hoffen co-owned, also is one of the top-winning Smooths in breed history, with 68 Bests in Show. He was the No. 1 Smooth Fox Terrier from 2002 to 2004 and No. 6 dog in the U.S. in 2003. Tux, who sired 24 champions, retired at 4 years of age.

"If it wasn't for Sandra, my professional handling career and Golden breeding program would not exist," Amy says. "I have bred 15 champi-



Amy stacks GCH J'Cobe Kemosabe Vigilante Justice ("Dodger"), who won Best in Show at the Pasco (Fla.) Kennel Club Dog Show in January 2010. Inset photo: Multi-BIS/BISS CH Broxden Rio Oso Best Dressed ("Tux") won 68 career Bests in Show.



on Goldens with Sandra, and we've won more than 200 Bests in Show with Goldens and Smooths."

## Turning Heads

BlueRose signifies the Booths' joint venture in showing dogs. The name combines Phil's favorite color and Amy's favorite flower. Few dogs carry the BlueRose prefix, however, as Amy continues to breed under her highly regarded Broxden prefix.

Acquaintances who became good friends through conformation, Phil bought a Smooth Fox Terrier from Amy several years ago, CH Decorum To Boldly Go ("Kirk"), in part as an excuse to talk more with her. He regularly called Amy to update her on the progress of the dog. Amy laughs when telling how it took six years for them to finally come together as a couple. She left behind the Pacific Ocean, bid farewell to her family and moved to Michigan in 2005.



Phil sits with Aria on the porch of the Booths' home in Fowlerville, Mich. Inset photo: Phil stacks Aria after winning the 2005 Onondaga Kennel Association Dog Show in Syracuse, N.Y.

Phil and Amy created BlueRose in 2006, when Phil handled Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CH Beaubriar's Exposé of Kinloch, an Irish Setter who became the No. 10 dog in the country and No. 2 Sporting dog before retiring that year. Like Monica, "Aria," now 9 years old, lives with Amy and Phil.

"I saw Aria when she was 14 months old," Phil says. "She was such a beautiful dog, I had to have her. She went on to be even more than expected, winning 30 all-breed Bests in Show and becoming the No. 1 Irish Setter in 2005 and 2006."

More highlights were on the horizon.

The Booths married in 2007. Phil won the Giant Schnauzer Club of America National Specialty with Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CH Kenro's Keeping Time ("Tempo") that year, and Amy won the AKC National Championship Bred-By-Exhibitor Best in Show with Newton.

Amy showed Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS AM/CAN CH Broxden Dress For Success ("Sebastian"), sired by Tux and co-owned by Hoffen, to 25 Bests in Show in 2007 and 2008. Then she handled a champion sired by Sebastian, Multi-BIS CH Waybroke Broxden Turning Tanner ("Tanner"), to win the 2011 American Fox Terrier Club Specialty.

Tanner was a Multi-Best in Show winner in 2010 in Brazil, where he was co-owned by Malzoni and handled by Divoney Rasera of Sao Paulo. After Tanner finishes his U.S. career, he will go to Italy. GCH J'Cobe Broxden The Headliner ("Hayden") is the No. 1 Smooth in Canada, shown by Hailey Griffith. His littermate, AM/MEX/INT GCH J'Cobe Broxden Kemosabe Life of Rylee ("Rylee"), is being shown by Sergio Cardiel-Ríos in Mexico. The Booths will get Dodger back from Malzoni in December, and then will consider showing him in Canada to finish his international championship. After retiring Dodger from the conformation ring, he will compete in earth dog events and contribute to the Broxden breeding program.

Amy's up-and-coming Smooth is J'Cobe Broxden Danae. At 20 months of age, "Nea" finished her championship at the Monroe (Mich.) Kennel Club Dog Show in October. Nea's black head and white body call to mind her half brother Dodger and set afire Amy's hopes for her potential.

"If you had Dodger and Nea standing in front of you, I don't think you could tell them apart, except that one is masculine and the other is feminine. It's remarkable," says Amy. "She is our future."

Among the Best in Show winners Phil is handling this year are the Giant Schnauzer, GCH Kenro's Fleeting Moment ("Enya"), who is out of Tempo, and the No. 1 German Wirehaired Pointer, GCH Mt. View's Ripsnorter Silver Charm. Phil handled "Oakley" to win the 2011 German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America National Specialty in October in Ionia, Mich.

Another Special he handles is the Dalmatian, GCH Bret D N Engine Co. To The Rescue (“Tilley”). Though Phil has specialized in showing sporting dogs, his finesse in the ring extends to other large breeds because his stride is fluid and eye-catching, Amy says.

“Phil has long legs and runs well with a dog,” she says. “When Phil is running in the ring, people’s heads turn. Even though I grew up with Brittanys, I have to hand it to Phil. He is able to make them look better. He has made his mark as a handler. You can’t think of Irish Setters, Dalmatians, Giant Schnauzers or German Wire-haired Pointers without thinking of Phil.”

## Partnerships for Success

Phil is a relative newcomer to breeding, having bred his first two litters of dogs out of Aria, his foundation bitch, after meeting Amy. Aria produced five champions — BlueRose One for the Money (“Moolah”); BlueRose ‘N’ Kinloch’s Next to Normal (“Solo”); BlueRose Phantasmagorical (“Taz”); BlueRose Words to Music (“Lyric”); and BlueRose Rhythm in Motion (“Rhythm”), whom Phil finished from the Bred-By Exhibitor class.

With that experience, he learned a lot about the efforts breeding requires and lauds immense praise on those who so attentively care for the bitch, aid the whelping process and nurture the puppies. With that experience, he has largely returned to his areas of expertise: handling dogs and managing a business.



Phil poses with Specials from three breeds for which he is highly regarded for his handling skills. From left are: a Dalmatian, GCH Bret D N Engine Co. To The Rescue (“Tilley”), a Giant Schnauzer, GCH Kenro’s Fleeting Moment (“Enya”), and the No. 1 German Wirehaired Pointer in the U.S., GCH Mt. View’s Ripsnorter Silver Charm (“Oakley”).



With Smooth Fox Terrier puppies chasing, Amy runs across the Booths’ backyard, careful not to let a puppy get under foot. Inset photo: Phil demonstrates his long gaiting stride with one of five champions he bred out of Aria, CH BlueRose Phantasmagorical (“Taz”).

“I feel very fortunate to be making a living doing what I love, which includes contributing my eye for dogs to the conversation about who Amy is considering breeding,” says Phil, “but I primarily focus on the business aspects of BlueRose related to showing and managing a campaign.”

“Phil enjoys making breeders’ and owners’ dreams come true in the ring,” Amy says. “He’s very good at all aspects of what we do. He has a great business mind, too. I showed Dodger and enjoyed his many wins, but I didn’t do the hard work of planning the campaign, choosing the shows and booking travel arrangements. Phil is very good at those things and deserves credit for Dodger’s achievements.”

“We complement each other,” Phil says.

“I have more patience. That helps me to be a better trainer and breeder,” Amy says. “Then, I pass dogs to Phil, who makes them look great in the ring.”

The complementary talents of Amy and Phil are at the core of BlueRose’s accomplishments, but they’ve not done it alone. Phil and Amy employ two part-time assistants, Nicole Esio and Tyler Cebulski; a home manager for when they are on the road, Judy Bonfiglio; and a live-in, full-time associate, Kate Batzner.

Besides the relationship with Hoffen, Amy partners with Smooth Fox Terrier breeders for a few litters each year: Bill Dalling of J’Cobe Smooth Fox Terriers in Eagle, Idaho; Joan Galbraith of Galbraith Smooth Fox Terriers in Orland, Calif.; Stacy Turner of Kemosabe Smooth Fox Terriers in Arroyo Grande, Calif.; Gary and Beverly Anderson of Omega Smooth Fox Terriers in Scottsdale, Ariz.; and Madison Weeks and Hubert Thomas of Waybroke Smooth Fox Terriers in Jacksonville, Fla.

“My Broxden breeding program is successful because of this team,” Amy says. “Those I’ve partnered with help with the process of breeding and whelping, and they raise puppies. I breed a couple of litters a year at home with Phil’s help. Mostly, my role is to train, condition and show the puppies raised by our partners, to take them to the next level.”

“We can only be as good as our weakest link,” Phil says. “Our success depends on having a good staff and strong partnerships.”

### Passionate and Competitive

Going forward, the Booths’ breeding program will focus on Smooths, with Golden Retrievers and Irish Setters being bred infrequently. “My passion in breeding is to see what we can produce and to do it consistently from generation to generation,” Amy says. “I’ve seen that with Tux, his son Sebastian, his grandsons Dodger and Tanner, and now Nea. Those are just the Specials I have handled. There are more that are notable and are adding to this program.”

Phil’s fascination lies not only with certain breeds, but with individual dogs.



Grooming in their kennel, Amy trims the rear of Nea, while Batzner holds her head steady, and Phil brushes Oakley, who he handled to win the German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America National Specialty in October in Ionia, Mich.

“I’m incredibly curious,” he says. “I have to know why they do the little things they do, why they acted one way yesterday and a different way today. I like to study them and apply what I learn.”

“Phil has the ability with breeds he has worked with to know how each of them tick, so he gets more out of them,” says Amy. “Like a veterinarian figures out what is happening with a dog physically, Phil figures out dogs’ behaviors.”

“They have different temperaments,” he says. “It takes time, practice and observation to learn the right buttons to push with a dog. Like with anything else, though, I believe that time and hard work pay off.”

With that in mind, the Booths work their dogs like athletes preparing for competition. In fair weather, that entails exercise in the fenced yard and gaiting around the circle driveway. Snow can blanket Michigan for four or five months of the year, which is when they use the treadmill in the garage

next to the dog room. They favor running the dogs outdoors, when possible, whatever the season.

“My thinking is, ‘You can wash off the mud, but you can’t wash on the muscle,’” Amy says.

“The AKC standard for many breeds calls for well-muscled dogs,” says Phil. “We want well-conditioned athletes. If they aren’t conditioned, they aren’t up to standard.”

To provide dogs with needed protein, the Booths feed *Purina Pro Plan Performance Formula* and/or *Pro Plan Sensitive Skin & Stomach Formula*. Some of the dogs also are fed *Pro Plan Selects Natural Chicken & Brown Rice Entrée*.

In a dog room with 18 kennels, a grooming table and bathing tub, the Booths balance space, attention and care among their dogs and clients.



BlueRose associate Kate Batzner prepares bowls of *Purina Pro Plan Performance Formula*, *Pro Plan Sensitive Skin & Stomach Formula*, and *Pro Plan Selects Natural Chicken & Brown Rice Entrée*.

They are showing around six Specials this year, with the rest being class dogs. Amy and Phil’s handling abilities provide their livelihood and fulfill their passions beyond breeding.

“I am an incredibly competitive person,” Phil says. “I always want to win. A strength of mine, which sometimes can be a weakness, is how demanding I am of myself to perform well.”

A competitive thread burns in Amy as well. She finds humor in the idea prospective clients may not hire her to show a Brittany or other sporting dog, thinking she wouldn’t want to compete against her husband.

“If they think I won’t push my dog to outperform Phil and his dog, they don’t know,” she says, laughing. “I absolutely want to outdo him.”

Phil acknowledges Amy’s statement with a slight smile, like a man who has heard the truth before, and knows the feeling is mutual. BlueRose is built on such give-and-take. It’s built on a marriage. ■

# TEAMING WITH *Excellence*

BY KAITE FLAMM

**T**he exuberance of competition was felt during the Jefferson County (Mo.) Kennel Club (JCKC) obedience and rally trials held in August at the Purina Event Center in Gray Summit, Mo. Discipline, however, was the essence of the three-day event that included more than 200 entrants per day.

Cathy Sutler of Imperial, Mo., and her rescued 5-year-old Italian Greyhound, Bella, CD, RAE, CGC, glided side by side through the course, performing coordinated maneuvers with ease. To achieve such a fluid performance — and the sport’s top title of Rally Advanced Excellent (RAE) — has taken years of training, 16 months of competition and an attentive relationship that underscores it all.

“Rally feels like a team activity, because we are always in close contact with our dogs on the course,” Sutler says. “Every step, every act and every behavior, you do it together.

“The perfect rally dog is a calm dog that pays close attention to his or her owner’s every movement and every word, but also the dog must know how to have fun. A well-balanced dog usually has better odds on the course.”

There are four levels of competition in American Kennel Club rally trials: Rally Novice (RN), Rally Advanced (RA), Rally Excellent (RE) and RAE. To earn titles in rally obedience, handlers and dogs must achieve a certain number of legs, or qualifying scores, on courses with numbered stations that dictate the team’s path and maneuvers.

To earn a qualifying score, competitors must retain at least 70 points of 100 points they start with per run. Final scores are determined after point



Cathy Sutler runs a rally obedience course with her Italian Greyhound, Bella, CD, RAE, CGC. Inset photos, left: Signs at numbered stations tell competitors what exercises to perform.

deductions for errors. To achieve RN, RA and RE titles, three legs are necessary. For an RAE title, a team must achieve 10 legs, each consisting of qualifying in Rally Advanced B and Rally Excellent B courses the same day.

After completing the Rally Novice title, two distinct changes take place: Handlers cannot touch their dogs, and dogs must compete off leash. All competitions are timed. If two teams achieve the same score, their times distinguish their order of finish in the trial.

In Rally Novice, handlers are allowed to verbally praise dogs and to clap and pat their legs as encouragement. The team must correctly maneuver through the course of 10 to 15 signs with instructions. Up to five stationary signs require them to stop and perform indicated exercises, such as directional turns, a 360-degree turn and changes of pace.

In Rally Advanced, teams are required to complete a course with 12 to 17 stations that include up to seven stationary exercises with jumps.

The competition becomes harder with each level. In Rally Excellent, handlers are allowed only to gesture and verbally encourage their dogs, while moving through the 15 to 20 required stations. These stations include two jumps and up to seven stationary exercises. Exercises may include a moving stand. This involves the handler backing up three steps, while the dog stays in the heel position. The dog then stands as the handler walks a circle around the dog, pausing before the team proceeds to the next station.

After completing the course, dogs must honor competitors by performing the sit or down command at the end of a 6-foot leash anywhere in the ring the judge instructs. The dog must stay in that position until the next dog completes the course.

There are more than 30 obedience and rally obedience trials held at Purina Farms each year. Some are part of larger events that include conformation. Obedience and rally are similar in their goals to train canine companions and competitors to behave well at home and in public. The distinction is drawn in the details of the sports.



Patrick Corcoran poses with his Belgian Sheepdog, Dayspring's All Fun 'N' Games, after competing in their first Rally Novice obedience trial.

In Novice, Open and Utility obedience trials, handler-dog teams begin with 200 points and deductions range from half a point to all points lost if a dog fails to perform the exercise properly. Perfection of each movement is necessary to avoid deductions. This includes mastering the heel command. A proper heel requires a dog to be precisely beside the handler, not too far forward, backward, to the side or bumping into the handler.

Patrick Corcoran of Florissant, Mo., recently joined the excitement of rally trials. The JKC trial was his first. Corcoran initially wanted his 16-month-old Belgian Sheepdog, Dayspring's All Fun 'N' Games, for companionship when hiking and swimming. He soon took interest in competing with "Caera" in rally.

"Rally is the perfect activity for me and Caera because it challenges us mentally while allowing us to build a stronger bond," he says. "Plus, it makes Caera a more obedient dog."

Meanwhile, Sutler and "Bella" also competed in relay fashion with three handler teammates and their dogs in the Rally Team Novice class. Each handler-dog team ran the course separately, then the four pairs' scores were added together, totaling 399 out of 400 points.

The team consisted of: Barbara Redecker of Pevely, Mo., with her 5-year-old Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Grady's Luck of the Irish, CDX, RAE, CGC; Sandi Thompson of Arnold, Mo., with her 6-year-old Standard Schnauzer, Kesef Que Sara Sara ForJaySans, CDX, RE, TD, CGC; and JKC president and trial chairwoman JoAnn Hankemeyer of Imperial, Mo., with her 4-year-old English Springer Spaniel, CH Desertsun's Float Like A Butterfly, CD, BN, GN, RE, OA, OAJ, CGC.

"Our club has been coming to Purina Farms since long before the Purina Event Center was built," Hankemeyer says. "We hold conformation shows and obedience and rally trials. The staff is so supportive of our interests.

"It is so nice not to have to lug around all our chairs, ring gating and performance equipment. We no longer have to rent and put down mats or scrounge for tables. Everything is right here for



JoAnn Hankemeyer competes with CH Desertsun's Float Like A Butterfly, CD, BN, GN, RE, OA, OAJ, CGC, at the Jefferson County Kennel Club rally obedience trial in August.

us. We just have to show up. That lets us concentrate on the shows and trials, not the setup."

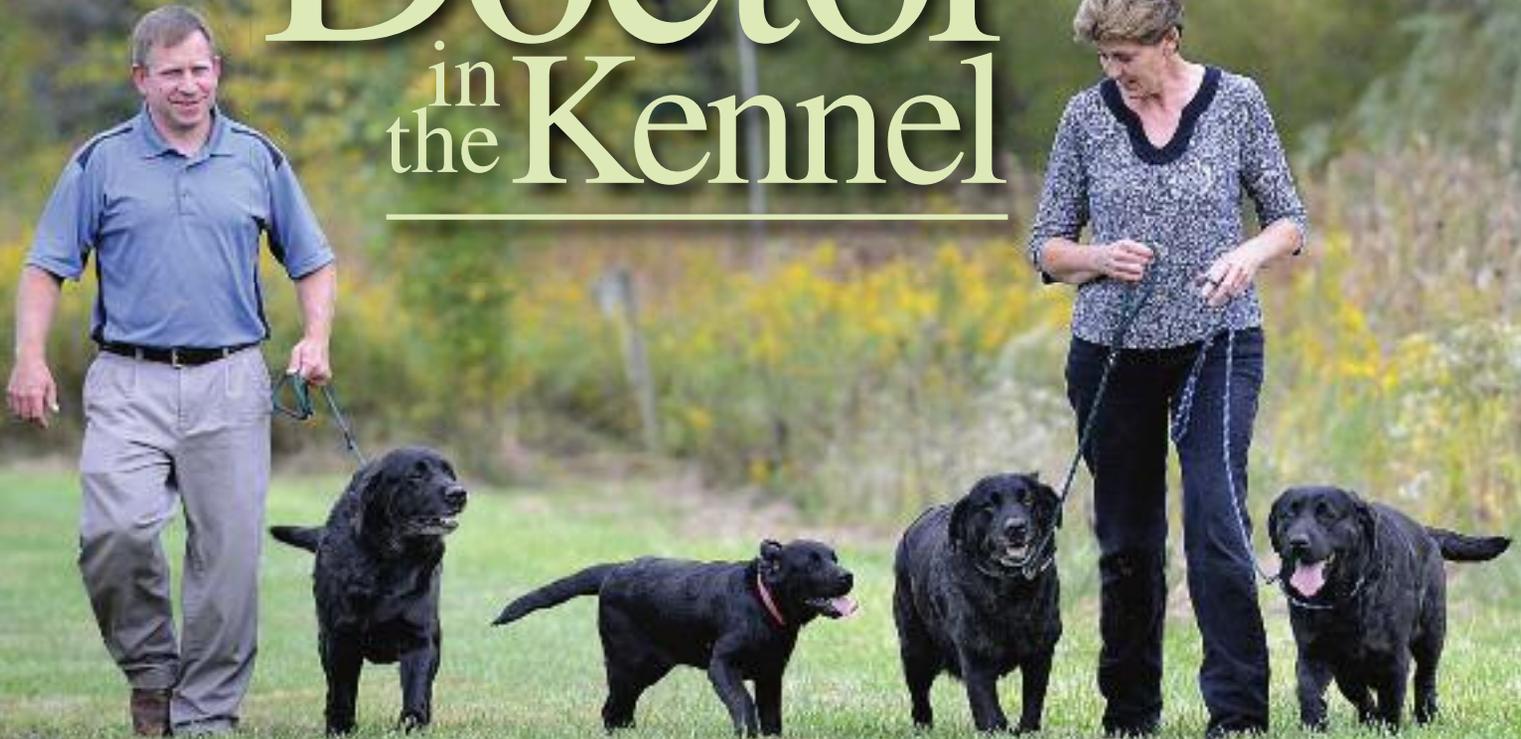
Though a newcomer to obedience trials, Corcoran recognizes the benefits of training and competing with Caera, and he is smitten with the sport.

"Rally is a sport in which almost any dog can participate," Corcoran says. "It starts with a willingness to put in the work necessary to train your dog and a commitment to build a great relationship so you can compete as a team. My hope is that we'll get a Novice title, and then who knows where the future will take us?" ■

*For more information about rally obedience and obedience trials or to schedule an all-breed or National Specialty dog show at the Purina Event Center, please contact Kaite Flamm, Purina Event Center Manager, at 888-688-PETS (888-688-7387), or by e-mail at [kaite.flamm@purina.nestle.com](mailto:kaite.flamm@purina.nestle.com). Please visit [www.purinaproclub.com/eventcenter](http://www.purinaproclub.com/eventcenter) to learn more about the Purina Event Center.*

# A Doctor in the Kennel

Drs. John and Karen Helmers enjoy daily walks on their farm with their Labrador Retrievers. From left are: Paradocs Tabatha's Caillou, his granddaughter puppy, Paradocs Nani's Gemstone, his dam, Paradocs Tabatha's Kali, and his daughter, Paradocs Tabatha's Pebble. The adult Paradocs Labradors represent three of seven generations of Specialty winners.



Veterinarians who breed dogs for shows and field trials have an edge when it comes to their advanced knowledge and years of experience. They also have a competitive streak laced in wanting to achieve excellence in their breeds. *Today's Breeder* recently interviewed breeder-veterinarians to learn the secrets of their success. Here, we share their stories, telling how they are making a difference in their breeds and touching the lives of others in the fancy.

## A Love for Labradors

When it came time for Drs. John and Karen Helmers to name their kennel, they aptly chose Paradocs Labrador Retrievers, a play on the words “pair of doctors.”

The veterinarian couple who owns Greencastle Veterinary Clinic in Indiana has come a long way since veterinary school, when they owned two rescued Labrador Retrievers. Already fond of the breed, John, and then

Karen, became a Labrador lover in 1994 during his senior externship at the veterinary clinic of Dr. Fran Smith in Burnsville, Minn.

“Fran is a board-certified theriogenologist, and she also breeds Labrador Retrievers (Danikk Labradors),” John says. “She gives lectures on canine reproduction all over the world. Her interest in Labradors and reproduction drew a lot of clients with Labradors. I literally fell in love with the breed in Minnesota.”



At their Greencastle (Ind.) Veterinary Clinic, the Helmers examine “Emmy,” a black Labrador Retriever female puppy.

Transitioning from being pure pet owners to Labrador competitors, they started out with hunt tests and obedience trials, then discovered dog shows. “I am not sure why we liked conformation,” Karen says. “I think it was the whole challenge of breeding a beautiful dog and keeping the whole dog in mind — temperament, working ability, movement and health clearances.”

Not long afterward, they found a mentor in Carol Heidl, the breeder of 110 champion Labradors (Tabatha Labradors) finished

exclusively in Specialty shows. Her English-style Labradors were exactly what they wanted. “Her bitches were beautiful, calm, trainable, easy to live with,” says Karen. “They were what we really loved about the breed, and they set a high standard for our kennel.”

Their first two Labradors from Heidi — Tabatha’s Tassel and Tabatha’s Frazzle — became Specialty-winning champions and provided top-quality foundation stock for their Paradocs’ breeding program. Paradocs Tabatha’s Caillou, a Frazzle grandson, won Best of Breed from the Bred-By Exhibitor class, from over 760 class dogs, at the Labrador Retriever Club of the Potomac Specialty.

“‘Caillou’ really put our kennel on the map,” Karen says. “He also produced well as a sire. His daughter, Paradocs Pebble, won three Specialties.”

Breeding and exhibiting their Labradors “brings something extra to our practice,” says Karen. “We understand breeders and are really glad to work with good ones who want to advance their breed and produce healthy, long-lived dogs.”

“We have a keen interest in all aspects of breeding,” John says. “We take part in continuing education aimed at reproduction. At our clinic, we offer pre-breeding examinations, health clearance testing, ovulation timing, artificial insemination and help with whelping and raising litters. A lot of this is not learned in veterinary school.”

Though Karen is the one who most enjoys going to dog shows, she and



In the examination room at his South Mill Veterinary Clinic in Boardman, Ohio, Dr. Robert Reynolds checks the eyes of Write Me a Prescription, a German Shorthaired Pointer.

John share breeding decisions. “Every litter is carefully planned,” she explains. “We choose breeding partners based on years working with Carol and other mentors like Chris Grisell (Nani’s Weimaraners) and Doug Johnson, Jeane Haverick and Jamie Hubbard (Clussexx Spaniels), and studying pedigrees and dogs.”

“With every litter, we hope to improve on the parents,” John adds. “Sometimes we have the goal of just maintaining what we have. We have some lovely bitches and are sometimes just happy not to go backward.”

### The Next Best Generation

For many years, Dr. Robert “Bob” Reynolds of Canfield, Ohio, was content breeding an occasional litter of bird dogs for hunting. His fancy was Weimaraners and English Setters, using them together in the field to point, flush and retrieve game. Then, he discovered German Shorthaired Pointers, a versatile breed well-suited to his newfound interest in walking field trials.

“Being a veterinarian, I had cared for a lot of German Shorthairs over the years,” he says. “I liked their levelheadedness and temperament and decided to get one to try hunting with.”

His new best friend had been started by professional trainer George Hickox and proved to be a far-ranging pointer, capable of endurance horseback stakes. Bob had not competed in horseback field trials, so



Reynolds motions that his Shorthair, FC WTR HiPoint’s Hightailing Ruby, is pointing on game.



Dr. John and Susan Hamil consider breeding an art and a science. They take pleasure in striving to improve each generation of their Quiet Creek Bloodhounds.

Hickox suggested that he seek a professional to help him. Chris Goegan, a trainer and handler in Alliance, Ohio, masterfully shaped his ambitious Shorthair, Woodland Trail Jester, into the 2001 NGSPA (National German Shorthaired Pointer Association) Region 4 Derby Classic Champion.

“The hook was set with this win,” Bob says, “and the many that followed.”

Kyle’s Hightailing Luke became a three-time National German Shorthaired Pointer Pheasant Champion, having won in 2004, 2006 and 2007, and the Runner-Up Champion at the National German Pointing Dog National Championship in 2006. GK’s Nuke It captured the 2006 National German Shorthaired Pointer Championship.

“I was hooked on the excitement of competition, and I was enjoying meeting people with similar interests from around the country,” Bob says.

A busy veterinarian and owner of two Ohio veterinary practices, the South Mill Veterinary Clinic in Boardman and the Doctors Park Veterinary Clinic in Canfield, Bob found pleasure in sending his best dogs

to be developed and handled in field trials by Goegan. “Field trials are held all over,” he says. “There is no way I am able to travel to compete at the national level, as Chris does with my dogs. I try to attend most of the trials though.”

Having top-caliber Shorthairs gave new meaning to breeding for Bob at his Woodland Trails kennel. Selection of the best sires and dams to produce athletes capable of winning on the national circuit became the emphasis. “Being a veterinarian and having knowledge of anatomy and physiology has helped in producing the next best generation,” he says. “Obviously, the more knowledge you have about health gives you a better chance to have a positive outcome.”

“Luke” and “Nuke” were successful sires whose championship-winning offspring made them AKC Field Trial Sires of the Year, Luke in 2008 and Nuke in 2010. Luke’s daughter, HiPoint’s Hightailing Ruby, a far-reaching, fast-running female, was the 2011 National German Pointing Dog All-Age Runner-Up Champion.

Another Luke offspring and a Nuke grandson is Woodland Trails LL Cool J, a stylish, animated male. His dam, Whiskey Run’s A Star is Born, was the 2007 National Shooting Dog Champion. “Ruby” and “Woody” are Luke’s offspring from different litters.

Bob breeds one litter a year. “Winning isn’t necessarily the goal, although it is really nice to win,” he says. “The real goal is to produce genetically sound, healthy animals that are athletically talented so they can be passed along to others who enjoy German Shorthaired Pointers.”

## A Constant Balancing Act

At the Quiet Creek Bloodhound kennel of Susan and Dr. John Hamil in Laguna Beach, Calif., tradition prevails. The veterinarian in the family provides veterinary expertise, and the breeder decides which dogs to breed and which to take to shows.

“It’s a partnership,” John says. “It’s ideal, really. I provide the veterinary knowledge for whelping, care of the bitch and her puppies, and Susan makes virtually all the breeding decisions.”

“It really is valuable to have a veterinarian in the family, particularly to help with whelping and breeding,” Susan says. “In the past 10 years, we’ve gone to more frozen and fresh-chilled semen breedings, and John has taken a more active role in the breeding process.”

The Hamils’ success in producing top Bloodhound show dogs is noteworthy. Their current No. 1 Bloodhound and No. 5 Hound, campaigned by professional handler Bruce Schultz of Riverside, Calif., GCH (Silver) Quiet Creek’s Kiss and Tell, recently won the 2011 American Bloodhound Club (ABC) National Specialty. The No. 2 Bloodhound is their male, GCH Quiet Creek’s Windfall, who won the Top Twenty this year and Best of

Breed last year at the ABC National Specialty. They also bred CH Ridgerunner Unforgettable, the breed's top-winning Bloodhound bitch of all time and the Westminster Hound Group winner in 2001.

When the couple were married in 1981, Susan exhibited their Bloodhounds as a breeder-owner-handler. That is, until she started working in her husband's Canyon Animal Hospital as his veterinary technician and office manager.

John and Karen help to advance canine health through leadership roles. John is past president of the California Veterinary Association. Susan is chairwoman of the AKC Delegates Committee on Canine Health and a board member of the AKC Canine Health Foundation and the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals.

Having both grown up in the South — John is from Mississippi and Susan is from Louisiana — they had a mutual appreciation for hounds. "Bloodhounds are personable but independent,"

John says. "I like a dog that is independent in his decision-making and in daily life. I find it particularly intriguing that this breed has such strong scent ability, it assists in police work and search and rescue."

"I was first attracted to their look, their long ears and expressions," says Susan, the 2007 AKC Hound Group Breeder of the Year. "Then, it was their personality that kept me involved in this breed."

As Susan realized the challenges of breeding standout Bloodhounds for all-breed competition, that became part

of the fun. "They are not particularly trainable in ways we usually consider other dogs to be. They don't obey commands like 'Sit' 'Down,' 'Stay.' They are scent hounds and want to be in front leading, showing where the trail is. You have to be able to transfer that to the ring and motivate them to do things they would not normally do."

The Hamils' success in showing their own dogs has attracted breeders and exhibitors of National Specialty and Westminster winners to their veterinary



Susan Hamil poses at home with CH Quiet Creek's Classic Rock, a 3-year-old Bloodhound bitch who has been CHIC (Canine Health Information Center) certified for health clearances. At left: Dr. John Hamil cares for a patient at his Canyon Animal Hospital in Laguna Beach, Calif.



clinic. "We understand firsthand many issues that breeders face. We stress that with health screenings, proper nutrition and training, purebred dogs may live long, happy, healthy lives," Susan says.

In their own breeding program, "we enjoy producing dogs that look and behave as the breed standard says they should," she says. "It isn't just about beauty. They have to be sound physically and temperamentally."

"The animals permeate all aspects of our lives," John says. "It is a constant balancing act, but it dovetails nicely. It's been a very successful marriage, partnership and business. It's not work. It's a great pleasure."

### Progress to be Proud Of

If Dr. David "Doc" Birdsall of Gloucester, Va., had not been a veterinarian, he might never have become a breeder of Black & Tan Coonhounds. Shortly after he opened his Gloucester Veterinary Hospital, a hunter brought in a Black & Tan female needing orthopedic surgery due to an injury.

"He was afraid the dog would limp after surgery," Doc recalls. "He had decided not to keep her. I asked if I could try to repair her fractured hip, and he agreed."

"Wendy" became Doc's first Black & Tan Coonhound and the foundation for his Dach Lair bloodline. She also was the first Black & Tan that Doc took pleasure hunting, a pastime he enjoyed with her until she was 11 years old.

That pastime grew into a family endeavor involving his wife, Chirpie, daughter, Kathy (Shorter), and son, David Jr.

"I started breeding in the late 1970s," says Doc, "then I started in nite hunt competitions and bench shows in 1981. The time I had for going to nite hunts was limited, so my wife and daughter did the majority of the showing for the first 20 years. I would go to big annual events like Autumn Oaks."

As he got more involved in breeding and competing, Doc realized that "the only way to continue in this sport is to breed a quality hound. I basically

had two strains, hunting and show. I tried to intermingle these as much as I could. It's nice to have dogs that can perform in both venues and become Dual Champions."

This year marked the 28th consecutive year that the Birdsalls have traveled to Richmond, Ind., for Autumn Oaks, one of the largest United Kennel Club coonhound events. They did not leave empty-handed. Their Black & Tan male, CCH GR CH 'PR' Dach Lair's Mr. Grinch, was named the National Grand Bench Show Champion of breed. "Grinch" is one of three National Grand Champions of breed from his litter sired by Dach Lair's Heir to the Throne, himself a National Grand Champion bench winner. One littermate, Dach Lair's Tribute to 3 Kings, was the AKC World Bench Show Champion in 2006.

Through the years, Dach Lair has had three overall National Grand Bench Show Champions and 12 Black & Tan National Grand breed winners at Autumn Oaks. "A lot of people think it came easy for us," Doc says. "We went to Autumn Oaks for 10 years before we got our first trophy. We put in lots of miles, lots of showing, lots of years before we won."

Having grown up on a dairy farm and judged state and national dairy cattle competitions in college gave Doc knowledge about sound structure in animals. Combined with his veterinary experience, he had cumulative years of learning that few others enjoy. That knowledge benefited Dach Lair's breeding program.



Dr. David "Doc" Birdsall opened his Gloucester (Va.) Veterinary Hospital in 1965.

"A hound should look like a hound with proper breed characteristics but also have correct shoulder angles, and the forelegs should match the angles of the hind end with enough rib in the middle to support the two," he explains. "In so many hounds, the forelegs and hind end don't match.

This alters the gait causing certain parts of the body to work harder to compensate for the parts that don't match the standard."

A recognized expert on breeding and conformation, Doc got involved judging bench shows. He wrote articles for *Coonhound Bloodlines* and presented seminars. He and his family developed lifetime friendships with coonhound breeders and owners across the country. Whenever Doc could, he tried to help others, giving advice.

Though he retired from his veterinary practice five years ago after 40 years, Doc still owns the clinic. He continues to breed a litter every two years and still enjoys running his dogs at night. "The sound of the coonhound's bawl in the woods at night still is exhilarating," he says.

Looking back on changes in the sport, Doc says, "We've made a lot of progress in the past 30 years in the health and conformation of our coonhounds. It absolutely is something I am proud of. The sport and dogs have grown and are better today." ■



Outside his home kennel, Birdsall is shown with Dach Lair's Bart, a 2-year-old Black & Tan Coonhound. Longtime coonhound fanciers, the Birdsall family has been going to Autumn Oaks for 28 consecutive years.

# GETTING SERIOUS About SAS

Subvalvular aortic stenosis (SAS), the most common congenital heart disease in Golden Retrievers, Newfoundlands and Rottweilers, is a troublesome disease. Known for being highly complex genetically and therapeutically, SAS has a history of taking the lives of seemingly healthy dogs, robbing them of a chance for treatment in their prime.

Part of the problem is that severely affected dogs may not show signs of disease. Additionally, owners may not know or recognize their dogs' decreased exercise ability or the possibility of their fainting or collapsing from excitement. When these dogs die suddenly, their owners are left pondering the cause.

Even for dogs lucky enough to be diagnosed with severe SAS, treatment options that increase quality of life and longevity have been slim. Discovery of the heart defect usually comes after a veterinarian detects a heart murmur, leading to definitive diagnostic testing.

When a dog is diagnosed with SAS — regardless of the severity of disease — breeders receive cautionary advice from experts not to breed the dog. The risk in breeding a dog with SAS is that the heart defect easily can be passed on to offspring regardless of the genetics of the breeding partner.

The dramatic life-shortening potential of severe cases of SAS is reflected in the median 19-month survival for dogs that do not receive treatment. The median survival for dogs receiving medical therapy, consisting of beta blockers to help slow the heart, is 56 months. Dogs with mild to moderate cases of SAS typically live much longer, possibly having normal life spans, although scientific data for life estimates is not available.

Concerns about SAS have prompted the health and education committees of the Golden Retriever,

Newfoundland and Rottweiler parent clubs to educate breeders and owners about the disease and to advocate cardiac testing by veterinary cardiologists. All three parent clubs require congenital cardiac testing, along with testing for other health conditions, for dogs to receive their Canine Health Information Center (CHIC) health clearances.

Despite the challenges, good news has come in bits and pieces. Veterinary cardiologists are tackling SAS from a preventive and treatment approach. A novel treatment option being developed and investigated for dogs with SAS is cutting

balloon valvuloplasty. This procedure, used for treating coronary artery disease in adults and branch pulmonic stenosis in children, has proved successful in the short term in the majority of dogs with severe SAS that were part of a recent study. The long-term outcome of these dogs continues to be monitored.

Genetic researchers are working to find the causative gene mutation and develop a genetic test. Current research focuses on a region of chromosome 21, where an association appears likely in Rottweilers and Golden Retrievers.



Board-certified veterinary cardiologists Amara Estrada, left, and Mandi Kleman perform cutting balloon valvuloplasty at the University of Florida Veterinary Teaching Hospital on a dog that was part of a study to determine the procedure's effectiveness in treating subvalvular aortic stenosis (SAS). Kleman developed the technique as a veterinary cardiologist resident.

## Deciphering a Heart Murmur

First described in dogs in the 1960s, subvalvular aortic stenosis was not easily diagnosed until basic echocardiography, or ultrasound, began being used in veterinary cardiology in the late 1970s. Two-dimensional echocardiography, which creates an image of the heart, combined with doppler echocardiography, which determines the speed and direction of blood flow, was introduced in the 1980s.

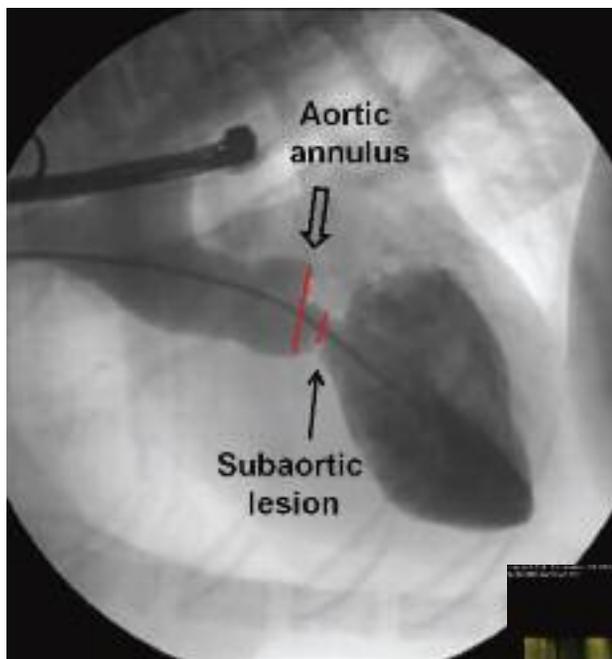
Today, doppler echocardiography is used to view a ring of tissue below the aortic valve that causes the stenosis for which the disease is named. It also detects the turbulent blood flow through the aortic valve that causes the heart murmur. Doppler technology measures the velocity of blood flow and uses this number to estimate the pressure gradient across the lesion, which is critical in making treatment decisions and determining the prognosis for an individual dog.

Even with doppler echocardiography, dogs with uncertain or mild disease can be hard to detect, which is why a board-certified veterinary cardiologist is required to interpret the results of an echocardiogram test for cardiac health clearances. Young puppies could have innocent murmurs not caused by a heart defect that may go away as the heart matures, and athletic dogs may develop physiologic murmurs unrelated to SAS.

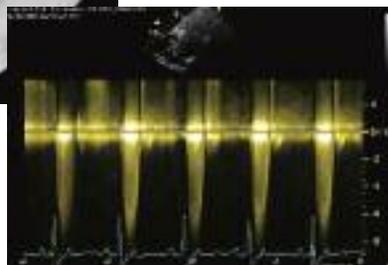
A study to determine the cardiac morphological effects of endurance training on Alaskan sled dogs found that the more conditioned the dogs, the higher the incidence of physiologic murmurs.<sup>1</sup> The incidence of heart murmurs was 15.8 percent in unconditioned sled dogs, 27.8 percent in lightly conditioned dogs, and 39.6 percent in highly conditioned sled dogs. The researchers concluded that in sled dogs, as exercise increases, the heart rate decreases, which causes an athletic heart murmur associated with improved athletic performance in dogs subject to regular exercise programs.

The best age to screen for SAS is around 16

weeks, although puppies showing abnormal signs or having a loud murmur should be tested sooner. Though early testing can help identify an affected dog, the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) mandates that dogs be 1 year of age prior to ruling them free of SAS. The age requirement relates to SAS being the only congenital heart disease that cannot be ruled out during puppyhood. This problem occurs because the abnormal tissue that



Angiography (above) depicts the narrowed stenosis that occurs in dogs with SAS. Inset photo: Doppler echocardiography is used to measure the velocity of blood flow across the stenosis.



causes SAS may begin to develop between 3 and 5 weeks of age but will continue progressing into young adulthood. OFA requires an echocardiogram for dogs with murmurs for cardiac health clearances; however, if a dog does not have a murmur at 1 year of age, the dog can be certified free of SAS by a veterinary cardiologist without an echocardiogram.

Clinical signs of SAS can vary extremely. Besides having a heart murmur, affected dogs may show signs ranging from mild panting and weakness to exercise or heat intolerance. Fainting or collapsing episodes may occur when they are excited or during exercise. Some dogs, even those with severe disease, show no signs.

A veterinary cardiologist is trained to decipher the differences among innocent, athletic and SAS heart murmurs. An echocardiogram is important to diagnose dogs with mild SAS, or soft murmurs, and thus remove them from the breeding pool. Further testing when SAS is suspected may include radiography to evaluate the heart and lungs, basic blood pressure evaluation, and an electrocardiogram to determine heart rhythm, though dogs with SAS often have normal electrocardiogram tests.

The developmental abnormality that occurs in the heart of dogs with SAS causes the secondary clinical signs and problems. The heart is divided into four chambers — the right and left ventricles and the right and left atria. Four valves separate the chambers and ensure that blood flows in one direction through the heart. SAS affects the normal blood flow exiting the heart to the body through the left ventricle via the largest blood vessel in the body, the aorta.

The stenosis, or additional fibromuscular tissue that forms a ridge or ring below the aortic valve, blocks or obstructs the flow of blood through the aorta. The ridge may be small at first but can become progressively more extensive as the puppy grows, causing the opening to the aorta to become narrower.

The heart then must work harder during each heartbeat to push the same amount of blood through the narrowed opening. As the blood is forced through the narrow opening, it squirts turbulently at a high velocity, creating the sound of the heart murmur.

Over time, the excessive workload on the left ventricle causes the muscle to thicken and become less flexible, while the space for blood in the chamber becomes smaller. The thickened heart muscle requires more energy and oxygen to work harder and pump an adequate supply of blood to the body. The energy-depleted heart muscle may conduct abnormal electrical impulses that disrupt the normal electrical rhythm of the heart. These arrhythmias may cause exercise intolerance,

fainting spells and are thought to be the cause of sudden death.

Another risk of SAS is bacterial infection of the heart valves, prompting veterinarians to urge owners to look for cuts or breaks in the skin that could lead to infection. Dogs with SAS are put on antibiotics if such an injury occurs, and special care is taken during teeth cleaning and surgical procedures, such as spay and neuter surgeries, where there is potential for bleeding. Congestive heart failure and difficulty breathing are other risks of severe SAS. In contrast, dogs with mild to moderate cases may live normal lives with moderate lifestyle changes.

## Beyond Traditional Treatment

The traditional treatment for dogs with SAS has been the use of beta blockers to help slow the heart rate and increase longevity of the dog's life. Slowing down the heart rate helps to decrease the overall workload on the heart muscle by decreasing the heart rate and force of contractions with each beat. Though veterinary cardiologists design treatment programs appropriate for individual dogs, most dogs with severe SAS live on average less than five years even with medical care. Owners of dogs with severe SAS are advised not to let their dogs perform strenuous exercise, as it promotes increased heart work and could complicate abnormal heart rhythms and lead to sudden death.

A low-pressure balloon valvuloplasty was first investigated in dogs with SAS in the early 1990s.<sup>2</sup> In this procedure, a veterinary cardiologist makes a small incision in the neck to thread a long, specialized catheter through the carotid artery into the aorta and across the stenotic region. A balloon on the end of the catheter is then inflated, dilating the stenosis. Unfortunately, survival following this interventional surgery was shown to be similar to dogs treated with beta blockers alone.

More recently, Mandi Kleman, D.V.M., DACVIM-Cardiology, developed a technique using cutting balloon valvuloplasty to help dogs diagnosed with severe SAS. A veterinary cardiology resident at the University of Florida Veteri-

nary Teaching Hospital in Gainesville at the time, Kleman and her mentor, Amara Estrada, D.V.M., DACVIM-Cardiology, associate professor, worked as a team to study the effectiveness of the technique. Funding came from the AKC Canine Health Foundation, the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine and the University of Florida.



The cutting balloon used in cutting balloon valvuloplasty has four 2-millimeter microsurgical blades that when inflated, left, force open the stenosis causing the heart obstruction. The cutting balloon then is deflated, right, and replaced with a high-pressure balloon that forcibly dilates the stenotic region.

“Based on successful data from children and adults with difficult stenotic lesions, we theorized that cutting balloon valvuloplasty might provide a much-needed new treatment option for dogs with severe SAS,” Estrada explains.

In cutting balloon valvuloplasty, the catheter is inserted in the same way as in the traditional low-pressure balloon valvuloplasty. High-technology transesophageal echocardiography and standard angiography allow the surgeon to track the catheter, while it is being threaded into the stenotic region. The cutting balloon is customized with four 2-millimeter microsurgical blades that are about five times sharper than conventional surgical blades.

As the deflated balloon is initially inserted through the carotid artery in the neck, the blades do not touch the arterial walls. When the balloon is inflated, the blades are forced open within the

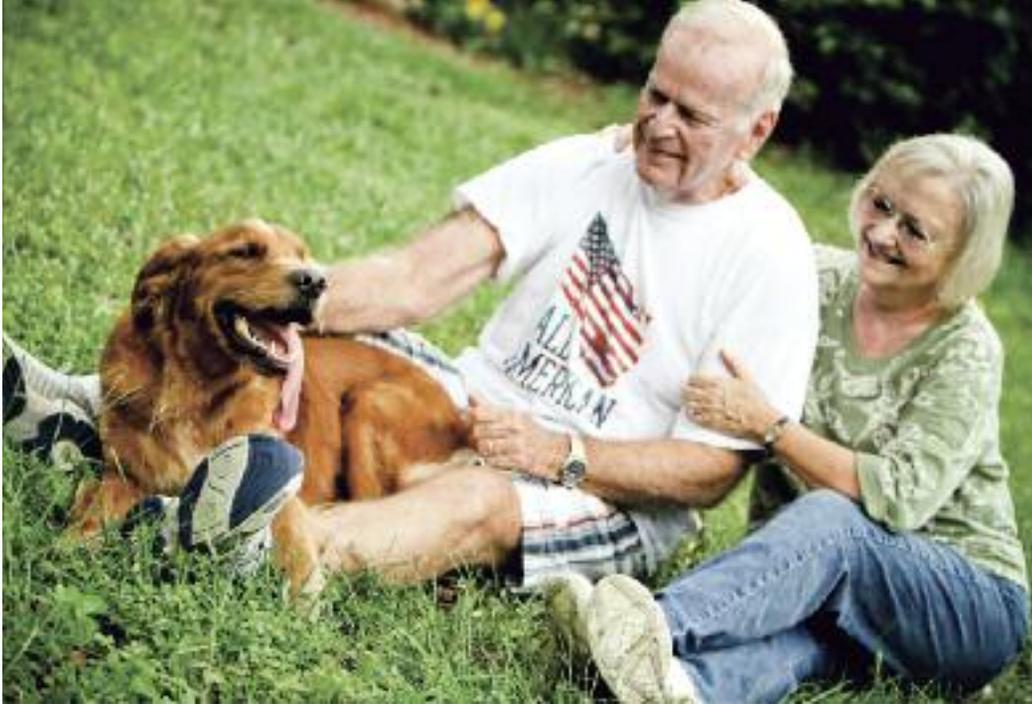
stenotic region, which cuts four incision-like slits into the obstruction. The balloon is then deflated, removed and replaced with a high-pressure balloon, which is inflated to forcibly dilate the stenotic region. The slits created by the blades are opened up with the high-pressure balloon. This combined technique has been evaluated for effectiveness in dilating the tough stenoses in dogs with severe SAS.

“The high-pressure balloon is unique and exciting to evaluate for this purpose,” Kleman says. “It is made of Kevlar, the same material used for bullet-proof vests. It achieves very high pressure, which we believe is likely necessary to develop enough force to dilate the very tough fibrous and muscular lesion in SAS.”

One of the first dogs to receive cutting balloon valvuloplasty in April 2009 was a Golden Retriever named “Buddy.” During a routine veterinary examination when Buddy was 15 months old, the veterinarian exclaimed, “Wow! He has a pronounced heart murmur,” recalls Buddy’s owner, Cal Ringquist of Inverness, Fla.

Buddy was referred to the University of Florida Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Gainesville, where Kleman was his primary veterinarian on the cardiology team. Though the Golden Retriever did not appear sick, he was considerably underweight. Kleman diagnosed Buddy with severe SAS based on two-dimensional and doppler echocardiography that measured the velocity of his blood across the stenosis. With treatment, Buddy was expected to live maybe three more years.

Although cutting balloon valvuloplasty was a novel surgical procedure, Kleman and Ringquist discussed the limited therapeutic options and decided that it was the right choice for Buddy. Buddy did well during the two-hour surgery and was hospitalized for two days following the procedure to be monitored in the Intensive Care Unit. When he went home, he had a tiny incision on his neck where the surgery took place. He also wore a Holter monitor, essentially a portable 24-hour electrocardiogram, for the first two days to detect any possible irregular heartbeats or arrhythmias



Cal Ringquist and his wife, Marilyn, enjoy quality time with their Golden Retriever, "Buddy," who received cutting balloon valvuloplasty.

following the surgery. The true results of the surgery would be determined soon.

"Before the surgery, Buddy and a Border Collie companion loved to play, but the Border Collie always would outlast Buddy," Ringquist says. "It wasn't long after the surgery until Buddy had more energy than the Border Collie."

The Golden Retriever's health improved in other measurable ways. Over the past two years, Buddy has gained 10 pounds, and his doppler echocardiogram scores have improved. Eighteen months after his surgery, Buddy continued to maintain a 25 percent decrease in the pressure gradient across the SAS lesion, which was estimated from measurements taken from the doppler echocardiography. Though Buddy has a slight heart murmur and must take beta blocker medication and an omega-3 fatty acid supplement for the rest of his life, his heart condition is no longer a daily concern and worry for Ringquist.

"We have deemed Buddy's surgery a success," Kleman says. "The majority, but not all, dogs have had results similar to his. Many of our young patients were noticeably exercise-intolerant prior to the procedure, and it was rewarding to hear of their much-improved energy level and resolution of fainting. Most of our owners have reported their dogs have enjoyed an improved quality of life following the surgery."

The surgery was performed on 14 dogs to deter-

mine its effectiveness in treating subvalvular aortic stenosis. The dogs in the study included four Boxers, a French Mastiff, a German Shepherd Dog, six Golden Retrievers, a Rottweiler and a Swiss Mountain Dog.

Kleman will monitor the 11 surviving dogs that were part of the study for the rest of their lives to determine their long-term survival and quality of life. Three dogs died between nine months and 25 months after their surgery due to SAS-related complications, either sudden death or congestive heart failure. Kleman and Estrada caution that the procedure should only be used in dogs with severe cases of SAS, as those with mild to moderate SAS have a reasonably good prognosis.

Presenting the study results last year at the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine Forum in Anaheim, Calif., Kleman had a success story to share.<sup>3</sup> "Based on these results, we have concluded that cutting balloon valvuloplasty combined with high-pressure balloon valvuloplasty is safe, feasible and effective in significantly decreasing the pressure gradient in dogs with severe SAS," says Kleman, now a clinical cardiologist at Cornell University Veterinary Specialists in Stamford, Conn. "There is potential value in this procedure for canine patients with an otherwise untreatable severe cardiac condition."

Veterinary hospitals around the country are beginning to offer the cutting balloon valvulo-

plasty. Over the last year, Kleman has provided technical assistance to veterinary cardiologists at Cornell University, the University of California at Davis, The Ohio State University and private referral veterinary hospitals. The patients have been Golden Retrievers, German Shepherd Dogs and one Newfoundland.

The cost may range from \$3,000 to \$6,000, according to the geographical area and clinic where the surgery is performed. Follow-up care could make the cost even higher. Part of the expense is the highly specialized balloons developed for humans that are not reusable. Estrada and Kleman are optimistic that the cost may be reduced in the future.

Importantly, though SAS is rare in people, this procedure may benefit children with congenital heart disease. Kleman presented her findings last year at the annual meeting of the Pediatric Interventional Cardiology Society, where it was considered a possible treatment option for various conditions.<sup>4</sup>

## A Genetic Puzzle

No DNA test exists to determine dogs that carry the gene mutation for SAS or those that are affected or normal. Since the 1970s, researchers have sought the mode of inheritance, and corresponding genetic mutation, but no definitive results have come about.

In the 1970s, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine aimed to identify the genetics and pathology of SAS in Newfoundlands. Their study, published in the September 1976 issue of the *American Heart Journal*, determined that SAS was a polygenic disease involving multiple genes.<sup>5</sup> The findings were based on five types of breedings that involved crossing affected and normal Newfoundlands with five non-Newfoundland breeds not affected by SAS (Boxers, Black and Tan Coonhounds, Collies, Labrador Retrievers and Malamutes). The breedings were backcrossed to the affected and normal lines. Ultimately, the researchers suggested that SAS was a dominant trait with various modifying aspects.

Kathryn Meurs, D.V.M., Ph.D., associate dean of research and graduate studies at North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine, has been working on SAS genetic research, along with other canine heart diseases, most of her career. She now believes that SAS may be a recessive genetic disease with variable expression.

Studying the DNA of normal and SAS-affected Golden Retrievers and Rottweilers, she and her colleagues have found a region on chromosome 21 that appears to be associated with the disease in both breeds. “If the gene is responsible for SAS in these two breeds, it increases the likelihood that other breeds with SAS may share the same mutation,” Meurs says. “This would mean that development of DNA tests for other breeds would likely be easier even though each breed may have additional genetic modifiers.”

Over the past decade, Meurs has been the lead investigator of several research projects supported by the AKC Canine Health Foundation, with funding from the Rottweiler Health Foundation, Medalion Rottweiler Club, Golden Retriever Club of

America, Golden Retriever Foundation and the Newfoundland Club of America. The time-consuming collection of pedigrees, DNA samples and clinical information including echocardiography data and physical examinations has contributed to the chromosome 21 finding.

Maryke Nau of Snohomish, Wash., learned about SAS and Meurs’ research three years ago, when Meurs worked at Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine. As the co-breeder of her first litter of Golden Retriever puppies, Nau took the 14-month-old puppies to the veterinary teaching hospital for congenital heart testing for their health clearances. A heart murmur was detected in a female, “Lilly,” one of 13 in the litter, which led to a diagnosis of SAS.

“At the time, we thought both parents were clear of SAS,” Nau says. “Then, about one and half years ago, an echocardiogram indicated that the dam is affected with SAS. She and Lilly, who recently turned 5 years old, have mild murmurs that do not require treatment.”

Little scientific data documents the prevalence of

SAS, although the disease is common in Golden Retrievers, Rottweilers and Newfoundlands. It also occurs in Boxers and German Shepherd Dogs. Meurs recommends that breeders do not breed dogs that have SAS. “If a dog merits breeding, it is important to breed to an unrelated dog that does not have SAS and does not have relatives suspected of having SAS,” Meurs says.

Despite the challenges, Meurs is optimistic that it is a matter of time before the discovery of a causative gene mutation. Meanwhile, she continues to request blood samples from Golden Retrievers and Rottweilers that are confirmed to have SAS and that are confirmed clear by echocardiography. Samples should be sent to the Meurs Cardiac Genetics laboratory at North Carolina State University. For information, please contact Meurs at [kate\\_meurs@ncsu.edu](mailto:kate_meurs@ncsu.edu) or Josh Stern at [JStemDVM@gmail.com](mailto:JStemDVM@gmail.com).

Similarly, Kleman and Estrada are optimistic that combined cutting balloon and high-pressure balloon valvuloplasty will have favorable long-term results for the dogs that underwent the novel surgery. Some of the most severe cases no longer have fainting spells and are more energetic, even though Kleman and Estrada still recommend the dogs should not run.

Reflecting on how the surgery helped his beloved Golden Retriever, Ringquist says, “It saved Buddy’s life.” ■

<sup>1</sup> Stepien RL, Hinchcliff KW, Constable PD, Olson J. Effect of endurance training on cardiac morphology in Alaskan sled dogs. *American Physiological Society*. 1998;1368-1375.

<sup>2</sup> Meurs K, Lehmkuhl L, Bonagura J. Survival times in dogs with severe subvalvular aortic stenosis treated with balloon valvuloplasty or atenolol. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 2005;227(3):420-424.

<sup>3</sup> Schmidt MK, Estrada AH, Maisenbacher HW, Prošek RP, Pogue B, Shih A, Paolillo JA. Combined cutting balloon and high-pressure balloon valvuloplasty for dogs with severe subaortic stenosis. *American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine Forum* (oral abstract). Anaheim, CA. June 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Schmidt MK, Estrada AH, Maisenbacher HW, Prošek RP, Pogue B, Shih A, Paolillo JA. Combined cutting balloon and high-pressure balloon angioplasty for dogs with severe subaortic stenosis. *Pediatric Interventional Cardiac Symposium* (oral abstract). Chicago, IL. July 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Pyle RL, Patterson DF, Chacko S. The genetics and pathology of discrete subaortic stenosis in the Newfoundland dog. *American Heart Journal*. 1976;92(3):324-334.

## Understanding the Severity of SAS

Subvalvular aortic stenosis (SAS) is a potentially fatal congenital heart defect that occurs commonly in Golden Retrievers, Newfoundlands and Rottweilers. Clinical signs vary widely based on the severity of disease. Dogs with mild to moderate SAS may live normal life spans, yet dogs with severe SAS may die suddenly with no signs of disease. Regardless of the severity of SAS, experts recommend that dogs diagnosed with SAS should not be bred. Here is information about the three classifications.

Mild SAS	Doppler echocardiography indicates pressure gradient across the lesion is <40mmHg. A dog usually shows no clinical signs and leads a normal life. Rarely do these dogs develop clinical signs associated with arrhythmias, bacterial valve infections or sudden death.
Moderate SAS	Doppler echocardiography indicates pressure gradient across the lesion from 40mmHg to 80mmHg. A dog may have no clinical signs or may have decreased appetite, reduced exercise capacity, weakness, excessive panting, heat intolerance, fainting or sudden death. These dogs are expected to have a fairly normal life span. Owners are cautioned that dogs may develop clinical signs associated with arrhythmias, congestive heart failure, bacterial valve infections or sudden death.
Severe SAS	Doppler echocardiography indicates pressure gradient across the lesion is >80mmHg. A dog may have no clinical signs or may have decreased appetite, reduced mild to severe exercise capacity, weakness, excessive panting, mild to severe heat intolerance, or mild to severe fainting. Sudden death, often the first clinical sign other than a heart murmur, is common in young dogs. Dogs that do not die suddenly are at high risk as they age for congestive heart failure, bacterial valve infections or sudden death.

Source: Mandi Kleman, D.V.M., DACVIM-Cardiology, Cornell University Veterinary Specialists, Stamford, Conn.

# BIRD DOG FOUNDATION

## *Spreads Its Wings*

Visitors to the Bird Dog Foundation in Grand Junction, Tenn., will soon enjoy a new 6,000-square-foot annex, where they will learn about sporting breeds and those who have dedicated their lives to advancing and supporting them. Construction of the \$500,000 addition began last May after a groundbreaking ceremony and is expected to be completed next February.

“This new space will give us more room to feature various sporting breeds,” says David Smith, executive director of the Bird Dog Foundation. “The groups that have contributed to this effort will receive dedicated space to celebrate their breeds. Importantly, this addition will help relieve crowding in the Field Trial Hall of Fame and the National Bird Dog Museum.”

Founded in 1991, the Bird Dog Foundation is dedicated to preserving the past and protecting the future for sporting dog fanciers worldwide. Visitors may tour the foundation for free, although donations are appreciated. The 24,000-square-foot facility includes the National Bird Dog Museum for Pointing Dogs, Retrievers and Spaniels, the Field Trial Hall of Fame and the Wildlife Heritage Center.

The museum features historical memorabilia including portraits, figurines

and photographs of memorable dogs and their trainers, owners and handlers. The Field Trial Hall of Fame honors dogs and people who have contributed significantly to their sports, and the Wildlife Heritage Center provides information about upland game birds and waterfowl and the importance of conservation.

Several breed groups have contributed to the addition. They include: the Brittany, English Cocker Spaniel, English Springer Spaniel, German Shorthaired Pointer, German Wirehaired Pointer, Gordon Setter, Irish Setter, Red Setter, Vizsla, and Weimaraner.

“These breed groups include donors from all regions of the country,” Smith says. “They not only have contributed to the construction but also to an endowment fund that will secure our ability to operate and maintain the new wing well into the future.”



Visitors frequent the Bird Dog Foundation in Grand Junction, Tenn., to learn about sporting dogs.



Bird Dog Foundation board members and sporting dog enthusiasts join local dignitaries last May at a groundbreaking ceremony for construction of a 6,000-square-foot annex to the facility that includes the National Bird Dog Museum and the Field Trial Hall of Fame in Grand Junction, Tenn.

Hayley Killam of Laredo, Texas, a German Shorthaired Pointer enthusiast who helped with fundraising, says, “The Bird Dog Foundation and this new annex are important because so many people have put so much of their lives into the sport and developing their breeds. Field trialing is a profession for many people and a hobby for so many more. We need to properly honor those who have given and achieved so much.”

The addition will connect to the southeastern corner of the Foundation building. The project is expected to be completed by February 2012, with a dedication planned during the Field Trial Hall of Fame ceremony that month. Updates of the construction progress and photos are posted online at [www.birddogfoundation.com](http://www.birddogfoundation.com).

### Purina President Receives President’s Award

The AKC Canine Health Foundation presented its annual President’s Award to Terence E. Block, who is retiring in December as Purina President,



Purina President Terence Block, left, receives the AKC Canine Health Foundation's President's Award from Lee Arnold, chairman of the board, in August during the biennial National Parent Club Canine Health Conference.

North American Pet Foods, at the eighth biennial National Parent Club Canine Health Conference Sponsored by Purina.

“It is a privilege to present Terry with this award,” said Lee Arnold, chairman of the Foundation’s board, at a dinner at the Purina Event Center in Gray Summit, Mo. “Throughout his career, Terry has continued to demonstrate his commitment to canine health research and the companion animal industry. Under his leadership, Purina has contributed more than \$8.5 million to the Foundation. We pause to recognize his efforts and celebrate his contributions.”

In accepting the award, Block said, “Tonight, it’s all about the dogs — and supporting groundbreaking discoveries in canine health through innovative research by scientists and veterinary professionals. Purina’s decision 15 years ago to sponsor and support the Canine Health Foundation continues to pay huge dividends for all dogs. I am proud to accept this award on behalf of Purina’s 7,000 associates in the U.S.”

“We congratulate Terry on being selected for this year’s award,” said Terry Warren, chief executive officer and general counsel for the Foundation. “His tremendous contributions to canine health through his work with Purina have helped us continue our mission to help dogs live longer, healthier lives.”

The Canine Health Foundation is a nonprofit organization that funds exclusively scientific research that helps prevent, treat and cure canine diseases. Since its beginning in 1995, the Foundation has funded more than \$33.2 million in canine health research projects and education programs.



### Outdoor Writers Get Scoop on Training

Professional trainer and Purina consultant Tom Dokken, above, demonstrates positive training techniques used to bring out natural instincts in Labrador Retrievers at the Outdoor Writers conference sponsored by Purina in August. Dokken owns Dokken’s Oak Ridge Kennels in Northfield, Minn., one of the largest training facilities in the country for sporting breeds.

The three-day workshop, which was held at the Purina Event Center in Gray Summit, Mo., included talks on nutrition for hardworking sporting dogs, the impact of stress on performance, and information about PurinaCare pet insurance. Terry Warren, chief executive officer and general counsel of the AKC Canine Health Foundation, gave an overview of canine research sponsored by the Foundation and Purina’s contributions to it.

“Purina holds the Outdoor Writers conference to introduce writers from across the country to what it takes to develop a top-performing sporting dog,” says Purina Director of Sporting Bob West. “This year’s event provided information showing how physical conditioning, training and nutrition work together to help dogs achieve their best.”

The three-day National Parent Club Canine Health Conference, held Aug. 12 to 14 in St. Louis, was attended by more than 120 parent club representatives as well as AKC officials and delegates, veterinary students, members of the Canine Health Foundation board and Purina representatives. Leading researchers shared insights on advances related to canine degenerative myelopathy, cancer, heart diseases, stress and inflammatory bowel disease. A highlight was an update by Dr. Cynthia Otto of the University of Pennsylvania showing that few search-and-rescue dogs deployed following the 9/11 terrorist attacks developed long-term health problems and few suffered respiratory conditions. Otto is the lead investigator of a groundbreaking health study of search-and-rescue dogs.

Audio presentations and slides from the conference are available online at [www.akcchf.org](http://www.akcchf.org). ■

# Making Second Series

BY BARBARA FAWVER

*Tugging excitedly on their leads, four brace Beagle puppies instinctively know they are about to track a rabbit. The puppies' exuberance on this sweaty, end-of-summer September morning is heard in their joyous barking. Pushing their noses downward to the ground, they already are sniffing for rabbit scent. Their tails oscillate rhythmically like windshield wipers on a lazy, rainy day.*



Ron and Doby Gray head to the training field with their derby-age brace Beagles, "Romeo," "Dimond," "Debonair" and "Royal Coco."

**H**olding steady to the leads while the long-eared, tricolor and chocolate Beagle puppies pull vigorously, brace Beagle breeders Ron and Josephine “Doby” Gray can’t help but smile. It’s been a bumper-crop year. The 6- and 7-month-old puppies are among 12 promising derby-age Beagles whelped from five litters sired by four noteworthy males. Their pedigrees, enriched with Purina Award winners and top producers, read like a Who’s Who in Brace Beagling.

Five puppies are from litters split with friends; the others are from their own litters. All were born at their Gray’s Beagles kennel in Georgetown, Pa. With double the usual number of pups to train and determine which ones to take to next spring’s Federation derby field trials, Ron is barely keeping up. It’s a good problem to have, he concedes, with a twinkle in his eye.

Pulling out a large black ledger, Ron scribbles notes by the names of the dogs he is running. “Royal Coco” and “Romeo” are males, and “Dimond” and “Debonair” are females. Those who follow Ron and Doby Gray’s hounds know their trademark of giving males names that start with “R” and females names that start with “D.”

Brace beagles compete in male and female 13-inch and 15-inch classes, thus some beaglers run exclusively male or female classes.

“As the good ones come along, we run males and females,” Ron explains. “We always try to develop the best hound we can.”

Just weeks out of the puppy starting pen, these young hounds are learning to be field trial competitors. Honing their instincts to track rabbits, Ron focuses on training them solo as well as bracing them with other Beagles. In a trial, they will be judged as part of a two-dog

brace. Their ability to accurately track a rabbit, with the least amount of lost motion, is fundamental to winning. They must be able to run the front and back of a brace.

“You can’t hurt a good dog by running it too much,” says Ron, a veteran beagler and member of the Brace Beagling Hall of Fame. “The key

is not all dogs need the same amount of work. You have to follow that dog and find out its secret.”

The black ledger helps Ron track their progress. He jots down notes describing desirable traits like having a good mouth, or barking with enthusiasm, and not being competitive or aggressive by bumping or pushing a brace mate. He watches for accurate tracking close to the rabbit line and a steady, slow pace. Never mind that a rabbit may make widespread jumps twisted with turns and double backs.



Gray’s Danika pokes her head out to greet visitors.

“The slower the dog, the more accurate and straighter the line,” Ron says.

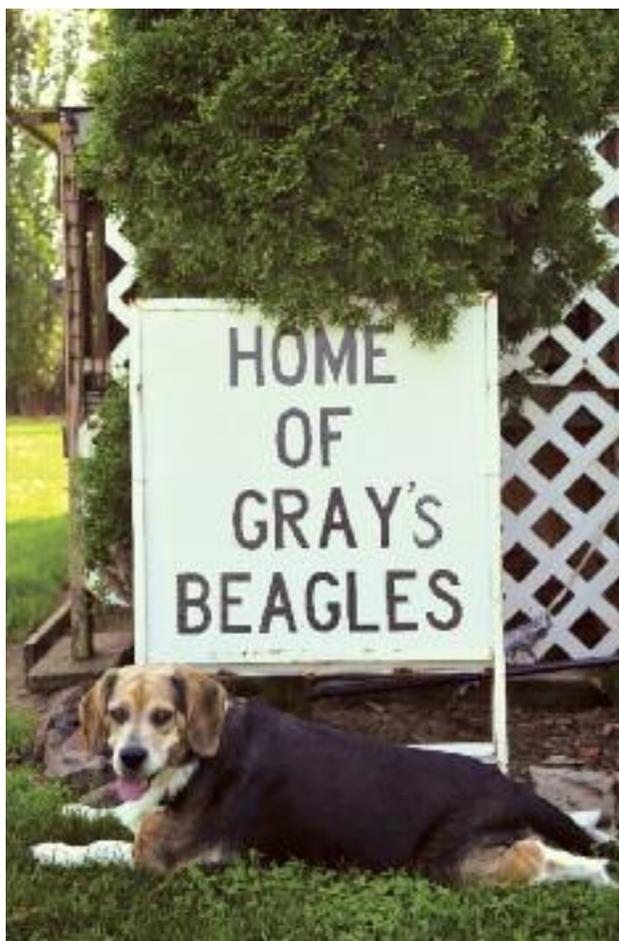
The secret to running quality brace Beagles seems to come as naturally to Ron and Doby Gray as does their secret to a good marriage. Celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary this muggy September weekend, Ron and Doby have been sweethearts since high school in Jeannette, Pa. Their Gray’s Beagles partnership is forged in their shared love for Beagles and respect for each other’s contributions.

“This sport is our hobby, our life,” says Ron, his voice trailing off. “I like it so much, I don’t have to win everything.”

“When we started out, the big thing was trying to make second series,” says Doby. “If you did, you’d get your picture in *Hounds and Hunting*.”

Since their start in brace beagling field trials 42 years ago, Ron and Doby have made many second series. They have bred, owned and handled two Purina Outstanding Field Trial Brace Beagle Award class winners, two National Field Champions and nine Pennsylvania State Champions. They are the breeders of 34 Field Champions, most handled by Ron to the required three wins and 120 points. They have won 1,440 trophies for placements in derby, licensed and sanctioned field trials.

Their well-rounded endeavors include judging field trials and running field trials as devoted members of their home club, the Coraopolis Beagle Club, in Clinton, Pa. Ron is on the board of the National Brace Beagle Championship and for eight years represented brace beagling on the Beagle Advisory Committee of the American Kennel Club. No one is their



Gray’s Chester plops down in front of the kennel sign.



Doby and Ron watch their veteran trackers, NFC-FC J&B's Deb and FC Gray's Dixie Rose, trail rabbit scent on a mowed strip at their home grounds.



Ron and Doby are pictured above with FC Gray's Ralph, who became their first Field Champion in 1973, and later won the male class and Absolute Award at the Pennsylvania State Championship. At right: They pose with Gray's Donna, Ralph's aunt and one of their early bitches.



stranger. Ron's friendly, easy nature and Doby's contagious smile have welcomed many beaglers to the sport.

### Field Trials & Families

Rabbit hunting led Ron to try his luck at a sanctioned trial with his large, red female Beagle, Gray's Whiskey Run Red, at the invitation of Joe Koda. Ron, who managed ramp services for United Airlines at its hub in Pittsburgh, met Koda, a member of the Coraopolis Beagle Club, through Koda's work at the Sky Chef Kitchen.

The trial, held Father's Day weekend, 1969, at Beaver Valley Beagle Club in Freedom, Pa., was a family outing, with Doby and their three children, all under the age of 5, coming along. "There were so many families with children. We loved it," Doby says. "The children enjoyed playing outdoors together."

"We won the trial out of about 20 dogs and got a ribbon," Ron says, fondly recalling their start in brace beagle field trials. "We beat out a near Field Champion."

Later that year, Ron and Doby became members of Coraopolis.

The era called for a faster-running hound than competes today in brace beagle field trials, accounting for Ron's success with his gundog Beagle, "Whiskey." The oldest Beagle field trial sport in the U.S., brace beagling dates to 1890, when the first trial was held in Massachusetts. The sport and the hounds have evolved to become a precision tracking competition, where every inch of the rabbit line is important in a field trial.

Heavier with a lower, longer body than most types of Beagles, the brace Beagle is known for his slow, ponderous movement, long ears and deep voice. Bred to work the line slowly and accurately, the brace Beagle never chases the rabbit. A handler places the dog on the rabbit trail after a cottontail is flushed from the brush. At a trial, shaggers and the gallery chase out a rabbit, and a spotter shouts, "Tally ho!"

Almost as soon as they started in field trials, the Grays began breeding



Collars hang ready for use at Gray's Beagles kennel.



"Donut" enjoys a biscuit.

Beagles, crossing their bitches with males that produced qualities they needed. Their first litter, whelped in 1970, was sired by FC Appledale Barney out of Gray's Debbie. "Most of our breeding goes back to George Nixon's Pearson Creek Beagles from hounds we got from Joe Koda," Ron says.

Enjoying their hounds and the camaraderie at field trials, the Grays competed whenever they could. In 1973, Doby took the children to a trial at the Oil Creek Beagle Club in Tionesta, Pa., while Ron worked, hoping she could finish Gray's Ralph, a 15-inch tricolor male Beagle who only needed another win to become a Field Champion. After the trial, she called Ron and reported they hadn't done anything, though that was not exactly how the trial went.

"Ralph" was in the last brace of a class of 63 dogs. In second series, he made the high brace. When Ralph and his brace mate came to a check, a tricky spot where the rabbit made a turn, Ralph kept working the check, barking on the scent and tracking the rabbit line. He worked through the check and won the trial, becoming Gray's Beagles' first Field Champion.

Doby drove the children to Ron's office, sneaking in while he was out, so they could prominently display Ralph's trophy and rosette on his desk. When Ron came back to his office, his eyes got big, and he exclaimed, "You lied to me!"

"After that, I never lied again," laughs Doby.

Sanctioned trials held every month and the annual state championship offered opportunities to compete with finished Field Champions. In 1974, the year after Ralph became a Field Champion, he captured the male class at the Pennsylvania State Championship. He also won the Absolute Award when braced with the winning female Champion. That day, Ralph outperformed more than 200 Beagles. It was a proud moment for Ron and Doby.

Though placements in sanctioned trials do not earn points toward a dog's AKC Field Champion title, they do help prepare hounds for licensed trials. They also provide a training ground for people wanting to learn how to judge trials. In 1973, Ron judged his first sanctioned trial.

"Judging helps you develop your own dogs," says Ron. "I probably judged 200 sanctioned trials before taking a licensed trial."

Years later, Doby complained to Ron about how a judge had scored one of their Beagles. "He asked me, 'Did you look at all the braces?'" she says. "I had not."

His comment led to Doby following Ron's lead in becoming a judge of sanctioned trials to learn more about the sport. Five years later, she judged her first licensed trial.

Ron still watches as many braces as he can. "I like to watch the stud dogs and also their pups run," he says. "At the Federations, you see dogs from around the country. I try to watch every brace."

For many years, Ron and Doby juggled family life with beagling. Their daughters, Dannette and Christine, played softball, and their son, Ron Jr.



House dogs Chester and Donut pose in the backyard with Ron and Doby.

took part on baseball, football and wrestling teams. When Ron retired in 2000, after a 40-year career with United Airlines, he finally had ample time to devote to beagling.

It wasn't long before a daily ritual evolved. Every morning, Ron loads his truck with a few hounds and drives half an hour to Coraopolis Beagle Club, where he meets up with fellow retired club members Bill Bushmire, Jim Watson III and Dick Shafer. Besides running dogs, they enjoy one another's company.

Founded in 1932, Coraopolis holds five licensed and seven or eight derby trials a year, as well as the International Brace Beagle Federation and the National Brace Beagle Championship. Some of the largest brace beagle field trials in the country are held here. Ron is the field trial secretary, although he has served the club in every officer role. Doby manages the kitchen, often preparing and serving meals to more than a hundred people.



Members of the Coraopolis Beagle Club who gather daily to run dogs and socialize are, from left, Bill Bushmire, Dick Shafer, Jim Watson III and Ron. Dick Donahue, right, of Uhrichsville, Ohio, was visiting.



Doby affectionately talks to Gray's Rumble, while Gray's Riddler waits his turn for attention.

### 'Our Own Little Beagle Club'

Three moves over the course of the Grays' marriage have each time produced better facilities for breeding and training field trial Beagles. "We have our own little beagle club here," Ron says, describing their operation on 12 ½ acres in rural Georgetown, Pa., where they have lived for the past 20 years.

Two training grounds, a puppy starting pen, two heated kennel buildings, one that is used specifically for whelping puppies, and ground kennels comprise a dream setup. Even before their house was built, Ron and Doby built the first kennel, a 10-by-16-foot storage building that Ron customized, dividing it into 15 individual dog kennels and adding insulation and gas heat for cold Pennsylvania winters.

Shortly after they moved, the state conservation department helped the Grays develop a natural wildlife habitat on land that abuts the highway and runs alongside their house. Grain sorghum and clover were planted to attract turkey, deer and rabbits. Later, Ron mowed strips through the entire property, enabling them to maximize its use for training Beagles.

Surrounding their property is Raccoon State Park, a lush 33,000-acre park used for hunting, boating, hiking and camping. Each autumn, Ron enjoys deer hunting during bow season, usually

bagging a white-tailed deer. The park provides a sound barrier that serves the Grays and their hounds well.

Though the past summer has been unusually hot for Pennsylvania, the Grays' lawn is green, meticulously mowed. Running to greet visitors are "Chester" and "Donut," Beagle house dogs. They bark a welcoming "Hellooo." Two people-friendly Labrador Retrievers, "Maggie" and "Cutter," complete the house dog menagerie.

The kennel buildings look like quaint cottages. On this warm day, the doors are open, showing walls decorated with framed AKC Field Champion certificates, plaques, trophies and photographs from field trials. Individual kennels are numbered, and the dogs' registration papers, protected in plastic sleeves adhered with matching numbers, hang above the kennels.

Doby opens some of the kennel doors. Out pops the heads of Gray's December and Dan Arts Jolette. Their sweet, soulful eyes would melt any dog lover's heart. Explaining her love for Beagles, Doby says, "They don't ask anything from you except to be petted and fed. I can have a bad day, but when I come to the kennel to see the dogs, they make me smile."

Among their 38 Beagles are four male Field Champions and 14 female



Nails are trimmed regularly at Gray's Beagle kennel.



Working on a four-generation Field Champion bitchline, Ron and Doby pose with, from left, FC Gray's Dot, FC Gray's Deb, NFC-FC J&B's Deb and up-and-coming Field Champion Gray's Debonair.

Field Champions. The rest are young hounds competing and being developed for trials. Some of the retired dogs live in spacious ground kennels. No Beagle sits idle in his or her pen. Ron and Doby enjoy letting their dogs trail rabbits in their 2 ½-acre fenced enclosure.

Though there are fewer sanctioned trials today than years ago, they still can be found, plus the state championship continues to draw a large entry. Ron has held every office in the Pennsylvania Association. Doby is the secretary-treasurer for the Tri-State Association, and she helps promote entries in the state championship by producing a program book where beaglers advertise their top dogs and kennels.

The heated whelping kennel is designed to comfortably accommodate up to four pregnant bitches, although it is seldom at capacity. Though Ron and Doby breed about three litters a year, Doby offers a puppy delivery service to brace beaglers. She estimates that 76 litters have been born at

their Gray's Beagles kennel.

Baby monitors with video cameras allow Doby to watch dams and puppies when she is in the house. The wooden whelping boxes are sterilized between litters and during use. Pads placed under the whelping box floor provide warmth to newly born puppies. Stocked with supplies for caring for puppies, the whelping kennel is well-equipped.

“We move our pregnant bitches into the whelping box about two weeks before they are due to deliver,” Doby says. “I start dams right away on *Purina Pro Plan Performance* or *Pro Plan Puppy*. Both formulas provide optimal nutrition during pregnancy and nursing. We also keep them in good condition through exercise.”

Ron and Doby currently are working on a four-generation Field Champion bitchline consisting of FC Gray's Dot, FC Gray's Deb, NFC-FC J&B's Deb and a potential Field Champion female puppy named Gray's Debonair. Great-granddam “Dot,” who produced five Field Champions, was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2009.

Ron practices linebreeding, choosing distantly related breeding partners. Field Champions are 2 to 3 years of age before bred. “When I work puppies I learn what a dam may or may not have put in her pups,” he says. “This tells me what I need to look for in the sire when I breed her the



Dan Arts Jollette, left, and Gray's December enjoy their dinner of *Purina Dog Chow*.

next time. Do I breed for more mouth or more stay or other traits?”

When evening comes around, another daily ritual begins. Ron and Doby go together to the kennel. Ron cleans the individual dog kennels, and Doby feeds *Purina Dog Chow* and gives fresh water. She washes all the bowls and cleans the kennel building. When the work is done, they steal away to the enclosure to watch a brace run a rabbit.

When the brace beagle Federations start next March, Ron will know which of the derby-age dogs he'll be taking to the Southern. It's been 26 years since Gray's Dixie II made the high brace in the second series at the International Federation her derby year. Though Dixie lost her rabbit, her amazing career included becoming a Field Champion in three trials at 9 months of age and winning the 1985 Pennsylvania State Championship.

As long as they make second series, it will all work out. ■



Ron carries a Beagle back to the kennel after it tracked a rabbit. The whelping kennel can be seen in the background.



Plaques, portraits and memorabilia won in Pennsylvania State Championships are prominently displayed in the Grays' home. Ron has held every office in the Pennsylvania Association, and Doby, secretary-treasurer for the Tri-State Association, produces a program book to advertise the event.

# FOR <sup>A</sup> Knack Obedience

**N**ever before has a dog won the National Obedience Invitational three times, but that is exactly what Petra Ford of Lebanon Township, N.J., aims to achieve with her 7-year-old black Labrador Retriever, “Tyler,” in December in Orlando, Fla.

Her Labrador male, 2XNOC/OTCH Count Tyler Show Me The Money, UDX5, MH, is one of few two-time winners, having won in 2008 and 2009. Tyler narrowly missed winning a third time in 2010, when he was the Runner-Up Champion. Tyler also nearly won the 2010 World Obedience Cup at Crufts in Birmingham, England, where he placed second.

Bred by Ed and Linda Haskins of Bethlehem, Pa., Tyler comes from a field trial line. His sire is FC-AFC High Tech CEO, and his dam is FC-AFC Countess Olenska, MH. John Cavanaugh of Palmer, Pa., a



Petra Ford and “Tyler” compete at the 2008 National Obedience Invitational.

Labrador Retriever breeder and amateur trainer, gave Tyler to Ford when the dog was a puppy.

Ford’s first experience dog training was 10 years ago when she taught her first Labrador Retriever, “Duncan” (Pandemonium Duncan The Water, UD, SH), a yellow male, to compete in agility and hunting tests. A former professional mountain and road bike competitor who also ran half marathons, Ford plunged into training Duncan, and later Tyler, much like she prepared herself for competitions. Initially, Ford trained Tyler simultaneously for obedience, field trials and hunting tests but switched to mainly obedience training when he was 2 years old because she felt he had potential.

A fast learner, Tyler readily mastered complicated advanced obedience skills. The Labrador enthusiastically performed exercises such as retrieve on the flat, fetching a dumbbell thrown 20 feet, returning to a front position and then heeling. He also had the patience for three-minute sits and five-minute downs. Tyler and Ford bonded as a team. His desire to please her quickly became apparent.

Tyler’s rapid rise to prominence was unexpected. When Ford walked into the Long Beach (Calif.) Convention Center with Tyler for the 2008 National Obedience Invitational, it was the first national obedience event she attended, let alone participated in. “I was thrilled beyond thrilled to have won that year,” Ford says.

“Tyler was young, only 4 years old then. Historically, older, more experienced dogs win the National,” says Ford. “Tyler is an energetic, animated dog who some people thought would not have the discipline to succeed at obedience. I decided not to worry. We had done our best to prepare, and then we did our best in competition.”



Tyler proved to be a fast learner, mastering complicated advanced obedience skills such as scent discrimination, where a dog chooses the article with the handler’s scent.

More than 100 dogs representing nearly 50 breeds competed at the two-day National Obedience Invitational. The top three obedience competitors of each breed were invited to the event.

On the first day of the 2008 Invitational, Tyler and Ford were judged six times in the obedience ring. When they made the cut, one of 32 finalists advancing to a bracket competition the second day, the excitement was incomparable. “When we reached the Final Four, I felt like everything beyond that was gravy,” Ford says. “In the end, Tyler’s excellent condition helped him not to tire like some of the other dogs. They made mistakes, and we didn’t.”

Having won in 2008, Ford felt better prepared and less stressed about competing in 2009. “I felt no pressure to win because we already had won once,” Ford says. “When we won again, I was overwhelmed at how wonderful it was to have this amazing dog. Tyler consistently tries hard. He manages high-stress situations well. I realized how fortunate I am to have him.”

Ford’s success with Tyler validated the soundness of her training and conditioning programs. Ultimately, it inspired a career change, prompting her to apply her training as a human physical therapist to becoming a certified canine rehabilitation therapist. Her knowledge of physical conditioning, training, nutrition, attitude and competing under pressure fueled a new joint venture, Aqua Dog Rehabilitation, with Kristine Conway, D.V.M. The canine training and rehabilitation center opened in January 2009 in Flanders, N.J.

“I started doing canine rehabilitation because it pulls everything together for me,” says Ford. “Performance dogs make up 95 percent of my caseload. They are canine athletes that require conditioning and training much like human athletes. Working with these dogs and their owners, I am able to help them reach an optimal performance in competition.”

Now that Tyler is a two-time National Obedience Champion, Ford focuses on preparing him for the two major obedience events, the Invitational and World Cup. She backtracks the training schedule based on the date of the competitions. To achieve optimal performance, she does not want Tyler to peak too soon.

Conditioning workouts, from 20 minutes to one hour, are scheduled three times a week. Tyler builds muscle strength and endurance using land and water treadmills. Therapy balls help increase balance and strength. Range-of-motion exercises warm up his muscles before a workout.

Obedience training, from 15 minutes to one hour four or five days a week, consists of breaking down skills and exercises into pieces so Tyler can easily



A two-time National Obedience Champion, Tyler won in 2008 and 2009, shown above, from left, respectively, and was Runner-Up Champion in 2010.

master them. “This process helps build confidence,” she says. “We use games, food and rest breaks to help keep him highly motivated. Competition can be stressful, and a confident dog deals with stress much better.

“We concentrate on the skills Tyler needs for these big trials,” says Ford. “Every week, I take him to class at the Top Dog Obedience School owned by Betsy Scapicchio, where he also takes private lessons with Linda Brennan.

“The hardest thing in obedience is for a dog to ignore everything in his nature and

keep working. The class helps with distraction work. At an event, there are lots of distractions like barking dogs, crowd noise and food aromas.”

Nutrition plays an important role as well. “I feed *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula because it provides complete nutrition to sustain a highly active dog like Tyler,” Ford says. “Proper nutrition is a big part of preparing a dog to perform at the highest level.”

An important component is taking time off for free play. “I always give Tyler one to three weeks off at certain times of the year,” she says. “One day a week, we take a hike or some other fun activity.”

Ford realizes with pride that Tyler has been an exceptional dog at obedience. His intelligence, drive, focus, stamina and willingness to please have set him apart since the beginning. She also realizes nothing they have achieved would have been possible if not for the special bond she shares with Tyler.

“I like obedience because it is based on a strong relationship with your dog,” Ford says. “I have trained Tyler to pay close attention to me. He focuses on me and gives 100 percent every time. I get a ton back for what I put into him.” ■



At the 2010 World Obedience Cup at Crufts in Birmingham, England, Tyler took second place.



# A PREVENTIVE EDGE ON TRAINING

BY GEORGE HICKOX

**P**reventive measures are far better than surgery. When it comes to dog training, learned behaviors are far more difficult to extinguish or degrade than teaching new behaviors correctly from the start.

Many of the problems that I see at our training schools for owners and their dogs would never have necessitated a fix-it program if they had used some fundamental canine training principles and guidelines. Owners most often seek help for training issues that fall into three categories:

- The lack of obedience and control training. This is a common handicap to developing a dog that handles and finds birds with style and exhibits proper field manners. A dog that does not “Whoa” upon command, does not respond to the “Recall” command or ranges farther in the field than the owner wishes falls into this category.

- Improper introduction. This can lead to problems involving the sound of gunfire or the flush of a pheasant or quail.
- Not adequately preparing a puppy before advancing to the next grade. This represents a wishing and hoping strategy of canine training.

Other problems owners encounter involve the bird-finding abilities of their dogs. I hear people complain: “My dog does not seem to be able to find birds”; “My dog does not point”; and “My dog does not appear to be interested in birds.” These issues may be due to a lack of strong genetics. Not all dogs are born equal.

Obedience training for bird dogs should start with yard training. Generalization is the process of teaching a dog that he or she must respond to a command in a number of different areas, not just where the command was first learned. The benchmark for beginning the process of general-

ization is when a dog responds with excellence to a command in yard training. It is then time to introduce the command in the field.

A basic rule of dog training is that a dog should never be corrected if he does not perceive why the correction was given or if the dog does not fully understand the solution for preventing the correction in the future. Additionally, dogs have a strong propensity to associate positive or negative consequences with the place the correction or reward occurred. By using the benchmark of complying with excellence in yard training, the trainer ensures that the dog has a solution for avoiding a correction and will not associate the bird field as a bad place.

Unquestionably, the generalization of the commands “Here” or “Come” will help prevent many owners from becoming prematurely gray. It is no fun to go to the field with a dog if you

are constantly afraid you will lose him or that he might be hurt. The solution is not to take a dog to the field and give the “Here” command repeatedly, while watching the dog disappear over the horizon. It is better to teach the dog the command in yard training and be in position to correct the dog for noncompliance if he does not respond the first time the command is given in the field.

In addition to teaching a dog to respond reliably to the “Recall” command, the pointing breeds should be taught to “Whoa,” and the retriever and flushing breeds should learn to “Sit.” Versatile dogs that will serve duty in the duck blind or dove field as well as point upland birds should be taught “Sit” and “Whoa.”

I view the teaching of obedience as a cause-and-effect pairing. The rule I use for rewarding and correcting is as follows: I reward the dog for giving an effort to respond in a timely manner to a learned command/cue the first time the command/cue is given. I correct the dog for a lack of effort to respond in a timely manner to a learned command/cue the first time the command/cue is given.

The optimum word is “learned.” If the dog has not learned the command, a correction should not be administered. I teach the desired behavior by identifying the behavior — I use clicker training and positive reinforcement to develop the desired behavior of responding to a command/cue — and rewarding before implementing avoidance training and corrections.

It is important to understand that corrections should be used to teach excellent response to a known command/cue. A dog should not be corrected for making a mistake. Mistakes are mistakes. On the other hand, a lack of effort to respond in a timely manner to a learned command/cue should be corrected if the dog is to learn that there is no option that is acceptable other than trying. Once a dog learns to avoid corrections by giving an effort, he has become a finished, polished performer. Proper genetics and training that meshes obedience training are part of the formula.

I am often asked when a trainer can stop

rewarding the dog. The question should be: When can corrections cease? Once corrections are no longer needed, the dog is trained. However, rewards should always be part of any successful training program.

Gun shyness and apprehension around birds are environmentally induced. A bold, confident youngster is much less likely to develop a problem with either the sound of a gun or the flush of a bird. I begin with pen-raised quail and pigeons before bringing the pup to the field and exposing him to wild birds. A thundering pheasant or grouse taking flight can scare any pup.

When introducing a canine pupil to the gun or birds, I want to control the situation and guarantee the outcome. The same goes for introducing a dog to the check cord. I want the dog to be totally comfortable running with a check cord and feeling me on the other end of the cord before teaching “Heel” or the “Recall” command with a leash or check cord. It is a handicap to try to teach a dog bird manners if he is apprehensive when attached to a check cord.

It all starts with genetics. It is much easier to be a good dog trainer when working with genet-

ically talented dogs. Strong genetics are exhibited early. Developing a young pup that has all the ingredients is fun and rewarding. The trainer’s job is to maximize the genetics of the canine hopeful. If the dog associates pressure with birds or does not have solutions to solve and prevent problems, the dog may be apprehensive in the bird field. This is a trainer problem, not a genetic problem. A dog boasting a blue ribbon heritage, developed with a realistic and sound training program and fed top-tier nutrition will develop into a dog that makes the owner proud. ■

*A professional trainer and handler of pointing and flushing dogs, George Hickox conducts four-day schools for owners and their dogs as well as private clinics for individuals and organizations. For more information about the George Hickox School of Dog Training or Hickox’s four training DVDs, “Great Beginnings: The First Year Training Pointing Dogs,” “Training Pointing Dogs DVD Collection,” “Great Beginnings: The First Year Training the Upland Retriever,” and “Training the Upland Retrieve DVD Collection,” please visit [www.georgehickox.com](http://www.georgehickox.com).*



# Noble Workers & Capable Coonhounds



PHOTO BY CAROL BEUCHAT

Cane Corso

## Cane Corso

Deriving his name from the Latin word “cohors,” meaning guardian and protector, the Cane Corso is a noble, majestic Italian breed that descended from the Roman canis Pugnaces, or old Molossian war dog. Large-boned, muscular and athletic, the Cane Corso was a guard dog and hunter of large game in Italy until a severe population decline in the early

20th century. Dr. Paolo Breber began to revive the breed in 1974, and Michael Sottile imported the first litter to the U.S. in 1988. Recognized by the American Kennel Club (AKC) in 2010, the Cane Corso is an intelligent, easily trained dog. With his affectionate, protective nature, he bonds easily with a family. Dogs are 25 to 27 ½ inches tall, and females are 23 ½ to 26 inches tall.

## Leonberger

A large, multipurpose working dog, the Leonberger was named for Leonberg,

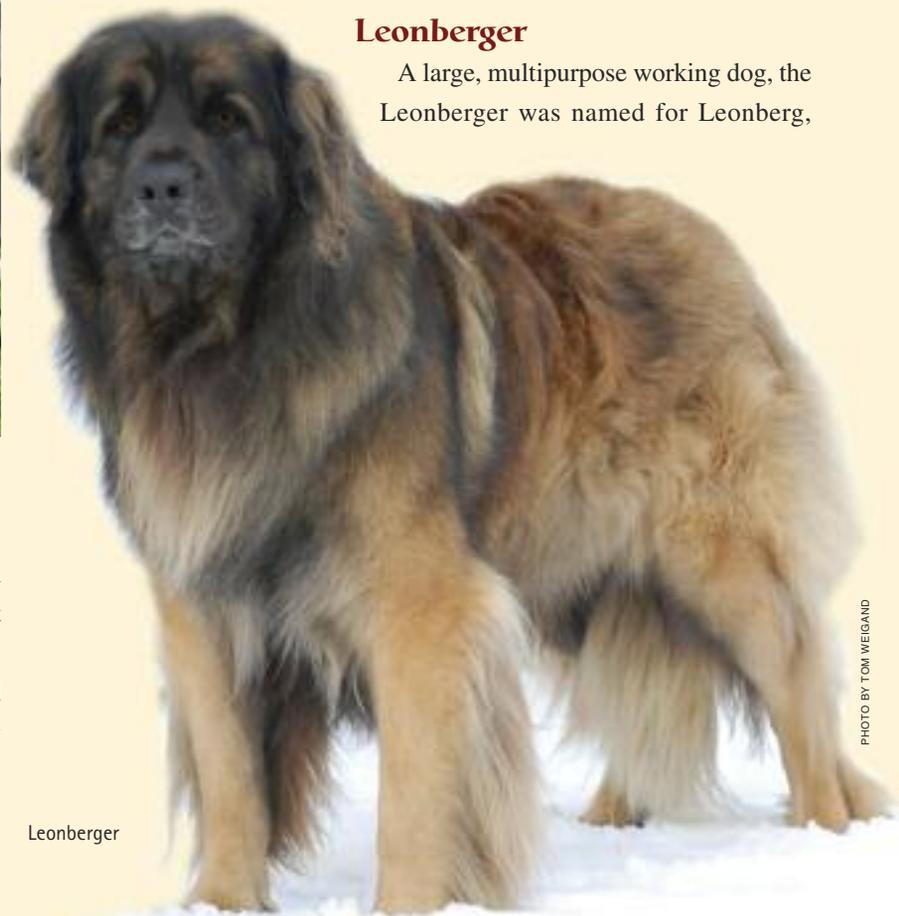


PHOTO BY TOM WEIGAND

Leonberger

Germany, where the breed originated in the 1800s. Heinrich Essig produced the Leonberger by crossing Landseer Newfoundlands, Saint Bernards, Pyrenean Mountain Dogs and other breeds. Intelligent, obedient and willing to please, the Leonberger originally was a family, farm and draft dog that became popular among royalty and German artists.

Recognized by the AKC in 2010, the Leonberger is a noble breed characterized by his lionlike mane, black mask and water-resistant double coat. Muscular and balanced, he has a powerful stride with good reach and drive. Despite his size, the Leonberger is graceful and light on his feet.

With his gentle, calm nature, the Leonberger is an excellent therapy dog and reliable family companion. He also can be an avid obedience and agility competitor. Males are 28 to 31 ½ inches at the shoulders, and females are 25 ½ to 29 ½ inches. Leonbergers can weigh more than 100 pounds.

### Redbone Coonhound

A versatile, capable hunter, the Redbone Coonhound was first bred in the late 1700s by American hunters who focused on breeding a solid red, flashy hound. Crossing coonhounds with red foxhounds, breeders developed the Redbone's distinguishing color. Then, they began to select for performance.

With his natural treeing instinct, the Redbone has the speed and agility to adeptly maneuver across terrain ranging from swamplands to steep, rocky hills. He has an excellent nose and powerful, balanced build. The Redbone also is an easily trained, even-tempered family dog who wants to please his owner. Males are 22 inches to 27 inches tall, and females are 21 inches to 26 inches tall.

### Bluetick Coonhound

Originally referred to as English Coonhounds in the U.S., the Bluetick Coonhound descended from the Grand Bleu de Gascogne and the English Foxhound around 1945, when Bluetick breeders broke away from English breeders. The breed is named for its dark blue coat covered in a ticking or mottled pattern. The Bluetick is a speedy, determined hunter skilled at following complicated tracks. Sturdy and athletic with a vigorous gait, Blueticks enjoy sports such as hunting, obedience and agility. Males are 22 to 27 inches at the withers and weigh 55 to 80 pounds. Females are 21 to 25 inches and weigh 45 to 65 pounds.



Redbone Coonhound

Sources: The websites of the American Kennel Club ([www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)), the Leonberger Club of America ([www.leonbergerclubofamerica.com](http://www.leonbergerclubofamerica.com)), the Cane Corso Association of America ([www.canecorso.org](http://www.canecorso.org)) and the National Redbone Coonhound Association ([www.nationalredbonecoonhoundassociation.com](http://www.nationalredbonecoonhoundassociation.com)).



Bluetick Coonhound

PHOTO BY CAROL BEUCHAT

PHOTO BY MIGUEL BETANCOURT


  
**CIRCLE OF CHAMPIONS**

## Cardigan Welsh Corgi Named 'Libby' Captures Two Major Bests in Show

The winner of two of the largest all-breed dog shows in the country, Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Aubrey's Tails of Mystery, CGC, TDI, is wooing Cardigan Welsh Corgi fans and dog lovers everywhere. The 3-year-old brindle-and-white bitch, named "Libby," is well-known for her charismatic ringside manners and smooth, effortless gait.

Bred by owners Cynthia and Vince Savioli of Cedar Knolls, NJ., and Shawn Michael of Union Bridge, Md., Libby was sired by CH Aubrey's Eyes of Mystery out of CH Kayshire SW Autumn Classic. Currently No. 1 in the breed and No. 5 in the Herding Group, Libby has exceeded expectations.

"This is just Libby's first year being campaigned as a Special," Cynthia Savioli says. "So much of her success has to do with her happy attitude."

Professional handler Sherri Hurst of Houston handled Libby to Bests in Show at the Beaumont Kennel



Professional handler Sherri Hurst stacks Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Aubrey's Tails of Mystery, after winning Best in Show at the Beaumont Kennel Club Dog Show. From left are: judge Joseph Gregory, show chairwoman Jackie Spiars and Purina representative Peggy Schilling.

Club Dog Show in July in Houston and the Fort Worth (Texas) Kennel Club Dog Show in March. The shows had entries of 2,745 dogs and 2,517 dogs, respectively. Libby's most recent Best in Show was won in September

at the Cape Cod Kennel Club Dog Show in East Falmouth, Mass.

Among Libby's six Best in Specialty Show wins, she took Best of Breed this year at the Cardigan Welsh Corgi Club of America National Specialty

in April in Houston. In March, Libby won the inaugural Three Trails Top Twenty competition sponsored by the Three Trails Cardigan Welsh Corgi Club of Kansas City.

The Saviolis, who breed under the Aubrey prefix, have been breeding Cardigans since 1996 and Pembroke Welsh Corgis since 1982. They have bred, owned or handled 60 champion Cardigans. "Libby has great reach and drive and is structurally correct with her moderate heavy bone and proper front," Cynthia Savioli says. "She is a powerful, small dog who is intelligent and very affectionate."

"Libby is the total package, an excellent example of what a Cardigan should be," Hurst says. "She loves to be in the ring and loves traveling. Her passion gives us a lot to look forward to."

Libby is fueled by *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula.

## GCH Cragmoor Buddy Goodman Charms His Way to Setting a Breed Record

Inching closer to becoming the top-winning Skye Terrier in breed history is a 5-year-old male, Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Cragmoor Buddy Goodman. Already the top-winning American-bred Skye Terrier, "Buddy," needs only one Best in Show to surpass a record set 40 years ago and become the breed's top-winning record holder.

Handled by professional handler Larry Cornelius of Ocala, Fla., Buddy has earned 36 Bests in Show. The top-winning male Skye Terrier, Buddy is ranked No. 1 in the breed and No. 3 in the Terrier Group. A three-time Best

of Breed winner at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, Buddy also won the 2010 Skye Terrier Club of America (STCA) National Specialty.

"Unlike many Skye Terriers, Buddy is eager and happy to meet everyone who comes up to him," says Cornelius. "Judges and those familiar with the breed don't expect him to be so good-natured. His personality is remarkable."

"Buddy is a great ambassador for the breed. He has a level topline, excellent tail carriage and gorgeous head. His long, flowing silver-and-cream coat is stunning."

Carolyn Koch of Chapel Hill, N.C.,



Having recently won his 36th Best in Show, "Buddy," an American-bred silver-and-cream Skye Terrier, has tied a breed record set 40 years ago.

and Victor Malzoni Jr. of Sao Paulo, Brazil, co-own Buddy. Bred by Eugene

Zaphiris and Matthew Stander, both of Oysterbay, N.Y., the Skye Terrier was sired by CH Of Skyline Albatross, a STCA National Specialty winner, out of CH Cragmoor Good As Can Be. Buddy's grandsire, CH Finnsky Oliver, won the Terrier Group at Westminster in 1996.

Considered a rare breed, it is difficult for Skye Terriers to win Bests in Show. "It is a breed that a lot of people don't understand," says Cornelius. "Buddy's accomplishments are a dream come true."

Buddy is fed *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula.

## Touch's White Out Wins Purina Top Field Trial Bird Dog Award

A 3-year-old white-and-orange male Pointer, Touch's White Out, called "Sam," is the winner of the Purina Top Field Trial Bird Dog Award. An exceptional bird finder, Sam earned 2,575 points with five placements that included winning the National and Missouri championships.

Sam was handled by Ike Todd of Dancyville, Tenn., who co-owns the dog with Keith and Jessica Wright of Covington, Ind. "Sam is a great athlete," Todd says. "His brain and his desire to find birds make him very focused. When you turn him loose, he's looking hard for birds, and he'll go find them."



"Sam" is shown with, from left, Jessica and Keith Wright and Ike Todd and Blair Conley.

Among his placements, Sam won the Tootsie Hurdle and Lynn

Taylor open all-age field trials and placed second in the Dixie Open All-Age Classic. A highlight was seven quail finds during a three-hour run at the highly competitive National Championship.

Bred by Gary Lester of Gracey, Ky., Sam was sired by Lester's Snowwatch out of Lester's Nat. The sire is a two-time Purina Award winner.

"Sam was a late bloomer," says Todd, who developed him as a young dog. "He didn't get out of the puppy pen until he was 1 year old, as I initially passed over him during

puppy evaluations."

Handled by Todd for Lester during his derby year, Sam qualified for the National Championship by winning the Lynn Taylor Open All-Age trial.

As the owners of the 48th annual Purina Award winner, the Wrights and Todd received an oil painting of Sam by artist Ross Young, a silk banner, belt buckles with the Top Field Trial Bird Dog Award emblem, and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula for one dog. As the handler, Todd received a \$2,500 cash prize that was doubled since he is an active member of *Purina Pro Club*.

## Mohawk Mill Blaze Captures Second Purina Amateur Award for Gary Winall

Mohawk Mill Blaze, excelled on finding wild quail and won the National Amateur All-Age Championship, earning enough points to make the 4-year-old white-and-liver male pointer the Purina Amateur Top Field Trial Bird Dog Award.

It was the second time in the four-year history of the prestigious award that breeder-owner-handler Gary Winall of Powhatan, Va., has won. "Blaze is a real strong dog," Winall says. "He is magnificent on point,

really pretty, one of those very exciting dogs who doesn't come along too often."

Winall previously won the award with Mohawk Mill Sportster in 2008-2009. "Sport" is Blaze's grandsire, having sired his dam, Mohawk Mill Chicklet. Funseeker's Rebel, the 2007 National Champion, is the sire of Blaze.

Besides the National Amateur Championship, Blaze won the Virginia Amateur Classic, the National Amateur Quail Championship and the Region

13 Amateur All-Age Championship. He took second at the North Carolina Amateur Classic, giving him a total of 1,385 points with five placements.

As the owner of the fourth annual Purina Amateur Award winner, Winall received an original oil painting of Blaze by artist Ross Young, a silk banner and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula for one dog.



Gary Winall and Ellen Clements, left, present "Blaze," with members of the Purina Award Committee. From left are: Sean Derrig, Fred Epp, Dr. Dorwin Hawthorne and Dr. Aubrey Morgan.

## Andy Daugherty Wins Second Purina All-Age Handler Award

A string of six Pointers that earned 15 placements and 2,543 points in all-age competitions put professional handler Andy Daugherty of Grovespring, Mo., on top to win his second Purina All-Age Handler of the Year Award.

Though it has been 13 years since Daugherty won the Purina Award in 1997-1998, he has placed among the top five handlers every year. "This award is something you work for all year," he says. "It is

rewarding when it comes together and you win."

Among the standout dogs on his string was Lester's Tom Cruise, a first-year competitor who won the Florida, Texas and Saskatchewan all-age championships. Other championship winners were House's Snake Bite and Elhew Sinbad.

A professional handler for 30 years, Daugherty began assisting his father, the late Bud Daugherty, a professional trainer in Inola, Okla., in 1972.



Andy Daugherty, the Purina All-Age Handler, poses with his wife, Sharleen.

Smitten with the challenge of developing dogs and competing in field trials, Daugherty took on the training of a young female Pointer, Michael's Express Babe, handling her to winning the National All-Age Championship stakes in 1981 when he was 26 years old.

As the winner of the 23rd annual Purina Handler Award, Daugherty received a \$2,000 cash prize, which was doubled because he is an active member of *Purina Pro Club*, a diamond for his All-Age Handler ring, and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula for one dog.

## Ninnescah Nicole Wins Purina Top Shooting Dog Award

A 7-year-old white-and-black female Pointer, Ninnescah Nicole, owned by breeder Dr. Richard Steckley of Wichita, Kan., and handled by professional handler Chuck Stretz of Blackwater, Mo., excelled with her animated, stylish, front-running performances to earn 2,035 points and win the Purina Top Shooting Dog Award.

"It takes a great dog to go all the way and win, and there is no better dog on my string than Nicole," Stretz says. "She is always to the front, with her tail held high, with lots of action. She is brainy, real smart about where to find birds, and she never wastes any steps."



"Nicole" is posed by, from left, Deserae Camp and Dr. Richard Steckley, and Chuck and Marla Stretz.

Nicole was sired by Samuel's Snowbird out of Jump'n Jackie Flash. The lit-

ter was whelped at Steckley's Ninnescah Pointers kennel, where Steckley began their foundation and early bird training. A versatile competitor, Nicole excels in walking and horseback field trials. She won the 2010 U.S. Complete Walking Championship and the 2009 Region 7 Amateur Shooting Dog Championship, with Steckley handling her at both events.

Nicole went to Stretz in her derby year, winning the Mississippi Shooting Dog Derby Championship in their first effort. A professional handler since the late 1970s, Stretz won the

National Shooting Dog Championship in 1988 with a male Pointer, Arian, sired by Guard Rail, a Field Trial Hall of Fame Pointer. He won the U.S. Invitational with a male Pointer, Rock Candy Man, in 1989.

As the owner of the 29th annual Purina Award winner, Steckley received an original oil painting of Nicole by artist Ross Young and a silk banner. Stretz received a \$2,500 cash prize that was doubled because he is an active member of *Purina Pro Club*. Both Steckley and Stretz received the traditional green sporting blazer awarded to the owners and handlers of Purina Shooting Dog Award winners and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula for one dog.

## Purpleline Dan Is Purina Amateur Top Shooting Dog

A stylish 5-year-old white-and-liver male Pointer, Purpleline Dan, proved his ability to find birds by winning two back-to-back championships that contributed to his earning 2,180 points, enough to make him the Purina Top Amateur Shooting Dog.

Owner-handler George Hill of Wentzville, Mo., who has competed in shooting dog stakes since 1980, was thrilled to win his first Purina Award. "I have never had a dog as outstanding as 'Dan,'" Hill says. "He is something else on point. He has a super nose and always stays in

front of the course."

Hill bought Dan as a 3-month-old on the recommendation of professional handler Chuck Stretz of Blackwater, Mo. Bred by Pat Kammerlocker of Norman, Okla., Dan was sired by Rock Acre Blackhawk, a recent Field Trial Hall of Fame inductee, out of High Heel Shoes. Dr. Richard Steckley of Wichita, Kan., did Dan's early puppy training, and then Stretz further developed the dog and handled him in derby stakes.

After Dan's derby year, Hill began handling him in amateur shooting



George Hill and his wife, Alma, present "Dan."

dog and all-age stakes. Dan won the Missouri All-Age Dog of the Year

Award in 2009 and 2010.

Last November, Dan won the Region 5 Amateur All-Age Championship. Though it did not count toward the shooting dog award, the next two weekends he won trials that did: the National Amateur Shooting Dog and the Region 5 Amateur championships.

As the owner of the eighth annual Purina Amateur Award winner, Hill received an oil painting of Dan by artist Ross Young, a silk banner and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula. He also received the traditional green blazer given to the owners and handlers of Purina Shooting Dog Award winners.

## Luke Eisenhart Captures Second Purina Top Shooting Dog Handler Award

Professional handler Luke Eisenhart of Tiskilwa, Ill., captured his second consecutive Purina Top Shooting Dog Handler of the Year Award. The honor was achieved with 15 dogs that won 24 field trials, netting their handler 4,334 points.

Among Eisenhart's top-winning dogs was Erin's Blackstreet Affair, the 2006 American Field Pheasant Futurity winner, who contributed

six of the 24 wins.

In accepting the award, Eisenhart said, "This is a tough life. You work hard and travel on the road for several months. I would not have done so well had it not been for the support I received from my family, the scouts, the judges and field trial people."

A professional handler since 1994, Eisenhart is the grandson of the late Gerald Tracy, who won the first Purina

Top Shooting Dog Award in 1983 with Rocky River Buck. Eisenhart has handled two Purina Top Shooting Dog Award winners: The Insider, an English Setter who won in 2008-2009, and Sugarknoll Buckshot, a Pointer who won in 2006-2007.

As the winner, Eisenhart received a \$2,000 cash prize that was doubled because he is an active member of *Purina Pro Club*, a diamond for his Purina Handler of the Year ring and a year's supply of *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula for one dog.



Luke Eisenhart, center, the Purina Top Shooting Dog Handler, is pictured with his wife, Tammy, and members of the Purina Award Committee, from left, Ray Jeffers, Dwight Smith and Johnny Taylor.

## JADEM MASTIFF WINS BEST OF BREED AT THE MCOA NATIONAL SPECIALTY

One year after winning Best of Opposite Sex, a Mastiff befittingly named "Moose" returned to the Mastiff Club of America (MCOA) National Specialty in May in Warwick, R.I., to win Best of Breed. The 230-pound, 2-year-old fawn male, GCH Jadem's Rhythm-N-Boo, CGC, is well-known to fanciers and not only because he is the No. 1 Mastiff in the country.

An impressive and powerful Mastiff, Moose also has the good-natured, easygoing disposition for which the breed is known. At shows, Moose often is surrounded by children, usually near his sidekick, a 3-pound tricolor Smooth Coat Chihuahua named "Mouse," who belongs to professional handler Pam Gilley.

"People stop and comment about how unusual it seems that this huge dog, Moose, is fond of this tiny dog, Mouse, who actually is his best friend," says Gilley of Wheat Ridge, Colo.

"Moose will lie on his side, while Mouse runs up and down his back."

Gilley, the handler of nine MCOA National Specialty winners since 1984, began handling Moose for breeder-owner Tina Woods in March 2010, after Woods finished the dog's conformation championship from the Bred-By Exhibitor class when he was 12 months old. Gilley and Moose bonded quickly, winning a Working Group First their first weekend in the ring.

A Mastiff lover since 2002, Woods of Draper, Utah, breeds under the Jadem Mastiffs prefix. Though Woods bred her first litter only four years ago, Moose and his litter of 11 proved to be exceptional, with nine dogs finishing their championships before they were 2 years old. Sired by UKC INTL/AM CH Greiner Hall Amir Zahar of Jadem out of CH Lazy D Pretty in Pink at Jadem, the litter's success made their dam, "Cienna," the top-



Professional handler Pam Gilley presents GCH Jadem's Rhythm-N-Boo, the National Specialty winner, with, from left, judge James Hudspeth, owner Tina Woods, who is holding "Mouse," and MCA president David Henson.

producing all-breed bitch in 2010. The honor was bittersweet for Woods, as Cienna had died in 2009 from leukemia at 2 1/2 years old.

"Moose inherited his sire's impressive size, bone and broad head and

his dam's powerful gait and showy attitude, a winning combination in the ring," Woods says. "Moose has been a breeder's dream comes true."

Gilley agrees. "Mastiffs should be powerful and massive yet move in a dignified manner," she says. "Their heads should be broad, and they should have dark eyes and a kind expression. Moose depicts the standard very well."

Following his win at the National Specialty, Moose captured his first Best in Show in June at the Missouri Rhineland Kennel Club Dog Show.

Since then, Moose has won several Working Group Firsts.

Moose is fed *Purina Pro Plan Sensitive Skin & Stomach Formula*.

## 'TANNER' BECOMES TOP-WINNING KUVASZ, SETS ANOTHER RECORD FOR SZUMERIA

The winner of 21 Bests in Show, not to mention three consecutive National Specialty Bests of Breed, Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Szumeria's Wildwood Silver Six Pence, CGC, is the top-winning Kuvasz of all time. He also is the first Kuvasz to earn a place among the Top Ten all-breed dogs in the country.

"It is remarkable how much Tanner has accomplished in less than three years," says breeder Lynn Brady. "His Top Ten ranking makes us very proud. He has brought a lot of honor and recognition to this little-known Hungarian working breed."

Currently ranked No. 8 in all-breed competition, "Tanner," bred by Szumeria's Kuvasz breeders Brady and Connie Townsend of Farmington, Minn., has outperformed the breed's previous top-winning record holder, a bitch named "Nala," who happens to be his great aunt. The 3-year-old male is handled by professional handler Diana Wilson of Brighton, Colo.

Tanner was sired by CH Szumeria's



Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Szumeria's Wildwood Silver Six Pence is the top-winning Kuvasz of all time.

Irish By Nature out of BISS CH Szumeria's One For the Money, CD, RAE, NJP, NAP, TT, CGC. The litter was co-bred with Clay and Bea Page of Rome, Ga., and Tanner is co-owned by Mer-

cedes Vila of Las Vegas and Claudia Muir of Louisville, Ky. The No. 1 Kuvasz since 2009, Tanner currently is No. 2 in the Working Group.

Brady and Townsend have bred more than 100 champions over the past 25 years. They are the breeders and owners of Nala (Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CH Szumeria's Nala of Silverpick, CGC), who was the top-winning Kuvasz for over 12 years before Tanner came along. Handled by Brady, Nala won six Bests in Show and three National Specialty Bests of Breed, outperforming her sire, CH Nordland's Rocky, to become the top-winning Kuvasz. "Rocky" had plucked the top honor from Nala's dam, AM/CAN CH Oak Hill's Inanna of Sumer, CGC, a Szumeria's bitch. "Inanna" was the first female Kuvasz to capture a Best in Show in the U.S. and to win the Kuvasz Club of America (KCA) National Specialty two times.

"Inanna unleashed the breed, putting the Kuvasz on the map in the

show ring," says Brady. "Then, Nala's extraordinary success helped pave the road for what Tanner has done."

The Kuvasz is an ancient protection breed, originating nearly 7,000 years ago to guard sheep and cattle. The Szumeria's Kuvasz program stresses early socialization. Townsend raises the puppies and begins puppy training as a foundation for obedience, agility, rally and tracking.

Tanner, who has won Best of Breed for the past three years at the KCA National Specialty, is a shining example of the results of socialization. "Tanner absolutely loves to be in the show ring," Wilson says. "He loves the attention and the applause. We hope he will continue to enjoy traveling and going to shows."

"At the end of the day, what really matters," Brady says, "is that he enjoys showing and continues having fun along the way."

Tanner is fed *Purina Pro Plan Performance Formula*.

## PRO PLAN INTRODUCES TOP SPORTING DOGS AD

A new *Pro Plan* ad touting that 85 of the Top Ten-ranked dogs in 10 major sporting dog segments are fed *Purina Pro Plan* recently began running in seven leading sporting dog publications. If you count five dogs that are fed other *Purina* brand dog foods, the number grows to 90 of 100 dogs fueled by *Purina*.

"We are very proud that the owners and handlers of the top sporting dogs in the country feed *Pro Plan*," says Maureen Salamone, Purina Brand Director for the Breeder-Enthusiast Group. "We developed the ad to show the broad use of *Pro Plan*. It is impactful to realize that the top field trial bird dogs, Beagles, coonhounds, retrievers and spaniels are fed *Pro Plan*."

The ad features portraits of 10 dogs, the winners of yearlong point competitions that ran in 2009 and 2010. The top performers in their segments, these dogs competed in multiple events to reach their coveted top-ranked positions. The ad, which began running in September, will continue to appear in publications until spring 2012, when it will be updated with 2011 winners.



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## National Amateur Retriever Champion Makes Comeback After Battling Grass Awn Infections

N AFC-FC Cody Cut A Lean Grade, LM ("Grady") has a lot of heart. Just ask Grady's owner and handler, Chad Baker of Bristol, Tenn., who guided the 7-year-old black male Labrador Retriever through 10 challenging series in Montana to win the coveted National Amateur Championship Stake in June.

The win capped a phenomenal comeback for Grady, who, over the past two years, battled several illnesses and surgeries related to grass awn infections. For a time, many wondered if Grady, the 2008 Open All-Age High-Point Retriever, would survive, much less compete again at the national level.

Not Baker.

"I always knew he'd be back," Baker says. "Grady has no quit in him. I knew how big his heart is. He'd swim an ocean for you, before or after surgery."

Baker points out that Grady has had more than his share of surgeries. "The first time, in September 2009, they took out two ribs and half a lung. He has a 5-inch circle in his rib cage that is nothing but mesh."

Grass awns are barbed seeds from some species of grass that can kill dogs. The awns are inhaled or swallowed or snag in a dog's coat and burrow through the skin. The awns can result in pyothorax infection in the chest cavity, pneumonia or internal abscesses. The incidence of grass awn infection, particularly among sporting dogs, appears to be increasing. A new study at the University of Wyoming,

sponsored by the AKC Canine Health Foundation, is shedding light on the so-called "mean seeds."

After recuperating from his first surgery, Grady rebounded and won two all-age stakes back-to-back, but he later developed a huge mass that required more major surgery and removal of dead or infected tissue.

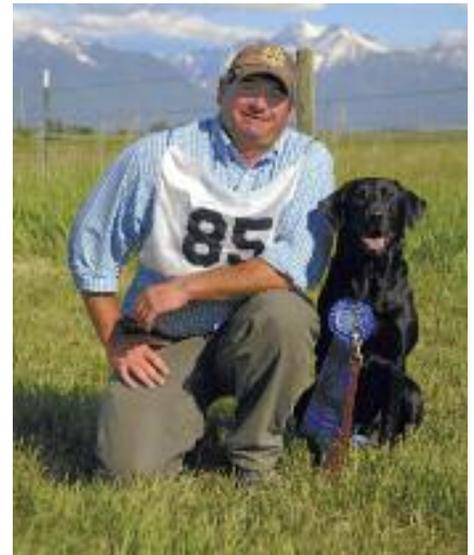
Last October, prior to training for the National Amateur, Grady developed a high fever and spent four days at an emergency veterinary clinic. "He was basically on life support due to another pyothorax infection in his lung, probably related to the grass awn," Baker says. Once again, the resilient retriever made a full recovery.

In Montana, Baker and Grady rose to the occasion. The duo went about their business during the weeklong competition that featured 115 of the nation's best retrievers. Grady's performance seemed to build throughout the week.

"He didn't make any mistakes," Baker says of his talented, now healthy retriever. "Grady just kept coming, series after series. He was very consistent."

On Saturday, June 25, the final day of competition, Grady aced the difficult ninth and 10th series, and the judges picked their winner from among the 15 National Amateur Finalists. It was Grady.

"He's really, really smart," Baker



Owner-handler Chad Baker poses proudly with "Grady," after winning the National Amateur Championship Stake.

says. "He's an awesome marker, good in the water and a gentleman to be around."

As competitors congratulated Baker and Grady, the new National Amateur Retriever Champion, still damp from a swim in the 10th series, rolled joyously in the Montana prairie grass like a puppy.

Baker received a congratulatory call from the lieutenant governor of his home state of Tennessee. In turn, Baker called Jim van Engen of Right Start Kennels, where Grady received his basics training. Baker also called Mike Lardy and credits the Handjem Retrievers team of Lardy, Ray Voigt and Pat Burns for Grady's intermediate and advanced training.

Grady is fueled by *Purina Pro Plan* Performance Formula.