



TODAY'S BREEDER

A Nestlé Purina Publication Dedicated to the Needs of Canine Enthusiasts

Issue 90



BREED PIONEER

Hunting Hills Small Munsterlanders

- **SHOWING DOGS TO THE STANDARD**
- **NEW APPROACHES TO BLOAT**
- **DOG PSYCHOLOGY IN THE FIELD**



PHOTO: JERRY NAUNHEIM

“Keeper” (CH Gallant Keepsake, SH, RN, AX, AXJ, CD), a 7-year-old buff male Cocker Spaniel handled by Vickie Dahlk of Barneveld, Wisconsin, eagerly runs toward a bird find.

COCKER SPANIELS FLUSH OUT HUNTING TEST TITLES AT ASC NATIONAL

“It is a wonderful feeling when preparation and natural ability come together.”

— Vickie Dahlk

Effortlessly gliding through the dry Midwest cover, intelligent, nose-to-ground Cocker Spaniels sniffed their way toward their respective Junior (JH), Senior (SH) and Master Hunter (MH) titles at the American Spaniel Club (ASC) Cocker Spaniel National Specialty. The steamy July heat at Wil-Nor Outdoors in Dittmer, Missouri, where the test was held, posed no problem for these methodical, willing-to-please dogs, conditioned to run in all types of weather.

“Hunting tests are designed to test a spaniel’s enthusiasm, desire and natural abilities in bird finding, retrieving and flushing,” says American Kennel Club (AKC) Executive Field Representative Tom Meyer. “It is a complete performance between the dog and his or her handler, so they are judged on how well they work as a team.”

Two finds, steady flushes and retrieves to hand, as well as a 40-yard water blind and retrieve, were all that stood between nine dogs and one of the five legs needed to earn an MH title. The smallest of the Sporting breeds, these merry little dogs easily moved through the 200-yard field, working at a moderate pace close to their handlers.

Giving a polished performance, a 7-year-old buff male called “Keeper” instinctively and accurately made his final water retrieve of the day before animatedly running back to handler Vickie Dahlk of Barneveld, Wisconsin, his tail wagging vigorously.

“We work hard during training,” says Dahlk. “It is a wonderful feeling when preparation and natural ability come together.”

One leg down, four to go. ■

The hunting test at the American Spaniel Club (ASC) Cocker Spaniel National Specialty took place at Wil-Nor Outdoors in Dittmer, Missouri, about half an hour from Purina Farms, where the ASC National’s conformation, obedience and rally events were held. A 300-acre facility, Purina Farms is ideally suited for outdoor canine sports and indoor all-breed and specialty dog shows, which are held at the custom-made Purina Event Center. Contact Kaite Flamm to book an event at kaiteflamm@purina.nestle.com or 888-688-PETS (888-688-7387).

5 UNLOCKING YOUR DOG'S POTENTIAL

Tapping into a dog's pack mentality starting with positive training is among the psychology tips to help you develop an eager-to-please sporting companion.

6 MILITZA IRISH SETTERS' TEAM APPROACH

A passion for Irish Setters cultivated the partnership between neophyte breeder Tracy McNeal and pro handler Ken Wall. Eighteen years later, they are the match-makers behind the No. 1 Irish Setter in the country.

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An age-old disorder affecting deep-chested large and giant breeds, gastric dilatation-volvulus is being studied to learn new ways to treat and prevent it.

12 THE MASTERFUL MUNSTERLANDERS OF HUNTING HILLS

Breeder-owner-trainer Kris Hill embraced the virtues of this German upland game hunting breed and then pioneered its popularity in the U.S. and success in her own kennel by producing three versatile champions.

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ON THE COVER

Hunting Hills' Xpress Flynn is a 1 1/2-year-old male Small Munsterlander bred and trained by Kris Hill. Cover photo by Tim Harrison. See story on page 12.

THIS PAGE

GCH Longo Miller N Lore's Here Comes The Son ("Enzo") was bred by Tootie Longo, who co-owns the 1-year-old male Great Dane with Jackie and Danny Van Delft and Lorraine Matherly. Great Danes are among the high-risk breeds for developing bloat. See story on page 8.



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Keith Schopp, Vice President

Barbara Fawver, Editor, Today's Breeder

Kayla Miller, Digital Editor, Today's Breeder

Rachel Likert, Contributing Writer

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Brittany enthusiast Larry Sandusky takes Moonshine Moxie Gal, 4 months old, on her first training run and ride in the saddle.

▲ **I AM PRESIDENT** of the Idaho Brittany Club and would like to share some articles from *Today's Breeder* with our members. We have a Facebook page where we share topics of interest with our members and other interested parties. We also use PowerPoint presentations at our monthly meetings to facilitate group discussions on hunting, performance and animal care.



Pro trainer Ed Rucker of TKO Bird Dogs works with "Maverick," a 13-month-old Brittany.

Here are the articles I'd like to share: "Stress-Free Travel" and "Achieving a Performance Edge" (Issue 87) and "5 Ways to Train Dogs Safely in the Summer" (Issue 89). Thank you, *Today's Breeder*!

Larry Sandusky / President, Idaho Brittany Club / Meridian, ID

◀ **SINCE WE SWITCHED** our dogs to *Purina Pro Plan SPORT* Performance 30/20 Chicken & Rice Formula, we have noticed a huge difference. Most of the pointing breeds we train for clients as well as our own dogs compete in high-

performance horseback stakes. It has been extremely difficult to maintain weight on dogs during training as they burn a lot of energy.

We love that our dogs' weights have stabilized on *Purina Pro Plan*. We've also seen an improvement in their overall health. Their recovery times have decreased, which means there is less downtime in preparation for field trials and hunt tests. We are looking forward to this field trial season with *Purina Pro Plan* nutrition fueling us!

Ed & Chrissy Rucker / TKO Bird Dogs / Surprise, AZ

I RECENTLY WAS THRILLED to put a Grand Champion title on my first show dog, "Cessie," a Coton de Tulear. She took a 5-point Best of Breed at the Crab Orchard Kennel Club show in Marion, Illinois, and then won her first Non-Sporting Group placement by taking third. I have been fortunate to receive mentoring from Cessie's breeders, Denise and Peter Simenauer, who are AKC Breeders of Merit.

I am very careful to give Cessie the best care possible, starting with nutrition from *Purina Pro Plan NATURAL* Plus Essential Vitamins and Minerals Chicken & Egg Formula, a grain-free food for adult dogs. It works! She is healthy and energetic. I also love reading *Today's Breeder*! With each issue, I gather information that will help me when the time comes to breed Cessie. Thanks, Purina!

Jessica McIntyre / San Mateo, CA ▼



Proud owner-handler Jessica McIntyre with new GCH Dior's C'est Si Bon, who placed third in the Non-Sporting Group under judge Timothy Robbins at the Crab Orchard Kennel Club show.

Today's Breeder loves hearing from Purina Pro Club members! Tell us about your dogs and how Purina nutrition and Purina Pro Club help you achieve your goals. Send your letter and photos to editor@purina.nestle.com or mail them to *Today's Breeder*, c/o Editor, Nestlé Purina PetCare, 2T Checkerboard Square, St. Louis, MO 63164. *Today's Breeder* retains the right to edit and publish letters, including names, addresses and photos, to a worldwide audience.

Unlocking Your Dog's Potential

Savvy trainers use psychology to help their dogs master the skills they need to become top-notch hunters or field trial performers. Starting with understanding a dog's pack mentality, they figure out the turnkey that opens an individual dog's mind to learning. Here are tips from pros on how to unlock a dog's potential.

1

BUILD TEAMWORK TRUST

Start with establishing yourself as the leader of the pack. A dog with respect for your dominance is attuned to trusting you. This relationship creates the opportunity for developing a dog's natural ability through training and teamwork.

2

CUSTOMIZE TRAINING

Realize that each dog has a distinct personality and responds differently to training. The more time you spend working with a dog, the better you will become at reading his or her personality. These insights will allow you to work through problems and decide what works best for an individual dog.

3

KEEP TRAINING FUN

A dog that enjoys training is more likely to succeed. Dogs live in the present and thus don't worry about the past or the future. By focusing on positive training, one accomplishment leads to the next challenge.

4

GIVE LOTS OF PRAISE

Always praise a dog for a job well done and look for opportunities to offer encouragement. When a dog performs well, reward him or her at the moment of accomplishment. Be sure to end a training session on a positive note. Rewarding dogs in a positive way makes them much happier and enables you to accomplish your training goals. ■

MILITZA IRISH SETTERS'

Team Approach



Behind the No. 1 Irish Setter in the country, Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Militza's My Cherie Amour, is a lot of polish, says breeder Tracy McNeal of Glen Allen, Virginia.

With her polished pedigree, "Adele," has flawless reach and drive and fire-in-the-belly exuberance, reminding Tracy of an earlier Militza setter, the bitch's great-granddam "Kayla" (BIS/BISS CH Militza's Tell Me No Lies). A beautiful setter, Kayla was Militza's first Best in Show winner and the gateway to a new partnership.

Showing her homebred bitch Kayla in the Bred-By Exhibitor class 19 years ago, Tracy, a neophyte breeder-owner-handler who had kept the cute puppy from her first litter, repeatedly took Reserve Winners Bitch to veteran pro Ken Wall, who masterfully handled the Quailfield setters of his aunt, Patricia Nagel.

Raised in a family of show dog enthusiasts, Ken had been the Best Junior Handler in the state of New York for three years straight. His attraction to setters came from Aunt Pat who took him to shows and recruited him to handle her dogs. A memorable male, CH Quailfield's Mak'N Business, was No. 1 in all-breed competition in Canada in 1993. A two-time Westminster breed winner, "Addy" took Best of Opposite Sex at the Irish Setter Club of America National in 1993, Best of Breed in 1998 and Awards of Merit over several years.

"I knew Kenny was a professional handler and it was very hard to beat him, but I did not personally know him," Tracy says. "He came up to me at a show and said, 'I love your bitch. She is really beautiful.'"

Tracy had nearly finished Kayla to her championship when Ken started handling her. Kayla became Ken's next Special — Militza's first campaigned setter — and eked her way into the Top Five ranking for the breed. The owner and handler were becoming friends.

When Tracy began showing "Roxanne" (Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CH Militza's Somethingroyal), a Kayla daughter, earning points

from the 6- to 9-Month Puppy bitch class, Ken saw the challenge she faced handling the high-spirited dog. At a specialty one weekend, "Ken told me, 'You can't show her, Tracy. She is too difficult,'" she recalls.

Ken began handling Roxanne, leading her to record-setting fame as the all-time winning Veteran Irish Setter bitch. Roxanne captured over 25 Bests in Specialty Show, 15 won from the Veterans class, including



Ken Wall and Tracy McNeal combined their respective pro handling and breeding expertise to become partners in Militza Irish Setters. Above: Ken and Tracy are shown with "Adele," 5 years old, and her dam, "Bridget," 11 years old. Left: Adele has been the No. 1 Irish Setter in the country the past two years.

Best of Breed as an 11 1/2-year-old at her last specialty show, the Irish Setter Club of Jacksonville (Florida) in 2012. She also won back-to-back Bests in Show at age 9. The owner and handler were becoming even better friends.

The partnership, now in its 18th year, includes Tracy's husband, Roger, and Ken's partner, Dr. Joel Fisher, a veterinarian and Italian Greyhound enthusiast. The first litter bred in the new partnership in 2002 was out of Kayla, which produced CH Militza's Honor Thy Mother, a male who is behind all the Militza Irish Setters.

"This partnership has worked because each of us has an important piece we contribute to make things complete," Tracy

says. "Most importantly, we respect each other. We are both obsessed perfectionists so things are crazy sometimes, but it has paid off well."

"Tracy and I are so close," Ken says. "We probably talk two times a day."

Sharing a genuine love for the beauty, intelligence and comical personality of Irish Setters, the partnership thrives. Litters, planned every two to six years, are whelped at Ken and Joel's home in Wake Forest, North Carolina. The puppies soon go to Tracy and Roger's home near Richmond, Virginia, to grow up.

"We try to keep a dog and a bitch from every litter," says Tracy. "What we pick by 11 weeks of age usually ends up staying."

Their method is admirable. All setters finish their championships with specialty majors, reaping success under stiff breed competition. "We always wait to show our dogs until we know they are competitive enough to win," Tracy says.

The strategy has earned them multiple dogs to win Golden Leash Awards, an honor bestowed by the parent club to a class dog that has earned the most points in majors during the year. Adele was a Golden Leash winner, as was her dam, Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Militza's Starry Starry Nite, and her uncle, CH Militza's Glamorous Flyer.

These days, Militza produces Best in Show winners in virtually every litter, though Adele, they all agree, is special. Ken started this year not intending to show Adele as heavily as in 2014, but she kept winning. So far, Adele, the No. 9 Sporting dog in the country, has won a career 81 Group Firsts and 15 Bests in Show.

Ken, who has grown fond of the setter bitch, says, "Adele is a once-in-a-lifetime dog. After years and years of breeding, you may never come across one like her." ■



A regal 1-year-old, “Enzo” (GCH Longo Miller N Lore’s Here Comes The Son), is out of the top-winning Great Dane in breed history, “Scout” (Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Longo Miller N Lore’s Diamond Lil). Both dogs were bred by Tootie Longo.

RESPONDING TO BLOAT WITH A VIGILANCE

BY BARBARA FAWVER

The unmistakable signs of bloat in her 6 ½-year-old retired show champion male Great Dane made Tootie Longo's heart pound. An adrenaline rush seemed to take control as she and her husband quickly loaded the beautiful black Dane into their car for the 15-minute drive to the veterinarian.

The race against the clock to save the life of the beloved giant dog ended futilely. All too quickly, the bloated stomach had twisted, cutting off blood and oxygen to vital organs such as the heart, spleen and liver. The dog had gone into shock and could not be saved. One and a half hours earlier, Longo had left the Dane at home while she ran an errand only to return to find the dog standing in a pool of white foam and his loin swollen hard like a barrel. The look of pain and fear in his eyes was unforgettable.

Gastric dilatation-volvulus (GDV), more commonly known as bloat, is a disorder that affects large- and giant-sized, deep-chested dogs. Gastric dilatation is when the stomach fills like a balloon with gas, and gastric dilatation with volvulus is when the gas-filled stomach twists 180 degrees on its axis. Among the high-risk breeds, Great Danes

are believed to have a 25 percent risk of developing GDV in their lifetime. Sadly, one in four dogs does not survive bloat.

Years after the first incident, Longo, of Concord,

Ohio, went through bloat with a 2 ½-year-old female Great Dane. "I had just put her out at 5:10 p.m., and when I brought her in the house at 5:20, she was bloated," she says. "I called the veterinarian to let him know we were coming. We battled rush hour, virtually driving up on sidewalks to get around stalled cars. Fortunately, we made it before the stomach twisted. They were ready and waiting for us. Emergency surgery saved her life."

Owners like Longo vividly recall the details of an episode of GDV, showing how horrific the experience can be. Their inability to stop an episode despite doing all they can to get a dog to an emergency facility is heartbreaking, especially when a dog dies.

These days, Longo, the 2013 AKC Working Group Breeder of the Year and the breeder of the top-winning Great Dane in breed history (Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Longo Miller N Lore's Diamond Lil), takes preventive measures into her own hands.

Bloat can happen so fast. As soon as our dogs finish their championship around 1 year of age, we have a gastropexy performed. I encourage all my pet owners to do the same.

— Tootie Longo

A capsule-sized wireless motility device called the SmartPill™ is being used by researchers at Michigan State University to study whether gastric dilatation-volvulus (GDV) risk and gastrointestinal motility are linked. Dogs swallow the SmartPill, which relays information to a recorder worn in a harness or vest.

“Bloat can happen so fast,” she says. “As soon as our dogs finish their championship around 1 year of age, we have a gastropexy performed. I encourage all my pet owners to do the same.”

Gastropexy is a surgery in which a dog’s stomach is tacked to the right side of the abdominal wall to prevent it from shifting or twisting. The cost for a gastropexy is around \$1,000, depending on the clinic and its geographical location, compared to \$6,000 to \$8,000 for emergency GDV surgery. Dogs receiving emergency surgery have a gastropexy performed at the same time to prevent a recurrence.

GDV has been recognized in dogs for more than 100 years. Other than a dog’s conformation — large and giant breeds with deep chests — there are more mysteries about what causes the disorder than facts.

Does the stomach bloat or twist first? Are there ways to determine if a dog is likely to survive? Is GDV due to genetics, environmental factors or both?

To learn more about GDV, the AKC Canine Health Foundation announced the bloat initiative in 2013 and provided funding of more than \$500,000 for research to study the causes of bloat.

At Michigan State University, researchers hypothesize that gastric dysrhythmia may predispose at-risk breeds to gastrointestinal motility problems that lead to GDV. At Tufts University where a biobank of DNA samples from GDV-affected dogs worldwide has been started, investigators are evaluating the bacterial microbiome of gastric and fecal content to see if altered flora triggers bloat.

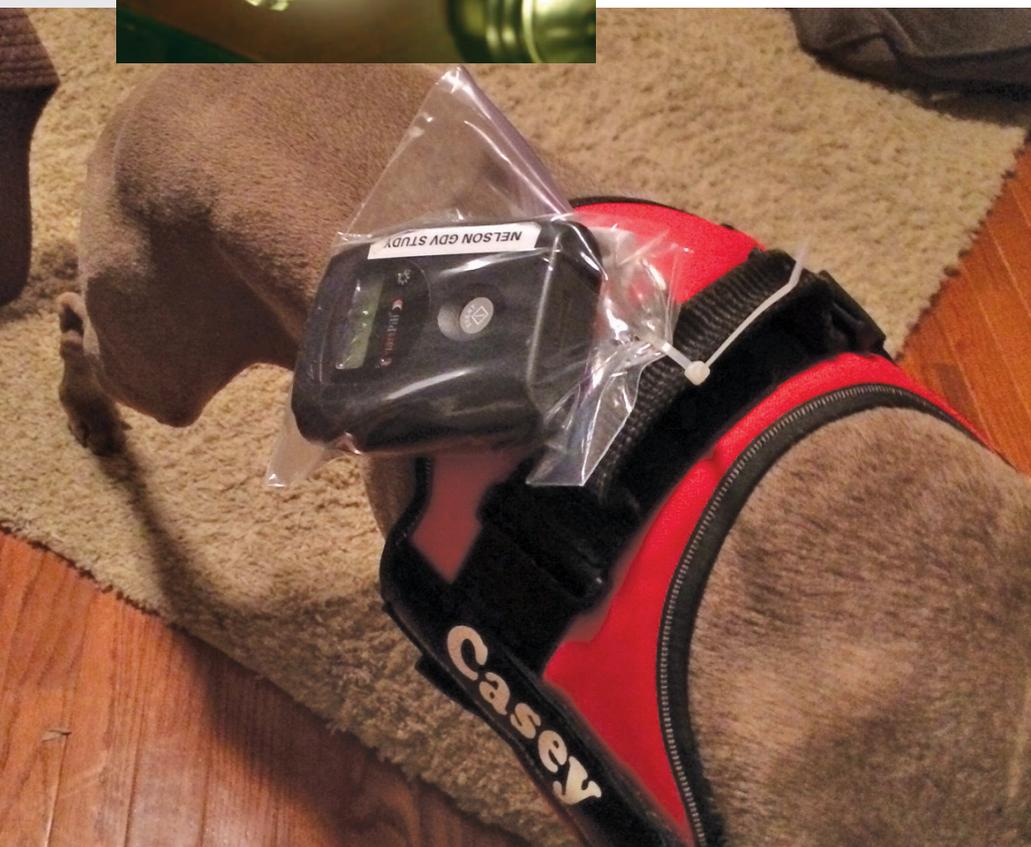
Lead investigators of these studies presented their work at the 2015 AKC Canine Health Foundation National Parent Club Canine Health Conference in August in St. Louis. They were among 21 speakers at the two-day program who provided the latest findings about canine diseases. Purina has sponsored the biennial conference since it began in 1995. Here are insights about GDV presented by Laura Nelson, DVM, MS, DACVS-SA, associate professor-health sciences at Michigan State University, and Elizabeth Rozanski, DVM, DACVECC, DACVIM, associate professor of clinical sciences at Tufts University.

UNDERSTANDING GASTRIC MOTILITY

Emergency veterinarians act fast when a dog arrives with GDV. “It is definitely an all hands on deck situation,” says Dr. Rozanski, director of Tufts University’s critical care program, which sees about 60 cases of GDV a year. “The first thing we usually do is treat a dog for shock by giving fluids, and then we try to get the dog into surgery as quickly as possible. These dogs go into shock due to the twisting of the stomach.”

A complex process, gastric motility is controlled by hormones, the central nervous system, an enteric nervous system, the automatic nervous system, and cells within the GI tract, factors that determine the strength, speed and pattern of GI contractions. Dr. Nelson explains, “To make things even more complicated, the fat-to-protein level and carbohydrates in a dog food, as well as the calories a dog consumes and whether the food is solid or fluid, and the kinds of bacteria and other microorganisms in the gut also play a role in GI motility.”

Insights about how gastric motility may cause bloat are being shaped by a capsule-sized wireless motility device called a SmartPill™ first used to diagnose gastrointestinal motility disorders in humans. In the study underway at Michigan State University, about 80 dogs have swallowed the \$600 SmartPill that measures gastric motility, relaying information to a SmartPill recorder worn in a harness or vest. The technological device picks up on



changes in pressure, temperature and acidity as the pill passes through the gut and can record episodes of bloating, constipation, abdominal pain, vomiting, and nausea.

Importantly, the SmartPill tells how long it takes for solids to pass through the gastrointestinal tract. “The pill may stay in the stomach of one dog for 21 hours and another one for only 10 minutes before reaching the small intestine,” says Dr. Nelson. “Prolonged transit of material through the stomach may stretch gastric ligaments to allow the stomach to twist. In addition, we know that the gas in the stomachs of dogs with GDV is a product of bacterial fermentation similar to what happens in cattle that bloat. With the SmartPill, we seek to learn if GDV risk and gastrointestinal motility are linked.”

Researchers at Michigan State also are evaluating the relationship between levels of two hormones, motilin (MLN) and ghrelin (GHRL), and GDV risk. Previous studies have shown that the phase III motility of dogs with GDV is weaker than in unaffected dogs. During phase III, contractions should be strongest to push nondigestible solids out of the stomach into the small intestine. The Michigan State team also is conducting a genetic analysis to evaluate the genes that encode MLN and GHRL in affected and low-risk dogs to determine if a mutation in one of the genes is more common in dogs that have bloated.

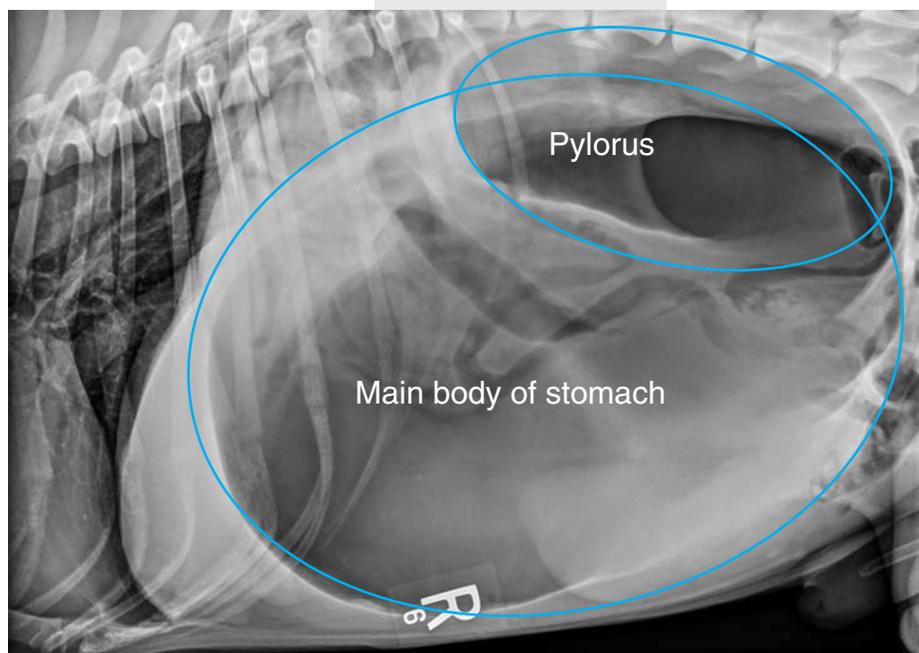
“As motilin is what seems to trigger phase III contractions in a dog’s stomach and ghrelin seems to end these contractions, potentially one or both of these hormones could cause the problem,” Dr. Nelson says.

The ability to predict which dogs are likely to respond well to surgery could be as simple as determining the amount of lactate in a dog’s blood, a measure of how effectively oxygen reaches body tissues. “When lactate goes up, it is a sign that tissues in the body have had to make energy without oxygen,” says Dr. Nelson. “The killer in GDV is more commonly related to shock, or the inability of the body to get oxygen and nutrients to the tissues, and thus not necessarily related to the stomach. Lactate indicates the severity of shock in a particular dog, but high lactate does not necessarily indicate a dog will survive or die.”

Dr. Rozanski agrees. “Preoperatively, increased lactate is associated with gastric necrosis, or tissue death, and ectopy, or abnormal heart beats. We have found that a long duration of GDV may be associated with a worse prognosis. Different organs such as

the heart, brain and lungs start to fail — a condition termed multiple organ dysfunction syndrome (MODS) — which complicates recovery.”

In a Tufts study of 26 dogs of various breeds with bloat, Dr. Rozanski reports that those with cardiac dysfunction largely had a poor outcome. “We are looking to see how to better characterize myocardial disease in dogs with GDV,” she says. “We have found that the biomarkers of echocardiography and electrocardiogram testing parallel the severity of disease.”



SOURCE: DR. LAURA NELSON, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The biobank of hundreds of DNA samples of GDV-affected dogs being collected at Tufts is ongoing. The microbiome research, which includes the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, aims to determine if there is a difference in the bacterial flora of dogs with GDV compared to other dogs.

Given that bloat is a complex age-old disease, it is not surprising that answers don't come quickly. Meanwhile, “early detection and planning ahead are key,” says Dr. Rozanski. “We can do more to help dogs with earlier detection, a more aggressive surgical approach and improved supportive care postoperatively. We want to learn how to prevent organ failure and infection in dogs with bloat.”

“The question for us is what causes bloat,” Dr. Nelson summarizes. “We need to clarify causative factors to guide preventive measures, improve medical treatment and implement selective breeding. The exciting thing about this devastating and significant problem is there are some new perspectives on this old disease.” ■

This radiographic image of a dog suffering from GDV shows the stomach, the large-egg-shaped structure, filled with gas and thus occupying most of the abdomen. The twisted pyloric sphincter at the top of the stomach indicates the stomach is twisted on its axis rather than simply distended.





Breeder-owner-trainer Kris Hill takes her daily morning walk with Hunting Hills Small Munsterlanders, from left, “Flynn” (Hunting Hills’ Xpress Flynn), “Jaika” (VC Looses Jaika), “Lexi” (Hunting Hills’ Lexi), and “Hemi” (VC Hunting Hills’ Hemlock).

The Masterful Munsterlanders *of Hunting Hills*

BY KAYLA MILLER

At 6 a.m., all is dark and calm at the farm in Brainard, Nebraska. Before the tractors hum and sprinklers sputter, Hunting Hills Small Munsterlander breeder Kris Hill sits at her kitchen table sipping a cup of tea, soaking in the serenity as she waits for the sun to rise over the rolling plains. The birds begin to chirp, signaling to Kris that daylight is about to break.

As she walks outside to rouse the dogs, the early morning light casts a peachy glow over the mostly treeless prairie. The cool, 60-degree breeze rustles the tall Indian grass. Kris enters one of the kennels and releases six Small Munsterlanders to air out. “Let’s go! Come on!” she calls, rallying the long-haired, medium-sized versatile hunting dogs so the group can embark on their one-mile walk, a daily morning ritual.

“I love it here. It’s so peaceful,” Kris says, beaming.

Natural ability and drive kicking in, the dogs wander off in search of the abundant wild quail. Not wanting them to tire too soon before a long training day ahead, Kris motions for the dogs to return, hollering, “Here, here, here!” One by one, they emerge from the field and run back.

Situated on 280 acres dedicated to the Conservation Reserve Program, the farm has been home to Kris and her

husband, Jeff, since 2002. Here, 26 litters spanning four generations of Hunting Hills Small Munsterlanders have been bred and trained to be well-balanced companions in the field and at home. The farm includes three kennels with 14 runs altogether, a 15-acre lake and two ponds, and several coveys of wild upland game such as quail and pheasant. “It is the perfect place to start puppies,” Kris says.

A longtime North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association (NAVHDA) member, Kris has run her dogs in more than 100 Natural Ability (NA), Utility Preparatory (UPT) and Utility (UT) tests, which measure a dog’s searching, pointing, retrieving, and tracking skills at various stages of maturity.

Fourteen NAVHDA and Small Munsterlander Club of North America (SMCNA) NA Breeder Awards plus 11 SMCNA NA Sire Awards have been bestowed on Hunting Hills for having at least four pups from a litter pass the NA test. Bids to the NAVHDA Invitational, the highest level of testing, have resulted in three versatile champions. Still, Kris is in disbelief over her success.

“I never thought I’d train a versatile champion once, let alone three times,” she says, gleaming. “For me, training and testing is about the journey you take with that dog. If you get to the Invitational level, you’re already successful whether or not your dog passes.”

Before Hunting Hills was established in 1995, neither Kris nor Jeff had experience with purebred dogs. Avid turkey hunters, they began to search for a sporting dog. A 1994 article in the *Omaha World-Herald* by outdoor writer Larry Porter about some “beautiful, even-tempered German hunting dogs” sparked the couple’s interest. Breeder Ray DeJong of Brookings, South Dakota, was quoted to say the breed is “one of the best-kept secrets” among upland game hunters.

“At that time, there were only five breeders and fewer than 300 Small Munsterlanders in the United States,” Kris recalls. “I was so drawn to these dogs I called every breeder mentioned in the article to get on their lists.”

The wait ended a year later when Kris bought “Darby” (Darby vom Krieger) from Barbara Krieger of Krieger’s Ridge Kennels in West Bend, Wisconsin. Krieger encouraged Kris to join NAVHDA to learn how to train and handle her new puppy. However, the nearest NAVHDA chapter was in Freeman, South Dakota. Kris frequently made the four-hour drive

For me, training and testing is about the journey you take with that dog. If you get to the Invitational level, you’re already successful whether or not your dog passes.

— Kris Hill



“I don’t want to produce the world’s best hunting dog that’s ill-mannered in the house or the world’s best house dog that isn’t a good hunter. I want my dogs to be both,” says Kris, pictured with husband Jeff and their dogs, from left, Hemi and Lexi.

each way to attend handler clinics, completing assignments from her instructors with Darby throughout the workweek as time allowed.

With the help of pros Al Harmeyer and Tracy Harmeyer of Krystal Creek Kennels in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, Kris trained Darby to a Prize I UT. The Harmeyers' hands-on mentoring helped Kris establish herself as a trainer. "After Darby passed the UT, they trained me not to untrain her," she says.

During a serendipitous stay at a hole-in-the-wall motel one weekend in Freeman, Kris met her now close friends Bev and Randy Turner, who also were from the Nebraska area. Tired of making the long drive north to train, the Turners and Hills started the NAVHDA Heartland chapter in Omaha in 1997.

Now retired, Kris is devoted to raising puppies and training dogs. Field exercise is completed in the mornings, followed by water work in the afternoons. Finished dogs assist with pointing and backing for NAVHDA Invitational training.

"Training is like putting a puzzle together," she says. "It's part physical, part cerebral."

A 'ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME' DOG

Upholding the German tradition of registering litters alphabetically, Kris bred her "A" litter out of Darby in 1998. She knew she needed an outcross to improve her dogs' conformation and natural ability and to further develop the Hunting Hills bloodline. Kris studied German records, looking for stud dogs with high conformation and hunting scores. She sent inquiries to several German breeders, but only one responded. During a brief correspondence in 2003 with Manfred Morber, a Small Munsterlander breeder of 20 years in Affalterbach, Germany, Kris agreed to buy a roan pup provided she could first meet the sire and dam. Morber granted her request, so Kris paid \$350 to book a round-trip flight to Munich to pick up "Cody" (VC Cody vom Apfelbaumbach).

"Rather than sightseeing, I got to know Manfred and how he trained and hunted with his dogs," Kris says. "As we filled out the paperwork, he kindly told me, 'I hope Cody will be your dream dog.'"

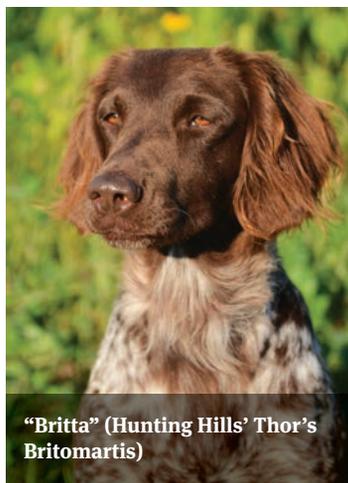
Was he ever. The first versatile champion Kris owned and trained, Cody received a record seven SMCNA Sire Awards, worthy of induction into the SMCNA Hall of Fame in 2012. He also became the first Small Munsterlander in the United States to run in the VJP and VGP tests, which examine natural ability and performance, respectively, through



Trained by Kris, Flynn, a 1 1/2-year-old male Small Munsterlander, recently passed the North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association's Utility Preparatory (UPT) test.

'THE LITTLE SPY'

His exact origin unknown, the Small Munsterlander is believed to have been developed during the 19th century in the Münster region of northern Germany, where the breed was nicknamed “little spy” for his tenacity and intelligence in the field. This versatile hunting dog is prized for his elegant style, characterized by skillful retrieving, staunch pointing and meticulous tracking. Capable of enduring even the most difficult conditions on land and in water, the Small Munsterlander uses his wagging, horizontally carried tail to signal game. Confident and eager to please, the Small Munsterlander is an equally devoted hunting partner and calm family companion. His smooth, feathered coat can either be brown-and-white or roan (brown-and-white with brown ticking). A medium-sized breed, males are 21 inches at the withers and weigh 45 to 60 pounds; females are 20 inches at the withers and weigh 40 to 55 pounds.



“Britta” (Hunting Hills’ Thor’s Britomartis)

JGHV (Jagdgebrauchshundverband), the umbrella organization of German versatile hunting dog clubs.

“Cody always did exactly what I asked of him. He knew how to turn it on and off,” says Kris. “He passed on to his progeny his staunch point and cooperative nature.”

In 2005, Kris imported “Jaika” (VC Looses Jaika), a brown-and-white female, from breeder Hans Loose in Denmark. “Even as a puppy, she was calm and even-tempered. A bold, quick learner, Jaika has a beautiful, setter-like point, keen nose and is a reliable retriever,” Kris says.

Anticipating Cody and Jaika would complement each other nicely, Kris planned to breed them. “Cody was very masculine and laid-back, while Jaika was a petite little go-getter,” she says.

That first breeding in 2007 produced “Hemi” (VC Hunting

Hills’ Hemlock). Taking after his sire and dam, Hemi became Kris’ third versatile champion in 2012. He has sired 27 Hunting Hills dogs, receiving a NAVHDA Breeder Award for the “J” litter in 2008 and a SMCNA Sire Award for the “Q” litter in 2011. A Hemi son, “Joker” (VC Hunting Hills’ Joker), also became a versatile champion under owners Pam and Mario Robinson of Robingun Kennels in Lincoln, Nebraska, as well as a SMCNA Hall of Fame member. Cody and Jaika produced two litters, boosting the Hunting Hills dogs’ NAVHDA test scores dramatically. Jaika, also a SMCNA Hall of Fame member, holds the record for producing 12 dogs that have completed Prize I work during their NAVHDA testing.

“I always strive to complement the dogs I’m breeding,” says Kris. “A steady temperament is paramount, followed by correct conformation, excellent hip health and keen natural ability. I want my dogs to be as successful at home as they are in the field.”

Training, which begins at 4 weeks of age, introduces the pups to birds. Seeing different kinds of birds and learning to respect them is crucial. Before picking up their tracking and pointing abilities, they start taking daily walks at 5 weeks. By the time they leave for their forever homes at 8 weeks, the puppies are socialized following the rule of seven. “Whatever you do with them, whether it be feeding, meeting new people or exposure to new environments, you should do it seven times,” Kris says. “This helps to give owners a well-rounded, even-keeled dog.”

Kris prefers to sell puppies to SMCNA members to ensure the breed is promoted through proper training and testing. She also encourages her puppy buyers to join NAVHDA. Almost 200 Small Munsterlanders have been born at Hunting Hills, with more than half being NAVHDA NA tested. Almost all passed.

“I like to NA test at least one dog from every litter,” Kris says. “If I see a dog I wouldn’t want to own, then I know not to repeat the breeding.”

Kris says her dogs keep her young at heart. Years of nagging arthritis and a car accident threatened to sideline Kris from the sport she loves. In 2007, Kris and Jeff were driving home from Chicago where the couple was visiting Jeff’s mother. While passing



Hunting Hills’ dogs are fed Purina Pro Plan SPORT Performance 30/20 Chicken & Rice Formula, a complete and balanced all life stages food.



Appearing to smile, Hemi displays the breed's signature easygoing temperament. "Small Munsterlanders should be enthusiastic hunting partners and alert family companions," Kris says.

through an intersection, another vehicle wrongfully turned in front of them, causing the Hills to slam into the car before spinning into a traffic post. The incident sent Kris to the emergency room with a ruptured small intestine. She spent two weeks recovering in the hospital. In the months following the accident, Jeff, a family physician at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, urged Kris to rebuild her strength by resuming morning walks with her Small Munsterlanders.

"Getting back into the routine with my dogs was the best therapy," says Kris. "They taught me I can do more than I ever thought I could. It's all about patience and perseverance."

Today, Kris is as exuberant as ever. Her joy and passion for the breed and sport shines as she practices retrieving with 18-month-old "Flynn" (Hunting Hills' Xpress Flynn) and 2-year-old "Ulysses" (Hunting Hills' Ulysses). The pair most recently passed their UPT tests. Once the young dogs complete their NAVHDA Invitational work, they will return to Hunting Hills for breeding. "Flynn and Ulysses have a lot of energy and natural ability. It's a matter of waiting for them to mature so everything comes together," she says.

Kris' current string also helps to fill the void left by Cody, who passed away this summer. Upon the 12-year-old's death, Kris sent Morber a letter to

thank him for the wonderful dog he sold her.

"Cody was my heart dog," says Kris. "He was a true gentleman, my protector, best friend and always there for me. I loved him so much."

Similarly, Kris often receives letters, phone calls and emails from her puppy buyers updating her on their Small Munsterlander. "I love when my owners call and excitedly tell me their dog did really well in the field on a particular day or passed their NA test," she says. "When you see the success of your dogs play out for others, everything comes full circle. It's very gratifying."

Full circle, indeed. Almost 20 years after Darby ran in her first NAVHDA test, Kris nods to those who paved the way for her as a breeder, owner and trainer by doing the same for the next generation. She remains active in NAVHDA, serving as a judge and as her chapter's summer test secretary. She and Jeff host tests at the farm, where new puppy owners are welcome to return for use of the rich training grounds or to tap into Kris' wealth of expertise.

Reflecting on her career, her beloved Cody and the rest of the masterful Small Munsterlanders of Hunting Hills, Kris says, "I hope I can produce someone's dog-of-a-lifetime. I want my puppy buyers to look back and say, 'That Hunting Hills dog gave me such joy. We had so many good times together.'" ■



HANDLING PROS STICK TO THE STANDARD

BY SUE VROOM

Among the virtues needed to be a successful all-breed handler of show dogs are innate talent, lots of practice and study, and an intense desire to achieve, a competitive streak, if you will. The ability to make it look easy, polished and smooth handling dog after dog, ring after ring, is nothing short of being a gifted professional.

Dog shows blend types of handlers. There are owner-handlers, the pros who specialize in breeds like poodles or terriers with minimal time for other breeds, and the all-breed professional. They come together in a lineup with one aim: to convince the judge the dog they lead is the closest to ideal as defined by the breed standard.

Unlike an owner-handler or a pro who specializes in particular breeds, an all-breed pro handler may not always have a grasp of the fine details of breed-type characteristics of each breed. Their expertise is presenting show dogs to a stellar performance in the ring based on years of apprenticing with a professional.

Experienced handlers know there is no such thing as a one-fits-all generic presentation. Considering that 184 breeds and varieties are recognized by the American Kennel Club, sooner or later a new breed or an individual dog is likely to give you a reason to want to learn more. The breed standard established by the parent breed club is your most valuable source of information. You also should find a mentor for ongoing study.

A mentor in a particular breed can help you understand the standard, proper movement and correct grooming. He or she also can help you assess how well an individual dog represents the ideal dog of its breed and thus what you need to do for an effective ring presentation. Observe your mentor grooming through all phases of preparing a dog to be shown. Grooming, trimming and conditioning are tools that can help make a dog stand out.

Establishing a rapport with a dog as an individual is an essential component of presentation. Good handlers know that no two dogs respond the same. Individual dogs have their own quirks and triggers. You want to understand a dog's limit for hand stacking and posing for bait and the best speed to maintain full-body extension. These are skills that will help your dog look his or her best when it counts.

Keep in mind that a judge is looking for the salient characteristics that bring out a breed's best physical attributes and temperament. A handler's ability to enhance a dog's positive features and draw attention away from negative ones is what makes a winner.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR ALL-BREED HANDLERS

- 1 Be sure to develop quality apprenticeship and mentoring relationships
- 2 Study the AKC breed standard for each breed presented
- 3 Honestly and accurately assess the virtues and faults of your clients' dogs
- 4 Recognize an individual dog's triggers — never show every dog the same way
- 5 Join a credible professional handling organization for support and affiliation



Initially, when a judge examines a dog in a ring, he or she is looking to identify the correct silhouette for a breed. It is the handler's job to make the dog's outline look correct on the line. For example, a dog that may be slightly too long in body according to its breed standard can be stacked on the line at a slight angle to create the illusion of less body length.

The most important thing to remember is that the judge is on a mission to find the closest example of the breed's ideal. Accomplished handlers can facilitate that process by optimizing their time in the ring to their full advantage. Timing is everything. You have to know when and how to grab the eye when presenting a dog. Doing so could make all the difference. ■

A professional all-breed handler for 32 years, Sue Vroom and her late husband, Corky Vroom, won hundreds of Bests in Show during their career. Vroom, of Shady Shores, Texas, works as an Executive Field Representative for the American Kennel Club. For information, contact Vroom by email at suevroom@centurytel.com.

Circle of Champions

ENGLISH SETTER 'TELLER' SETS BREED RECORD FOR SPECIALTY SHOW WINS



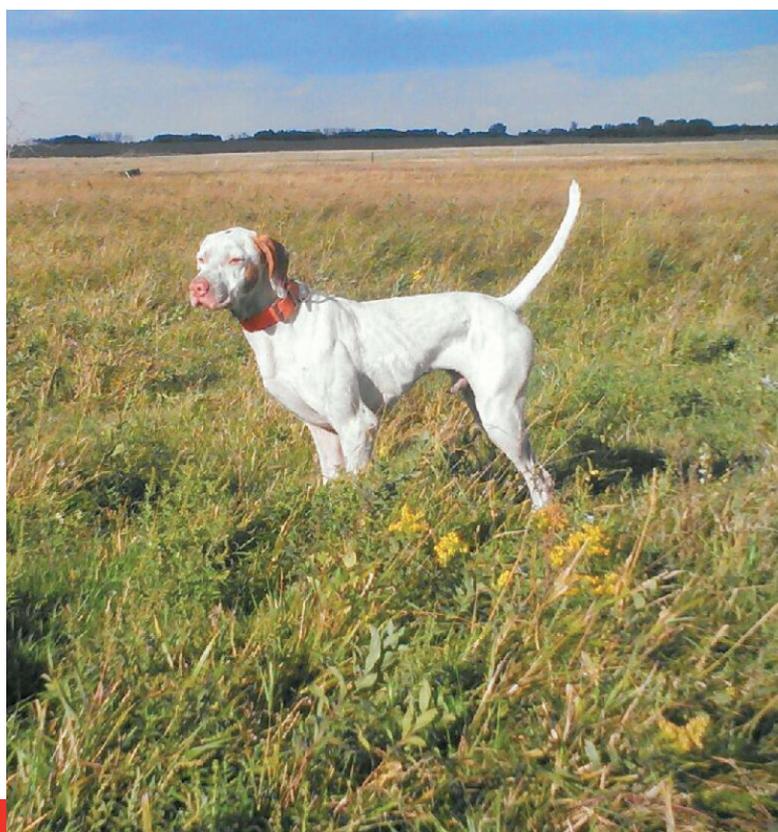
A striking orange-belton English Setter, called “Teller,” made breed history this year when he became the top specialty-winning English Setter of all time. Ranked No. 1 in the breed since 2013, Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Stargazer ‘N Wingfield Wait Wait Don’t Tell passed the previous record of 30 Bests in Specialty Show last March. “Teller’s graceful elegance and genuinely sweet temperament set him apart,” says pro handler Eileen Hackett, who co-bred the 6-year-old male with Pat Skoll and Lois Biedron of Chicago and co-owns him with Don and Pat Coller of Madison, Georgia. Teller is fueled by *Purina Pro Plan SPORT* Performance 30/20 Chicken & Rice Formula.

Gracefully elegant and genuinely sweet, “Teller” became the winningest English Setter for Bests in Specialty Show this past spring.

POINTER NAMED ‘SPOT’ IS THE 2015 SASKATCHEWAN CHAMPION

With two sharp-tailed grouse finds in a fast-paced one-hour horseback stake, a 3-year-old Pointer named Fireline edged to the front of the competition to win the Saskatchewan (Canada) All-Age Championship. Outperforming more than 50 bird dogs in the five-day trial, the orange-and-white male called “Spot” is handled by pro handler Mark McLean of Doerun, Georgia. McLean also handled the Runner-Up Champion and the winner of the Derby trial. Working with Spot since he was 6 weeks old, McLean credits the resilient dog’s stamina, speed and ability to learn for their win. “I see Spot getting better and better each time we go out,” McLean says. Bred by Woody Watson of Leesburg, Georgia, this high-powered bird dog is owned by Nelson Mills of Atlanta. Spot is fueled by *Purina Pro Plan SPORT* Performance 30/20 Chicken & Rice Formula.

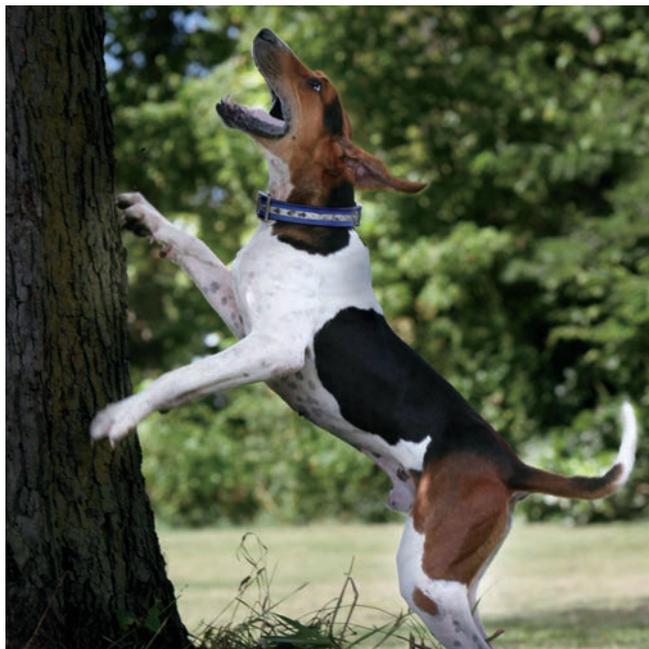
“Spot” crossed into Canada and outperformed the competition to win the Saskatchewan All-Age Championship in August. The championship is one of the first Purina Point trials in the 2015-2016 season.



TREEING WALKER COONHOUND NAMED 'BIG' WINS AUTUMN OAKS NITE HUNT CHAMPIONSHIP

Striking with precision and displaying unwavering endurance, GR NITE CH 'PR' Feelin Big powered through the competition to win the Autumn Oaks Nite Championship. Despite the early September heat, "Big" tirelessly outperformed nearly 200 dogs, earning 1,250 points and treeing seven raccoons during the three-round hunt. His flawless performance in the final series allowed the 2-year-old hound to pull ahead of the competition. A lean tricolored Treeing Walker Coonhound, Big is reminiscent of his parents, W NITE CH Miami River Big D and W NITE CH Hanna's Creek Feelin Frisky. "Big is bred to be a high-performance coonhound," says breeder-owner Bryan Whitted of Huntington, Indiana. "He has tremendous desire and never runs low on energy." Handled by Chuck Adkins of Richwood, Ohio, Big is fueled by *Purina Pro Plan SPORT* Performance 30/20 Salmon & Rice Formula.

A flawless performance in the final series took "Big" to the top of the UKC Autumn Oaks Nite Hunt Championship.



ITALIAN GREYHOUND 'BARBARA ANN' SPRINTS TO TOP OF BREED

A stylish 2-year-old bitch called "Barbara Ann" became the No. 1 Italian Greyhound less than a year after winning her first specialty show in July 2014. Since then, Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Marchwind Barbara Ann captured two more Bests in Specialty Show, including the 2014 Italian Greyhound Club of America National Specialty. Slender and elegant, she also is the first Italian Greyhound in three years to win an all-breed Best in Show. "With smooth curves and a high-stepping, free-moving gate, Barbara Ann is the quintessential Italian Greyhound," says pro handler Justin Smithey of Sugar Valley, Georgia. Powered by *Purina Pro Plan SPORT* Performance 30/20 Chicken & Rice Formula, Barbara Ann was bred by Lois March of Vienna, Georgia, and is owned by Carol Harris of Reddick, Florida.

"Barbara Ann," the first Italian Greyhound to capture an all-breed Best in Show in three years, has high-stepped her way to become No. 1 in the breed.

Please visit the Circle of Champions on the *Purina Pro Club* website at purinaproclub.com to read about top-performing show and sporting dogs powered by *Purina*.

PURINA HONORS OUTSTANDING RETRIEVERS

The style, intensity and drive of three exceptional Retrievers stood out last year at trials across the country. Their intelligence on the line, willingness to please their handlers and flawless performances over challenging land and water tests shined throughout their respective yearlong competitions. These are the Purina Outstanding Retriever Award winners.

NFC-AFC Robbers' Stray Bullet soared through land and water marks and blinds, earning 60



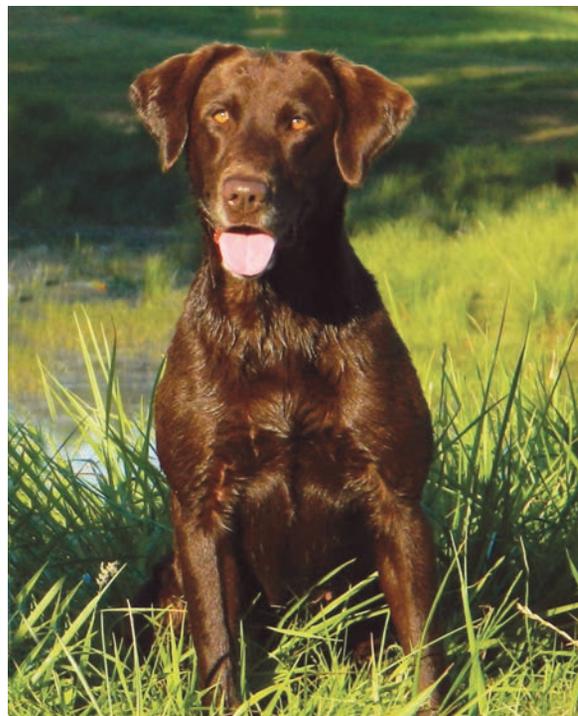
NFC-AFC Robbers' Stray Bullet

points, to snag the Purina Outstanding Open Retriever Award. Owned by the late Marion "Kippy" Stroud-Swingle of Elverson, Pennsylvania, "Bullet" won seven of the eight trials he entered last year before winning the 2014 National Open Retriever Championship in November. Pro handler Alan Pleasant of Black River Retrievers in Angier, North Carolina, says the 7-year-old male excels at every part of the competition. "Bullet is all business and always gives 110 percent."

Calm and collected, a 7-year-old chocolate female called "Ammo" gracefully sailed through the yearlong competition with 55.5 points to capture the Purina Outstanding Amateur Retriever Award. FC-AFC-CNAFC-CFC Upon The Wings of an Answered Prayer won 15 all-age stakes in 2014, becoming the only dog to win

four U.S. double headers. "When she comes to the line, Ammo is a professor. She looks at the test, absorbs and understands it, then boom — she does it!" says owner-handler Bill Petrovish of Townsend, Montana.

Not only did a yearlong campaign for Abby's Physician of Antioch take owner-handler Dan Hurst of Bullard, Texas, across the country for the first time, it also earned the duo the Purina Outstanding Derby Retriever Award. "'Luke' is a phenomenal marking dog, and as high rolling as he is, he's a wonderful team player," Hurst says.



FC-AFC-CNAFC-CFC Upon The Wings of an Answered Prayer

The smart, eager-to-please 2-year-old male bagged 86 points to clinch the Award before rounding out his Derby career with 98 points over 14 derby stake wins. ■



Abby's Physician of Antioch



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Breed Snapshot

MALTESE: ARISTOCRAT OF THE CANINE WORLD

A beloved ancient breed, the Maltese is as much a charming companion today as in the Middle Ages when European royalty adored them as pets. Winning the affection of women for their gentle nature and their minute size, Maltese were tucked into bosoms and carried in arms or sleeves on carriage rides.

Originating in the Mediterranean on the island of Malta, 50 miles south of Sicily, the Maltese has been considered the aristocrat of the canine world for 28 centuries. The Greeks and Romans depicted the breed's stunning pure white coat contrasted by dark eyes and black nose in their paintings and ceramic art. The prized toy dog was sold to wealthy Europeans, eventually making his way around the world.

In the U.S., the Maltese Lion Dog, a white dog, was listed at the first Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in 1877, and two years later, a colored Maltese was exhibited as a Maltese Skye Terrier, a misnomer given that the breed is a fearless, spirited spaniel. In 1888 the American Kennel Club accepted the Maltese for registration, though the toy dog was considered a rare breed until the 1950s.

Vigorous and lively, the Maltese loves to romp and play. The bright, happy dog stands out in conformation rings with his jaunty, smooth flowing gait. Maltese do not shed, adding to their value as a lap dog and trusting companion. The Maltese stands 8 inches tall at the shoulders and weighs from 4 to 6 pounds.

Source: *The Complete Dog Book*, Official Publication of the American Kennel Club. i-5 Publishing, Irvine, CA. 2014.

