

A golden retriever is running through water, splashing. The dog is the central focus, with its fur wet and matted. The background is a blurred green field. The overall scene is dynamic and energetic.

**PURINA**  
**PRO PLAN**

# TODAY'S BREEDER

A Purina Pro Plan Publication Dedicated to the Needs of Canine Enthusiasts

Issue 93

TOP OBEDIENCE BREEDERS

**Sunfire Golden Retrievers**

- BUILDING A KENNEL
- PLACING PUPPIES IN PET HOMES
- MANAGING URINARY STONES



Pro retriever trainer Mike Lardy of Handjem Kennels shared his experience training retrievers for field trials with veterinary sports medicine specialists at the Purina Canine Sports Medicine Symposium.

## PURINA SYMPOSIUM HELPS TO ADVANCE SAFE TRAINING OF SPORTING DOGS

Pro retriever trainer Mike Lardy likens field trial retrievers to endurance sprinters. “Even in the first series of a trial, as retrievers take off on a land mark retrieve, they may run over tough cover and hilly terrain in high wind or rain,” he says. “It can be physically demanding.”

With 35 years’ experience training retrievers, including dogs that have earned 22 National titles, seven National Retriever Champions he handled himself, Lardy has built a training program that centers on respect and care of the dogs. “We look for little things and take notes on our dogs’ progress every day,” he says. “A sloppy sit could indicate a physical problem, for example. Some trainers think the more training, the better. To us, more training is not always better.”

The dynamics involved in understanding the stress a sport puts on a dog and how to safely train are key to achieving an optimal performance. Trainers who partner with sports medicine veterinarians reap knowledge about little things that can make a big difference in a dog’s performance.

Capturing the opportunity to bring together competitors of this year’s AKC Master National Retriever event and the



*Purina Pro Plan Incredible Dog Challenge National Finals, Purina invited 30 top veterinary sports medicine experts to the Purina Canine Sports Medicine Symposium*

Sept. 29 to Oct. 1. The first program of its kind in the country, the symposium linked Lardy, as well as the competitors whose events were the same weekend, with the experts for a synergistic sharing of the intrinsic aspects of dog sports and the specialized nature of canine sports medicine.

“Purina is a longtime provider of optimal nutrition for canine athletes in training and conditioning, as well as recovery,” says Purina Senior Veterinary Communications Manager RuthAnn Lobos, DVM. “We are so proud to support the emerging field of veterinary sports medicine and rehabilitation since its inception in 2010.”

A collaborative spirit among the veterinary experts generated thought-provoking discussions and questions. The future for canine athletes promises to bring an increased level of care, so the retrievers that Lardy trains and those at the Master National may retrieve with greater endurance and precision, and accomplish more than ever before imagined. ■

## 4 GETTING STARTED ON BUILDING A DOG KENNEL

Kennels in the Country owners Justin Smithey and Cheslie Pickett share tips on creating a comfortable, safe kennel that's appealing to dogs and their owners.

## 6 PLACING PUPPIES IN PET HOMES

Matching the right family with the right dog is an essential part of dog breeding. Edy Ballard of Ironwood Beagles and Mike Stewart of Wildrose Kennels tell how they identify a good home for each dog.

## 10 SUNFIRE'S GOLDENS: 'BEST DOGS IN THE WORLD'

Michael "Mike" Book and Barbara Biewer have bred eight generations and more than 40 Obedience Trial Champions. Their ultimate goal is to produce dogs that owners will call "the best dog in the world."

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Struvite and calcium oxalate stones are the most common stones that occur in dogs. Watching for signs of stones can help owners manage the painful condition in dogs.

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Sunfire's Long Hot Summer MH CDX RN CGC WCX CAN CDX ("Ben"), a 4-year-old Golden Retriever bred and owned by Michael "Mike" Book and Barbara Biewer. Formerly owned by the late Claire Harnick, Ben is handled by Mike in hunting tests and by Mike and Barbara in obedience trials. Cover photo by Diane Lewis. See story on page 10.

### THIS PAGE

The ability to place puppies in homes where they will live wonderful lives is part of being a responsible breeder. To learn more, see story on page 6.



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Professional handlers Justin Smithey and Cheslie Pickett, pictured with Whippets “Lexie” (GCH Bo-Bett Lanexa Legionnaire), left, and “Angel” (GCH Bo-Bett Appraxin Angel), visited many boarding and show kennels before building their own in Sugar Valley, Georgia.

# GETTING STARTED ON BUILDING A DOG KENNEL

Many considerations go into building a kennel or adding on to an existing kennel. At Kennels in the Country in Sugar Valley, Georgia, Justin Smithey, who owns the handling/breeding and boarding kennel with his wife, Cheslie Pickett, says, “Our chief concern was providing a safe,

comfortable, healthy living space for the dogs. We wanted our kennel to be attractive to owners and appealing to dogs.”

Here are tips from Kennels in the Country to consider as you plan your kennel.

## 1 Location Is Everything

First check the city, county and state zoning requirements. Our kennel had to be 1,000 feet away from a residence, thus we built it in the center of our 28 acres. Your kennel should be located away from neighbors so barking dogs are not a problem. You also should have good drainage and room for future expansion.

## 2 Creatures of Comfort

Make sure the kennel is built so the hot afternoon sun does not face kennel runs. Our dog runs face the east and northeast, giving them the early morning sun. The office, grooming room, laundry, and kitchen are located at the front of the building where the afternoon sun hits.

## 3 Fresh Air Is Invigorating

Air quality is important. We installed a large exhaust fan that pulls air through the kennel when we open a couple of windows on the opposite side of the kennel. In the warm summer months, we keep the exhaust fan going regularly. In winter, we run it for about an hour every day. This is one of our favorite features.

## 4 Concrete Works Well

We chose a concrete foundation for our kennel for multiple reasons. The concrete on the outside runs allows for easy pickup of solid waste, and then we hose urine and water waste into drains that feed into a septic system. A sealed finish protects the concrete from urine and water seeping in. The inside runs have epoxy paint on the walls and floors that allows for surfaces to be thoroughly disinfected against disease and parasites, and we added texture to the concrete flooring to provide traction. The higher initial cost of concrete is offset by its lower maintenance cost, ease of cleaning and attractive, clean appearance.

## 5 Designed for Exercise

It was important to us to have safe, spacious exercise paddocks that would allow the Whippets and Italian Greyhounds that we breed and show, as well as dogs that are boarding, to run free. All our kennel runs feed into exercise paddocks that are separated by 5-foot-tall woven horse fencing with 2-by-4 inch mesh weaving secured on wooden posts. Custom chain link gates separate the exercise paddocks, and we added pavers under the gates and along the fence lines for security. ■



The outside runs of Kennels in the Country, above, have a roof overhang for protection from inclement weather, and the runs open to grass paddocks that provide a safe, secure area for exercise. The kennel façade, right, was built facing west so the office, rather than the kennels, would receive the sun in the warmest part of the day.



Kennels with glass doors, above, complement chain link runs opposite them. A large exhaust fan on the far wall helps to keep the air fresh when open windows on the opposite side of the building pull the air through. A separate area, right, allows for whelping and raising personal show dogs, and built-in crates provide a comfortable space for the Italian Greyhounds and Whippets.





# Placing Puppies

## in Pet Homes

BY KAYLA MILLER



Ironwood Beagle breeder Edy Ballard holds “Gidget” (CH RKn’Tooker’s Sweet Dreams), left, the dam of 6-month-old littermates “Sandy” (Ironwood Under the Boardwalk), right and opposite page, and “Jasper” (Ironwood Stand By Me), below.

One look was all it took for Tracey Johnson and her family to fall for a handsome, sweet Beagle puppy. Ironwood Beagle breeder Edy Ballard of Morristown, Indiana, is credited for bringing together “Jasper” and the Johnsons of St. Louis.

Tracey and her husband, Jack, were seeking a pet for their 11-year-old daughter, Taylor, and 9-year-old son, Aiden. When Tracey, a Purina employee, met “Uno,” the 2008 Westminster Best in Show winner, she was

smitten with the dog’s merry disposition. Years later, when the family decided they were ready for the responsibility of owning a dog and that they wanted a Beagle, a breeder referral led them to Edy.

An AKC Breeder of Merit, Edy takes seriously matching the right puppy with potential owners. She breeds one or two litters a year, though not every year. Referrals have resulted in a waiting list for an Ironwood puppy.

“I’m meticulous about determining the best dog for a family,” Edy says. “I spend a lot of time exchanging emails with puppy buyers to learn about their lifestyle, where they live, whether they have other pets, and what they are seeking in a dog. The more I know about a family, the better job I will do in placing a puppy.”

Originally, the Johnsons wanted a tricolored male with a loving temperament that

Tracey Johnson, left, with children Taylor and Aiden, consider Jasper a well-loved family member and his breeder, Edy Ballard, an extension of their family.

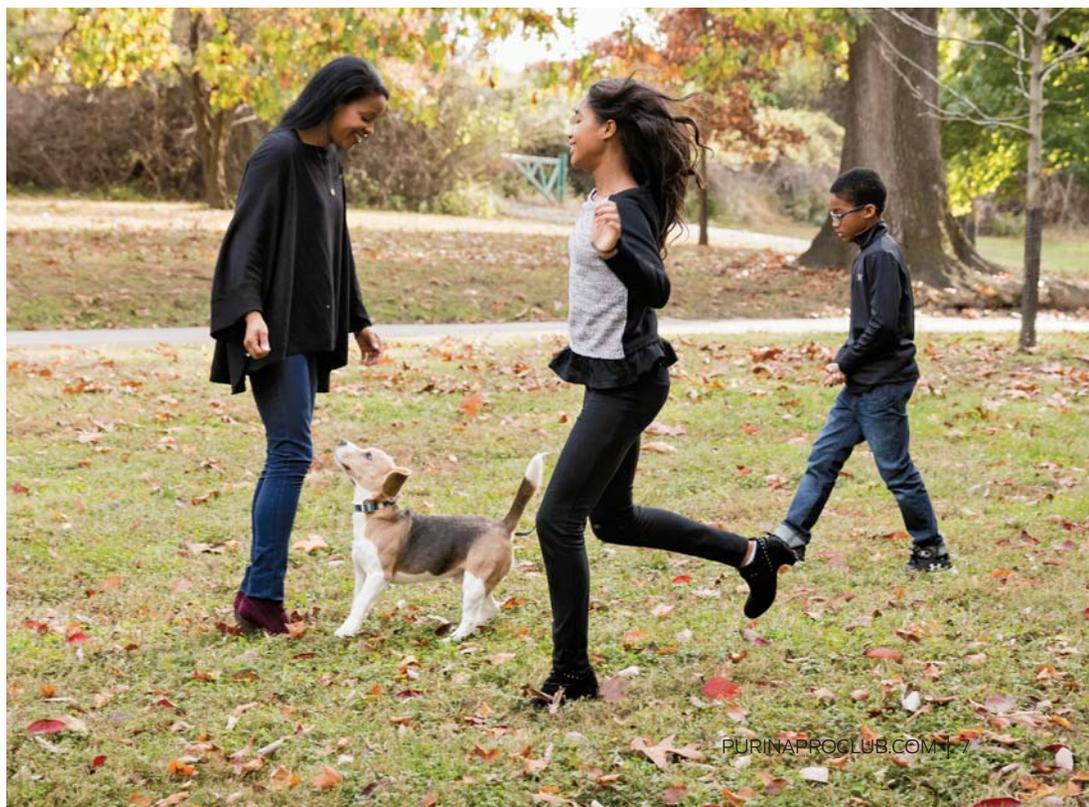
could easily adapt to their active lifestyle. Edy thought the docile nature of a male called “Donnie” would be a suitable match, and the Johnsons agreed.

“Not long after we decided on Donnie, Edy was concerned that as he developed, his personality wasn’t as good a fit for our family as she initially thought,” Tracey recalls.

Although Edy tries to match a puppy’s coat color and sex with what her clients want, temperament often is a better guide. Reevaluating the litter, Edy sent Tracey a couple of photos of puppies she thought would be more appropriate for them.

Jasper, a blue tricolor male, immediately captivated the family with his striking looks and warm personality radiating through the computer screen. Upon first glance, daughter Taylor burst into tears, exclaiming, “That’s our dog!”

To help prepare puppies for their new homes, socialization begins early for Ironwood Beagles. Edy takes young puppies on car rides and familiarizes them with walking on surfaces such



as wood, carpeting, concrete, and tile. They are introduced to household sounds such as crinkling plastic grocery bags and a running vacuum cleaner.

“Puppies also need to have boundaries,” she explains. “I encourage owners to use a crate for housetraining and to enroll in puppy classes and obedience training.”

This past July, the Johnsons drove to Edy’s house to pick up 8-week-old Jasper. Like other new owners, they were given a packet that included Edy’s articles about puppy care, information about Beagles, medical records, feeding instructions, a copy of *Puppies for Dummies*, and a Purina Puppy Starter Kit with a sample of *Purina Pro Plan FOCUS* Puppy Formula. A soft, fleece blanket with the dam’s scent and favorite toy with the littermates’ scents also helped to ease Jasper’s transition to his new home.

Now 6 months old, Jasper has blended seamlessly into his new life. Daily rituals include a belly rub from Tracey before his morning walk and hugs from Taylor and Aiden followed by a brief play session before school.

The family continues to turn to Edy with questions or concerns about Jasper to ensure they make careful, responsible decisions. “Buying an Ironwood

Beagle was the start of a new relationship,” Tracey says. “Edy is an extension of our family, too.”

“Success is placing a puppy in a permanent home with a happy, loving family,” Edy says.

## WILDROSE’S SPECIAL-ORDER RETRIEVERS

Sporting enthusiasts often know exactly what they want in

a dream hunting dog or field trial competitor. Such was the case for Bill Behnke of Anchorage, Alaska, when a decade of upland and waterfowl hunting with sporting dog-owning friends sparked his desire for a finished hunting companion.

“It became obvious that the hunters who enjoyed the outdoor experience the most were those who brought their own dogs,” says Bill, who began perusing the Internet for breeders with fully trained Labrador Retrievers. Mike Stewart of Wildrose Kennels in Oxford, Mississippi, repeatedly populated the search results.

Wildrose is renowned for producing gentlemen’s gundogs with superb temperaments and natural game-finding



Mike Stewart of Wildrose Kennels, shown with 7-week-old Labrador Retriever puppies, breeds gentlemen’s gundogs and customizes their training as desired by the client.



## TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PUPPY PLACEMENTS

- 1 Take It Slow** Do not rush into placing a puppy in a home if you’re not 100 percent sure it is a suitable fit. When you take the time to actively listen to what people want in a dog, you’re more likely to make a compatible match.
- 2 Trust Your Gut** If you notice red flags indicating a potential buyer and puppy aren’t the best match, trust your instinct. Your sales agreements, contracts and guarantees are only as good as the people signing them.
- 3 Customization Is Key** Matching puppies with buyers isn’t an exact science. Ask potential clients questions about their lifestyle and help them to understand temperament is often a better match than color or sex.
- 4 There Are No Bad Questions** Although questions from new owners may seem basic, remember that you were once a novice, too. Take time to educate clients throughout the buying process and continue to support them after the sale as the puppy transitions to his or her new life.

abilities from imported British and Irish lines. Having recognized Wildrose from sporting magazines, Bill was confident a dog with solid marking, quartering and retrieving skills would complement his lifestyle.

The process in obtaining a Wildrose “dog of duality” begins with potential clients sending Mike a description explaining what they want in a dog. “The more specific they are, the better I can do my job,” Mike says.

The Wildrose team includes a veterinary technician and support staff who work together to facilitate requests. Several litters per year help to fulfill a six-month to one-year waiting list for puppies.

All puppies are trained “the Wildrose Way,” a method pioneered by Mike in the 1970s in which puppies learn through positive reinforcement, gentle repetition and imprinting of basic behaviors. During the early “super learner” and “super scent” training phases, puppies are introduced to whistles, decoys, tunnels, and mazes.

New owners picking up their 7-week-old puppy stay for a half-day orientation to tour the facility, review basic commands and learn about health care, nutrition, house-training, and socialization. They take home a Purina Puppy Starter Kit with a sample of *Purina Pro Plan FOCUS* Large Breed Puppy Chicken & Rice Formula and *Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets FortiFlora* canine nutritional supplement, which helps manage the digestive stress that can occur when a dog goes to a new home.

Retrievers staying at Wildrose to become finished dogs spend several months learning heeling, whistle commands and hand signals. Then, Mike zeroes in on each retriever’s hunting training, which is done specifically to the contract with the client.

Several months after Bill’s initial inquiry for a finished adult dog, Mike called with exciting news of a potential match.



Long after buying “Ghillie” (Glenshee Ghillie of Craigenross), above, owner Bill Behnke says he considers Mike Stewart his mentor and friend.

Bill and his wife, Sandy, flew to Oxford to meet “Ghillie” (Glenshee Ghillie of Craigenross) and participate in a four-day handler workshop for Mike to evaluate their compatibility with the 5-year-old black male.

“I was so eager to take Ghillie home that I pulled out my checkbook each day to seal the deal,” Bill recalls. “By the third day, Mike was comfortable with my handling skills to sell me his dog.”

Back in Anchorage, Ghillie effortlessly became Bill’s full-time companion. He accompa-



“Opus” (Wildrose Opus One), left, and “Ice” (Wildrose Black Ice) exemplify the supreme intelligence, keen natural hunting ability and gentle temperament for which Wildrose retrievers are known.

nied Bill to work at his job, his easy temperament reversing a company policy prohibiting animals in the downtown high-rise.

“Ghillie’s gentle nature and versatility made him easy to take anywhere. We hunted pheasant in open fields, chased coveys of quail, sat quietly in countless duck blinds, and traveled across the country,” says Bill. “He was a true gentlemen’s gundog.”

Bill is now among a long list of repeat clients, a nod to Wildrose’s reputation. Realizing he couldn’t risk Ghillie hunting past his prime, Bill bought two black puppies including “Opus” (Wildrose Opus One), a Ghillie nephew, and “Ice” (Wildrose Black Ice), an Opus nephew.

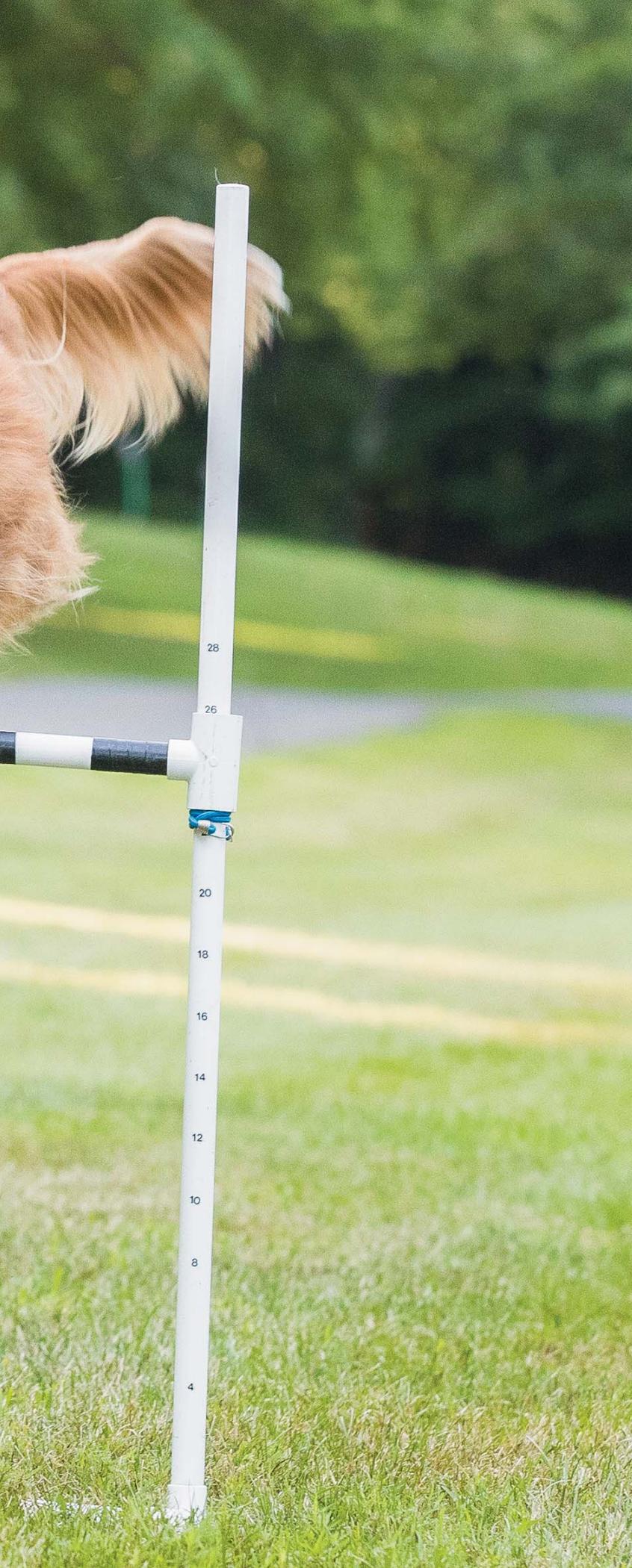
“I am fortunate to have such spectacular dogs,” he says. “Ghillie, Opus and Ice have been everything I ever wanted in hunting partners.”

Reflecting on his success, Mike says he enjoys receiving phone calls from clients bragging on their dog and seeing photos of dogs working as they were trained to do. “When a dog becomes part of a family, I know I’ve done my job.” ■



# SUNFIRE'S GOLDENS: 'BEST DOGS IN THE WORLD'

BY BARBARA FAWVER



**“Jump,”** says Michael “Mike” Book, directing 7-year-old “Buzz” (Sunfire What’s The Buzz UD BN GN GO VER RE JH WCX CCA U-CD CAN CD) to jump over the 24-inch high bar. Gracefully clearing the bar, this Sunfire Golden Retriever is halfway to earning the lofty Obedience Trial Champion (OTCH) title, the highest title in the highly challenging and competitive sport based on performance perfection and teamwork.

Next, his wife, Barbara Biewer, commands 4-year-old “Ben” (Sunfire’s Long Hot Summer MH CDX RN CGC WCX CAN CDX) to retrieve a dumbbell she tossed 20 feet. Off trots Ben, picking up the dumbbell and then returning proudly to sit straight in front of Barbara in the recall position, waiting for the command to release the dumbbell.

Obedience dog training crept into their lives 43 years ago when Barbara enrolled in a class at the Golden Triangle Obedience Training Club in Pittsburgh. Her partner, “Sunshine” (Sunshine Lollipop UD WCX CAN CDX), was a pup from the first Golden litter they bred, befittingly named for her sunny, sweet temperament.

Watching Barbara work with Sunshine from the sidelines, Mike recalls, “I told myself, ‘I can do this.’”

He began obedience training with “Tanya” (Tanya du Shanka WC CD OD CAN CD), Sunshine’s dam and his dog from college. Looking back, he says, “I didn’t know what I was doing. Tanya was 4 or 5 years old when we started training, and she wanted nothing more than to do what I wanted.”



Among the Sunfire Golden Retrievers that are known for their prowess in obedience work are “Buzz,” left, who is halfway to earning an Obedience Trial Champion title, and “Ben,” above, who also excels in hunting tests.



The fateful pairing of Mike and Tanya came in 1971 when he was looking for an Irish Setter puppy while in graduate school at the University of Wisconsin. The secretary of the physics department wanted to find a home for an 18-pound 10-week-old Golden puppy that was swimming in the water bowl. She owned the sire from the Handjem gundog retriever kennel of Henry A. “Hank” Lardy, and the dam was a blend of Gayhaven and Hammerlock show and field lines.

Earning the first of three legs needed for a Novice title — Companion Dog (CD) — on both dogs at their first obedience trial, the couple was hooked. That was the summer of 1975. Combining “sun” from Sunshine’s name and “fire” from Tanya’s fiery desire to please, they created the Sunfire prefix that is linked to some of the country’s top obedience dogs.

In 2014, the American Kennel Club honored Mike and Barbara as its Breeders of the Year for Obedience, recognizing the large number of OTCH dogs they have bred and their long-term commitment to the sport. Earning an OTCH, a 100-point journey that proves you are masterfully skilled in obedience teamwork, is compared to earning a doctorate degree. Sunfire has bred 40-plus OTCHs.

“This honor is a reflection of the dedication and talent of many people who have trusted our breeding program and accomplished amazing things with our puppies,” Barbara says. “We also are grateful for the contribution of stud dogs and their owners who have made such an impact on our breeding program.”

Obedience competitor Lynn Heidinger of Tinley Park, Illinois, has achieved phenomenal success with Sunfire Golden retrievers. “Barbara always sends me the naughtiest puppy,” says Heidinger.

Her naughtiest puppies include “Tapper” (OTCH Sunfire’s What’s On Tap UDX17 OGM GN GO), and “Toasty” (NOC2 OTCH Sunfire’s Toast Of the Town UDX45). Tapper is the 2016 Obedience Dog of the Year, having earned the most OTCH points in competition, and he was the No. 2 dog in 2015. A two-time National Obedience Champion and the Obedience Dog of the Year in 2001, Toasty, who died in 2003, was sired by “Rocky” (OTCH Stardust Rainier Rocky OBHF OS), a male owned by a mutual friend, Andrea Vaughan of Camano Island, Washington,

Having earned a Master Hunter title in hunting tests, Ben exhibits control and patience in training, virtues due, in part, to his background in obedience.



whom Barbara and Mike bred to their dam “Bounce” (Sunfire’s Too Hot To Handle OD).

The ability to breed Sunfire bitches to quality males such as Rocky came gradually as Mike and Barbara established themselves in the sport and as breeders. Early influencers such as the late Ruth Worrest Otis of High Farms kennel in New Hartford, Connecticut, and founder of the Southern Berkshire (Connecticut) Golden Retriever Club, helped to shape their knowledge about breeding and competing.

Mike attributes Tanya’s third litter, sired by “Rojo” (FC-AFC Kinike’s Oro de Rojo), owned by Jim and Sally Venerable of Huntley, Illinois, to honing their line. One of four Field Champions from his litter, Rojo was a littermate to Tanya’s grandsire.

Keeping two bitches from the litter, “Cascade” (Sunfire’s Kinetic Cascade UD MH WCX CAN UD WCX OD) and “Ruffian” (Sunfire’s Kinetic Ruffian CD WC), they began developing two lines. Cascade, who trained under up-and-coming professional retriever trainer Mike Lardy in the winter of 1981-82 and later became one of the first Master Hunters to also hold a Utility Dog title in obedience, was the first of their field line. Meanwhile, Ruffian was the start of a blended line of show, field and obedience titled dogs.

Cascade and Ruffian taught them about differences in Golden temperament, and how that impacts breeding. “Cascade was a field working bitch who could be bred to dogs with tougher temperaments, and Ruffian was a smart, independent female with good conformation who

we bred to soft, easygoing dogs,” Mike says.

“Ruffian produced our first competitive obedience dog, ‘Dynamite’ (CAN CH Sunfire’s Kinetic Dynamite JH UD WCX OD CAN UD WCI) when we bred her to a show champion.”

The idea of adding a show emphasis to their line came from mentor Sydney Waller of Jamestown, Rhode Island, whom they met in 1980 through their obedience work. “Sydney saw one of our field dogs, was impressed with the sound structure, but said, ‘You need to get some show lines into your bloodline,’” says Michael. “She wanted to help us improve the looks of our dogs.”

This led to Mike co-owning “Bonnie” (AM/CAN CH Clark’s Easter Bonnet UD WCX CAN CDX WC OD) with Waller. “We each added different parts to her training and titles,” Barbara says.

Waller finished her American show championship and CDX (Companion Dog Excellent) titles. Mike did her CD, WC (Working Certificate) and WCX (Working Certificate Excellent) titles, and Barbara completed her UD (Utility Dog) title after Mike and Waller gave up. Mike and Barbara put on Bonnie’s Canadian titles.

“Bonnie became an essential part of our breeding program,” Mike adds. “She was our first show champion. We swapped litters with Sydney, breeding Bonnie to a Field Champion, then to an Obedience Trial Champion and lastly to a combination show, field and obedience dog.”

Bonnie’s second litter, sired by OTCH Heelalong Cracklin’ Sunfire TDX OS WC OBHF, owned by Karen Johnson of Lake Mills, Wisconsin,

Buzz, Ben and Eddy represent the light, medium and dark coat colors common in Golden Retrievers.

Three-month-old Sunfire Golden puppies enjoy a meal of *Purina Pro Plan FOCUS Large Breed Puppy Chicken & Rice Formula*.



produced Sunfire's first obedience champions. "Flash" (OTCH Sunfire Spontaneous Combustn JH WCX OBHF OS), who was owned by Karen Price of Chatsworth, California, and "Rowdy" (OTCH Sunfire's Rowdy Rebel JH WCX ODHF), owned by Amy Gooch of Palm Coast, Florida, finished their titles in the 1980s, giving Sunfire status as an obedience-producing kennel.

Mixing lines with Dr. Kathy Eddy of Comstock Golden Retrievers in Millerton, New York, also helped to define the Sunfire lines. Dr. Eddy took Sunfire's "Ritz" (AM/CAN CH Comstock Sunfire O'Hillcrest UD MH WCX) to strengthen her bloodline, and Barbara and Mike have bred to her stud dogs and consulted her about breedings over the years.

Eight generations later — more than 250 litters — both Sunfire lines are going strong. A quick

Sunfire Golden Retriever breeders Michael "Mike" Book and Barbara Biewer hold littermates from a recent litter.



study of the Sunfire online Honor Roll with more than 500 dogs having earned significant achievements in show, field, agility, or obedience is impressive. Many have earned Hall of Fame status. Longevity is noted with marks by the names of dogs that have lived 14 years and longer.

### BREEDING ALL-AROUND DOGS

Waiting his turn to perform an obedience exercise, Ben leans into Barbara, a signature mark of a Sunfire Golden. "Our dogs are leaners," laughs Barbara.

"Goldens are 24-hour-a-day dogs that want to be with you," Mike says.

Dog lovers from the start, Barbara and Mike couldn't help but fall in love with the breed that ranks third in AKC registrations and is adored for its trainability and willingness to please. That amiable temperament serves them well in obedience and hunting tests, the core sports that Barbara and Mike enjoy.

"We breed to produce nice, all-around dogs," Mike says. "A Golden should be versatile. When we are looking for a stud dog, we often look at titles because it shows the biddability that is so essential to the breed and what we pass on in the breed.

"We also like a nice looking dog that is sound and has great movement. We don't restrict to a certain line of Goldens, either field or show. Without the Golden temperament, the breed is not the same," he says.

"Although some of our pups go to competitive homes, many go as family companions. We try to find families who want a true sporting dog that is active and needing more of a challenge than a walk around the block," says Barbara. "We love to see our pups succeed at whatever activity their owners desire, whether that is retrieving a bird or a tennis ball, doing the challenges of agility or obedience work, or a run in the woods or a jump off a dock."

When the couple met in 1970 in graduate school at the University of Wisconsin, Barbara had a Smooth Collie named "Bobbie." Early photos of Barbara and Mike with their dogs show a mix of Smooth Collies along with Golden Retrievers. By the late 1980s, Goldens became their focus.

With Mike's background in physics and Barbara's in medical genetics, they make a strong collaborative team when it comes to breeding and raising Goldens. Demand is high with a couple



of inquiries daily for puppies from the six to seven litters produced each year. Not all litters are whelped at the Sunfire kennel in Suffield, Connecticut, as some breeding bitches are co-owned and have their litters with their families.

Having retired a couple of years ago from his job as a nuclear engineer for Westinghouse, Mike is back into competing in obedience and hunting tests. He also recently renewed his license to judge hunting tests. Barbara retired from working in medical labs 40 years ago to raise the couple's three children, who grew up going to shows with their parents and showing dogs in 4-H Club.

"We took a 15-year hiatus in the 1990s because we didn't have the time to train and sending a dog out with a pro was prohibitive with raising three children and their college expenses," explains Barbara. "We continued to breed, and I did minor showing and obedience fun trials and matches. We were able to keep our field line going because of a friend, Mark Kulwich, an avid duck and goose hunter."

Kulwich of Granby, Connecticut, co-owned "Dash" (Sunfire's Dashing Rapids SH AM/CAN CDX WCX OD) with them, and he allowed Barbara and Mike to breed three litters out of her over the years. Kulwich always kept a puppy from the litters so he would have

a pup in training, an active hunting dog and an older Golden.

Great owners have provided opportunities for Barbara and Mike to maintain the Sunfire lines and to produce wonderful dogs. "The best all-around dog we bred was 'Apollo,'" Mike says. "He excelled in fieldwork, obedience, agility, and tracking."

Owned by Patricia and Charles Jones of Katy, Texas, Apollo (OTCH MACH Sunfire's Undeniable VCD3 UDX RAE TDX MH MXC MJB WCX OBHF ADHF OS) triumphed as a champion in obedience and agility. Apollo, who died in 2009 at age 14, also was an outstanding sire. Ben, the obedience dog to whom Barbara tossed the dumbbell in obedience practice and whom Mike trains for hunting tests, was sired by Apollo.

The greatest satisfaction for these Sunfire Golden Retriever breeders is producing dogs that are loved and valued by their families. "Sometimes people in their 20s come to us and say, 'My parents had one of your dogs when I was growing up, and it was my best friend. I would like to get one of my own now,'" says Barbara.

"It makes me feel good to see people who grew up with our dogs when they were teenagers come back for one of their own," Mike says. "Everyone tells us they have the 'best dog in the world.'" ■

Casting Ben on a land mark retrieve, Mike enjoys resuming training and competing in hunting tests since retiring a couple of years ago.



“Roxie,” a 3 ½-year-old Bichon Frise, developed struvite stones this past year. Owner Debbie Faes previously had experienced struvite stones with her first Bichon, a breed that is considered at risk for developing urinary stones.

# MANAGING URINARY STONES

Debbie Faes of Brighton, Michigan, adores the sweet, merry temperament of the Bichon Frise.

When her first one, “Lacey,” died at age 15, she couldn’t stand not having a Bichon to brighten her life. Three weeks later, she got “Roxie.”

Besides being cute, loving lapdogs, Roxie and Lacey shared another similarity: They both developed struvite uroliths, or stones, from a urinary tract infection. Considering that Bichons are among a handful of breeds at risk for developing struvite stones, the occurrence is more than a coincidence.

“The priority in treating struvite uroliths that develop secondary to a urease-producing bacterial infection is to treat the underlying urinary tract infection with an antibiotic,” says Dr. Larry Letsche, Roxie and Lacey’s veterinarian, of Remrock Farms Veterinary Services in Plymouth, Michigan. “The dog also should be fed a diet formulated to help dissolve stones.”



“Roxie had blood in her urine this past spring,” Faes says. “An antibiotic cleared it up, but she began urinating frequently. Eight weeks later, she had a urinary tract infection and was needing to go out every 45 minutes, often having accidents in the house. A radiograph showed stones, and Dr. Letsche began treating her for struvite stones. He prescribed an antibiotic for the infection and a combination of dry and canned therapeutic dog foods to help dissolve the stones.”

Dr. Letsche’s wife, Lorrie Carlton, the breeder of Roxie and Lacey, has bred Bichons under the Belle Creek prefix for 42 years. She understands the challenges involved with a breed predisposed to developing stones.

“I always make sure new owners are aware of the signs of urinary stones,” she says. “The majority of affected dogs are females because their shorter, wider urethra makes it easy for bacteria to pass into the bladder.”

Struvite and calcium oxalate stones account for more than 90 percent of uroliths in dogs in North America, according to an epidemiological report by veterinarians at the Minnesota Urolith Center of the University of Minnesota. Whereas

struvite stones were more common in 1999-2000, data from 2009-2010 shows that calcium oxalate stones comprised 48.2 percent of all stones compared to 41.9 percent for struvite stones.<sup>1</sup>

Urolithiasis, the formation of stones in the urinary tract, varies as much by the type of stone as by an individual dog’s case. Though not always, stones may form from crystals that occur when the solubility of a particular substance is exceeded. Some crystals in urine are normal, though persistent crystalluria is a risk for forming stones.

Urolith analysis is used to identify the type of stone and the percentage of various crystalloids. The type of crystal is not always an indication of the type of stone, though most uroliths have one

## SIGNS OF STONES IN DOGS

- Hematuria (blood in urine)
- Dysuria (straining to urinate)
- Incontinence (inability to control urination)
- Pollakiuria (attempting to urinate with little or no urine passing)
- Pyuria (pus in urine due to bacterial infection)
- Pain (hunched back associated with pain)

major crystal component and are named for that crystal when it makes up 70 percent or more of the stone’s weight.<sup>2</sup> Although rare, some stones contain both struvite and calcium oxalate. This occurs when calcium oxalate forms and then a bacterial infection develops producing urease, causing struvite to form around the calcium oxalate.

“In most dogs, diluting the urine is the solution to pollution, or stone formation, as it increases the volume and frequency of urination and thus helps to flush out the minerals from the bladder,” says Joe Bartges DVM, PhD, DACVIM, DACVN, professor of medicine and nutrition at the University of Georgia.

“However, that alone does not prevent a recurrence,” he adds. “In fact, in some patients, dilute urine increases the risk of infection. These dogs may form an infection with an organism that produces the urease enzyme associated with struvite stone formation and thus may form struvite stones.”

“I am a believer in getting these dogs to drink as much water as possible,” says Mary Labato, DVM, DACVIM, clinical professor at the Foster

Hospital for Small Animals at Cummings Veterinary Medical Center. “A high-water diet allows small stones to pass before clinical signs become apparent. The key to treating and preventing struvite uroliths is antibiotic therapy to manage the infection.”

Radiography or ultrasonography is required to accurately diagnose stones in dogs. “Some dogs can have multiple large stones in the bladder and though urinalysis will highlight some inflammation or blood, the dog may not show clinical signs,” Dr. Labato explains. “Other dogs with only small stones may have marked clinical signs. It is not understood why this happens other than individual tolerance or intolerance.”

## IDENTIFYING STONES IN DOGS

In determining stone type, Dr. Bartges says that the breed, age and gender of dog are factors he considers. “Other considerations are what the stone looks like on radiographs and whether crystals are present in a urine sample,” he says. “I look at whether there is an infection

and if it is due to a bacterial organism that produces the urease enzyme associated with struvite and whether bloodwork indicates the blood calcium level is high.”

Infection-induced struvite stones are frequently found in young adult female dogs. These stones are usually greater than 1 centimeter in diameter and are very large and flat-sided like a pyramid.<sup>2</sup> Early recognition of a potential problem and treatment of the bacteria that causes the stone helps to reduce occurrence.

“Struvite typically forms because of a bacterial urinary tract infection that produces urease, an enzyme that hydrolyzes urea into ammonium carbonate and alters the urine chemistry, allowing the struvite stones to form,” says Dr. Bartges. “The most common bacterium that produces this enzyme is *Staphylococcus*, followed by *Proteus* and *Enterococcus*.”

Calcium oxalate stones largely occur in middle-aged or older male dogs of at-risk breeds. These slow-growing stones may have sharp, jagged edges and thus could be painful. Dogs may not show signs until these uroliths become large or cause urethral obstruction, blocking urine from passing.

“We know less about why calcium oxalate stones form,” Dr. Bartges says. “Supersaturation of calcium and oxalate in urine causes the stones to form. Lack of crystal aggregation inhibitors may play a role. Consistent acidic urine is common in dogs that form calcium oxalate stones.”

Calcium oxalate stones may occur when a dog has a metabolic disease, such as hyperparathyroidism, which causes the parathyroid glands to produce too much parathyroid hormone, resulting in high blood calcium and causing excretion in the urine. They also can be triggered by an endocrine disorder, such as Cushing’s disease (hyperadrenocorticism), which makes the adrenal glands produce too much cortisol, thus contributing to high urine calcium levels.

An important difference between struvite and calcium oxalate stones is that calcium oxalate cannot be dissolved. “These stones must be physically removed,” says Dr. Bartges. “Cystostomy surgery, voiding hydropropulsion, laser lithotripsy, and percutaneous cystolithotomy are examples of procedures used to remove stones.”

The rate of recurrence for calcium oxalate stones is from 25 to 48 percent.<sup>2</sup> As these are slow-growing stones, it can take several months before a dog goes from being urolith free after surgery to the stones being visible in radiographs.

“There is no one treatment that prevents all types of stones,” Dr. Bartges says. “For infection-induced struvite stones, treating the infection is the most important thing. Calcium oxalate stones are trickier because prevention is not 100 percent. Patients that have a disease that causes high blood calcium levels must be treated for the condition.”

Regular follow-up visits with urinalysis and urine culture are important with many dogs. For dogs with infection-induced struvite stones, this enables detection of a urinary tract infection before new uroliths form. Similarly, these tests allow for monitoring the recurrence of calcium oxalate stones.

Faes is optimistic that her 3 ½-year-old Bichon, Roxie, will stay stone free with careful monitoring of her urine and feeding the dry and canned therapeutic diets that aid stone dissolution. “I am good about watching her and looking for signs of problems,” she says. “Fortunately, neither of my Bichons experienced an obstruction from stones. Being careful about stones is a small inconvenience for such a loving dog.” ■

<sup>1</sup> Lulich JP, Osborne CA, Albanan H, et al. Recent Shifts in the Global Proportions of Canine Uroliths. *Vet Rec*. doi: 10.1136/r.101056 (Published online Feb. 8, 2013)

<sup>2</sup> Chew DJ, Jones BR. Diets and Drugs for Canine Urolithiasis. *Irish Vet J*. 2004;57(6):356-364.

## BREEDS AT RISK FOR URINARY STONES

Bichon Frise  
Cocker Spaniel  
Lhasa Apso  
Miniature Poodle  
Miniature Schnauzer  
Pekingese  
Shih Tzu  
Yorkshire Terrier

Breeds that commonly form struvite stones are the same breeds at risk for forming calcium oxalate stones.<sup>1</sup> Although stones occur more commonly in these breeds, they have been found in most breeds and mixed breeds as well.

# THE ROLE OF DIET IN MANAGING DOGS WITH URINARY STONES

Painful and agonizing, struvite and calcium oxalate stones account for more than 90 percent of uroliths in dogs.<sup>1</sup> Most struvite uroliths in dogs are caused by urinary tract infections. In the case of these non-sterile struvite uroliths, it is important to treat them with the appropriate antibiotic in addition to dietary management.

A therapeutic diet introduced in April, *Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets UR Urinary Ox/St Canine Dry Formula*, is formulated to help dogs that suffer from sterile struvite and calcium oxalate stones. It is designed to help dissolve sterile struvite uroliths and to reduce the risk of sterile struvite and calcium oxalate urolith recurrence.

“Both the dry and canned *UR Urinary Ox/St* diets have been proved through dual validation testing to promote the production of urine undersaturated for sterile struvite and of urine metastable for calcium oxalate urolithiasis based on relative supersaturation (RSS) and activity product ratio (APR),” says Purina Senior Research Scientist Hui Xu, PhD.

RSS and APR are efficacy tests used to determine the effect of diet on the likelihood of stone formation. RSS testing involves measuring the urine pH and components of the stones. APR assesses the cumulative effect of urine crystal growth promoters and inhibitors by measuring if seed crystals placed in urine grow or dissolve.

“It is important to have complete and balanced nutrition while also meeting the special dietary needs of a dog with urolithiasis,” says Dr. Xu. “Feeding a diet formulated to reduce the stone-forming potential for both calcium oxalate and sterile struvite uroliths can help minimize the risk of recurrence.”

Attributes of *UR Urinary Ox/St* dry dog formula include:

- It is a moderate-calorie food with complete and balanced nutrition for adult dogs and is formulated to avoid an imbalance of the minerals involved in stone formation.
- It is designed to reduce the potential for sterile struvite formation and to help dissolve existing sterile struvite uroliths.
- It is formulated to increase urine volume and decrease urine concentration.

“The bottom line is that diet and feeding practices help dilute the urine and ensure a dog urinates more frequently,” says



Purina Senior Manager of Veterinary Marketing Jason Gagné, DVM. “This provides less opportunity for struvite and calcium oxalate stones to form.”

*Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets* are available exclusively from veterinarians. For more information, please visit [proplanveterinarydiets.com](http://proplanveterinarydiets.com). ■

<sup>1</sup> Lulich JP, Osborne CA, Albanan H, et al. Recent Shifts in the Global Proportions of Canine Uroliths. *Vet Rec*. doi: 10.1136/vr.101056 (published online Feb. 8, 2013)

# Circle of Champions



## GERMAN SHORTHAIRED POINTER 'NOSE' IS 2016 NSTRA PERFORMANCE CLASSIC WINNER

In the final hourlong stake of the United Kennel Club's National Shoot to Retrieve Association (NSTRA) Performance Classic, a hard-charging 7 ½-year-old German Shorthaired Pointer drove to the front with precision, speed and stamina. 22XNSTRA CH Quail Valley's Nose Knows came out on top with seven bird finds and retrieves, outperforming 83 dogs and winning the event in June in Waverly, Nebraska. "Nose" has a sixth sense in knowing when the stakes are high. When her brace begins, she goes from zero to 100," says owner-handler Adam Fellers of Bondurant, Iowa. Nose, who is fed *Purina Pro Plan SPORT Performance 30/20 Chicken & Rice Formula*, also is the only dog to win the NSTRA Purina Top Performance Award, based on points earned in the yearlong program, four consecutive years.

"Nose" excelled with her high drive and keen intelligence to win the NSTRA Performance Classic.

## BERGER PICARD 'ONLY' SETS MANY FIRSTS FOR BREED

The No. 1 Berger Picard in the country, BIS/BISS GCH Eclipse's One N' Only, befittingly named for being the only female in her litter, has earned one-and-only status in the show ring as well. Since the American Kennel Club recognized the rustic French herding breed in 2015, the 5-year-old fawn charbonne Picard has earned the breed's first Champion and Grand Champion titles and become the first Best of Breed winner at the Berger Picard of America National Specialty (2015). This past July, she won the breed's first Best in Show, earned at the Green Mountain Dog Club Show in Tunbridge, Vermont. Breeder-owner Donna Beadle of Elko New Market, Minnesota, says, "'Only' is a complete diva. She is well-bodied for a bitch and has incredibly balanced, clean, fluid movement." Co-owned by Debbie Butt of Brooksville, Florida, Only is handled by Amanda Giles and Daniel Martin of Raleigh, North Carolina. She is fed *Purina Pro Plan SPORT Performance 30/20 Chicken & Rice Formula*.

The No. 1 Berger Picard, "Only" depicts the breed's comical nature and independent, stubborn temperament.





## AFGHAN HOUND 'ARAINA' STANDS OUT WITH CLASSIC BREED TYPE

A classic beauty, Multi-BIS/BISS GCH Sunlit's Queen of Everything, the No. 1 Afghan Hound bitch, has exceeded breeder-owner-handler Tara M. Richardson's dreams, most notably by winning Best of Breed at the Afghan Hound Club of Greater Columbus (Ohio) specialty show that was part of this year's Afghan Hound World Congress. The 3-year-old black Afghan, called "Araina," is out of GCH Kingsleah Fire Queen, a Swedish champion whom Richardson brought to the U.S. four years ago from the world-renowned Kingsleah Kennels of Gunilla Holmgren. "Araina has a beautiful head," says Richardson of St. Louis. "She moves effortlessly, with powerful reach and drive, as she springs and lifts off the ground. She has the Afghan presence of the king of dogs." Co-owned by Pamela Winkelmeir of St. Charles, Missouri, Araina is fed *Purina Pro Plan SPORT* Performance 30/20 Salmon & Rice Formula.

"Araina," the No. 1 Afghan Hound bitch, shines in show rings.

## RETRIEVER NAMED 'LEGEND' IS THE 2016 NATIONAL AMATEUR CHAMPION

Owner-handler Alexandra "Alex" Washburn of Bruce, Mississippi, had a feeling that the 2016 National Amateur Retriever Championship in Stowe, Vermont, could be the last shot for her 9-year-old male to win a National. With impressive style and sharpness, NAFC-FC Coolwater's Hawkeye Legend sailed through 10 challenging tests over land and water, outperforming more than 100 top field trial retrievers to become a "legend" among the great ones that have won the prestigious event. Washburn, a 29-year-veteran of the sport, earned her first National win after having trained and handled several National Amateur Finalists. "'Legend' is a great marker, very strong in the water, and a total team player," Washburn says. "He works extremely well with me on the line and has often been described as '100 pounds of compliance.'" Legend is fueled by *Purina Pro Plan SPORT* Performance 30/20 Chicken & Rice Formula.

Charismatic, talented and focused, "Legend" won the National Amateur Retriever Championship.



Please visit the Circle of Champions on the *Purina Pro Club* website at [purinaproclub.com](http://purinaproclub.com) to read about top-performing show and sporting dogs powered by *Purina Pro Plan*.

# PURINA HONORS SPO BEAGLE AND COONHOUND AWARD WINNERS

Hot on the trail, the top-performing Small Pack Option (SPO) Beagle and nite hunt and bench show coonhounds powered through yearlong competitions with grit, vigor and intensity to reign supreme in their individual sports. Prized for their keen scent ability, natural tracking instinct and spot-on accuracy, these Purina Award-winning hounds were honored this past spring in their respective ceremonies.

A 3-year-old hardworking hound called “Mickie” enthusiastically led the pack from the 13-inch female class to win the 17th annual Purina Outstanding SPO Field Trial Beagle Award. “Mickie has an easygoing temperament, but once the trial begins, she determinedly weaves through the switchgrass and wastes little time to pick up the scent of a cottontail,” says breeder Mike Reynolds of Readyville, Tennessee, who owns



FCGD Star R Mickie E, the Purina Outstanding SPO Field Trial Beagle

and handles FCGD Star R Mickie E with Joe Piercey of La Vergne, Tennessee.

An 8-year-old tricolor Treeing Walker Coonhound named “Dennis” was recognized for his independence and accuracy at nite hunts across the country in 2015 as the winner of the 35th annual Purina Outstanding Nite Hunt Coonhound Award. GR CH GR NITE CH ‘PR’ Ashby’s Salt River Dennis inched ahead of the second-place finisher at the season’s pivotal end by one cast win, giving him a total of nine wins for the year. Skillfully co-handled by seven-time Purina Award winner Jody Jessup of Rural Hall, North Carolina, Dennis is owned by handler Doug Keaton of Culloden, West Virginia, who says, “Dennis has a lot of heart.”

No stranger to the Purina Award winners’ circle, “Rock” is the first three-

time winner of the Purina Outstanding Bench Show Coonhound Award in the program’s 12-year history. CCH GR WCH GR NITE CH GR CH ‘PR’ Preacher John the Rock was handled by Michael Seets, of Stonefort, Illinois, who co-owns the 6-year-old tricolor male Treeing Walker Coonhound with his wife, Myra. “Rock gave 110 percent at every show. You couldn’t paint a prettier dog,” says Seets. ■



CCH GR WCH GR NITE CH GR CH ‘PR’ Preacher John the Rock, the Purina Outstanding Bench Show Coonhound



GR CH GR NITE CH ‘PR’ Ashby’s Salt River Dennis, the Purina Outstanding Nite Hunt Coonhound

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## Breed Snapshot

# DALMATIAN: THE SPOT-ON COACHING DOG

No breed has a more mysterious heritage than the Dalmatian. The distinctly spotted dog traveled the world with gypsies, familiarizing the breed to European, Asian and African countries and complicating his origin. Regardless where the breed originated, since the mid-18th century, he has been known as the Dalmatian, named for Dalmatia, a former province of Austria located along the Adriatic Sea.

Through the years, the Dalmatian has worked as a watchdog, herding dog, bird dog, retriever, and pack hunter for boar and stags. His retentive memory served him well as a circus performer. His most famous role, however, is as a coaching dog, following and guarding the horse-drawn carriage. Even today, the Dalmatian Club of America holds road trials at its National Specialty to test the instinct for coaching.

Loyal and faithful, the Dalmatian is most beloved as a companion. An athletic dog, the Dalmatian competes in coursing, tracking, agility, rally, obedience, and conformation. His short white coat is defined by round spots of jet black or deep liver brown that endear his flashy appearance. Puppies are born pure white but soon develop their spots. The Dalmatian, males and females, are 19 to 23 inches tall at the withers and weigh 50 to 55 pounds. ■

Source: *The Complete Dog Book*, Official Publication of the American Kennel Club. i-5 Publishing, Irvine, CA. 2015.

PHOTO: RHONDA CASSIDY

