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Establishing a bloodline.

Selection of brood stock. Amy Greenwood Burford

Some important issues that need careful consideration in making the commitment to become a breeder of quality APBT's.

One of the most frequently asked questions at the ADDBA office are and still being asked are; "How do I become a breeder and establish my own bloodline?"

The answer could encompass a whole book, so I will begin by breaking down the question into a few of the fundamental parts and begin putting together the answer that will help guide those new fanciers that have this interest.

The motivation to become a breeder can be twofold. Number one: the individual wants to preserve and maintain the quality of the dogs that he has noted in a dog or a number of dogs that he has come in contact with. Number two: the individual wants to improve or incorporate a new characteristic into a family of dogs that he is involved with. Then of course some might see being a breeder as a business opportunity. Breeding a litter of pups is not the same as becoming a breeder and developing a bloodline. Many fine dogs have been produced by the former, but to continue to develop and refine the finest characteristics of the breed into a family of dogs that breed true for these characteristics is the definition of a 'bloodline' and the ultimate goal of a 'breeder'.

We have within our breed bloodlines that are known for producing great dogs as well as bloodlines that are known for producing mediocre dogs with certain problems, i.e. conformation faults, health issues, temperament faults and then low in working drives, abilities and traits etc. The newcomer that is interested in developing a 'bloodline' must understand that it is more than having your name carried as a part of the registered name of the dog. It is the development of a family of dogs that breed true for breed characteristics and conformation that you deem as essential and desirable, and that have been selectively bred into your family of dogs.

Becoming a breeder and developing a 'bloodline' demands that you establish a breeding plan. Number one is to identify those breed characteristics in dogs that you want to see reproduced in the dogs that you will want to produce. Identifying your individual list of characteristics that you want to develop in your bloodline requires that you are familiar with the breed character and are knowledgeable about the breed standards that have been established by the experts within the breed. You will also need knowledge about structural soundness and genetic health issues within the breed.

Number two is to develop your eye for a dog, to be able to evaluate one dog from another in terms of those traits that you are breeding for. This is a tall order for someone new in the breed, and it is the reason why many longtime fanciers spend years and years in the breed, before starting their careers as breeders. Newcomers can expand their knowledge by becoming involved other breeders and fanciers. Attendance at shows and weight pulling events, and talking to judges and exhibitors about the dogs can also enhance ones understanding. A study of the literature available about the breed and about dogs, genetics and breeding in general is also essential. The breeding of fine dogs is an art, with a strong scientific basis. What a breeder seeks to produce, the ideal that he formulates, is self-expression – the fulfillment of the creative urge.

The emphasis a breeder places upon soundness, a great head or the dogs correct front-end or backend declares his own nature. The breeder who would achieve a consistent color or size at the cost of breed type or honest structure is a different kind of person from one who prefers a correctly made dog.

All quality bloodlines have been established by incorporating starting up quality brood stock from someone else's bloodline. It is not often that you can incorporate your dog quality bitch or dog into your breeding program and produce consistent quality pups.

The best advice for a breeder is to buy the best bitch that you can afford from a top kennel and from a proven bloodline and then select one of the top performing quality matching studs being offered open to public stud to breed her to.

Top producing dogs are most often inbred or line bred individuals from an outstanding bloodline. Inbreeding and line breeding produces a pre-potent dog whose genetic material is homozygous.

Homozygous is a term that indicates that the gene pairs are the same.

Since only one gene is inherited from each parent, if the parents are related, as in inbreeding and line breeding, the chance of doubling up the gene pair is greater than in the case of breeding unrelated dogs, or outcross breeding. The term pre-potent means a dog that can produce offspring with his same characteristics. The reason is that a dog that is homozygous for a certain trait will pass this trait 100% of the time to their offspring.

A dog produced from an outcrossed breeding that is heterozygous (the gene pairs being different) for a certain trait, even though they themselves have the trait will pass the trait on to their offspring only 50% of the time. A breeding dog needs to be selected based on the dog's bloodline, the method of breeding that produced the dog (inbreeding or line breeding) and the individual attributes that the individual dog will bring to the breeding program.

Before making the commitment to become a breeder and establish your own bloodline, an honest appraisal of your resources is in order.

First do you have the money and time to invest in this endeavor? A large kennel facility is usually not necessary if you get two or three quality bitches to start out with. A small residential kennel where you can spend the time necessary to care for the brood matrons and to socialize and evaluate the pups produced is all that is needed to get started. More important than space and money is the commitment to your dog's the pups that you will be producing. For breeders to know if their breeding program is working, ongoing evaluation of the pups is essential. Most of us, do not have unlimited space, so placing pups in good homes and hands when they will receive adequate care and nutrition, training opportunity and evaluation is going to be essential. As a breeder, you only breed a litter when you need a dog yourself to show or to breed, or if you have interested people that you know will do a good job with the puppy.

Reserve the opportunity so you can get feedback about the quality, temperament and performance of the dogs as they grow, and a chance to see them in future.

Darwin's theory of natural selection states that when a natural breeding in the wild takes place, 'NATURE' places demands on the individuals produced and the strong survive to reproduce and the weak die. In this scenario, as a dog breeder you are 'NATURE'. Your role is to give an honest appraisal of the dogs that you produce, and breed only the strong. The weak, or dogs with characteristics that you do not want in your breeding program, should be culled or spayed and neutered and or placed as pets in good homes. This is where many, many breeders fail. Over time, they become kennel blind and emotional about their pups and dogs, and keep inferior dogs as breeding stock for one reason or another. Many times a breeding partnership works best, a husband and wife, or kennel partners as they can keep one another on track about the quality of the offspring that is being produced. What dogs should be kept and which needs to be sold, or placed in pet homes.