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***Styles & art of breeding.***

*Amy Greenwood Burford.*

Some important issues that need to be considered in moving your breeding program forward ... in establishing your 'bloodline' over time. Once a breeder has developed a breeding plan start by evaluating the brood stock you have or going to purchase that you will be using as the foundation of your kennel.

First and foremost, the individual stud dog or brood bitch must possess the proven outstanding traits that you as the breeder is looking for in your future offspring.

The mating of animals with similar characteristics tends to produce offspring that resemble themselves - this is known as like-to-like, type to-type or positive assortative mating's.

It might be obvious but of utmost importance that breeders should avoid mating animals with the same faults, as this type of mating will also tend to produce offspring with those faults set within the family of dogs.

Also important to know the dogs in the pedigree.

A deep analysis of the dog's pedigree is the second but equally important step that must be considered in the selection of brood stock.

For novices, a dog's pedigree is usually meaningless.

For the experienced fancier, the pedigree is a profile of genetic potential, containing an unlimited amount of information.

Knowledge about the individual dogs in the pedigree can also be obtained firsthand from the dog's breeder.

Pictures and information on the dogs can frequently be obtained from the numerous breed magazines and breeders websites – colour size and conformation that attract you.

Working performance, conformation, abilities and earned titles on the individual dogs can also be used in compiling your data base of information on the dog's pedigree. A dog breeder will have firsthand knowledge of the dogs making up the pedigree of the breeding stock.

Also a data base of information concerning the littermates as well as offspring and photos from repeat breeding's should be available to the breeder. This firsthand information will always be the most reliable if the breeder remains objective in his evaluation of his pups.

Pedigree analysis will also reveal the style of breeding that produced the stud dog or brood bitch in question.

### **Why would this be important?**

Certain styles of breeding, namely inbreeding and or line breeding tend to fix and preserve desirable traits by increasing homozygosity of the genes. This means that the gene pairs are the same. Since the gene pairs are the same, the genes for their quality will be passed to the dog's offspring 100% of the time.

Outcross breeding increases heterozygosity of the genes. This is where the gene pairs are not the same. Dogs that are the product of an outcross breeding will pass the genes for their quality traits to their offspring only 50% of the time because most of the time their genetic makeup is heterozygous.

The value of a stud dog or brood bitch lies in the dog's ability to consistently and predictably pass specific traits to their offspring. This is referred to as being pre-potent. This is what you should be looking for in your brood stock.

The ideal brood bitch or stud dog would be a dog that has the traits that the breeder was looking to produce and would be the product of an inbreeding or linebreeding.

**Note!** >> Many an old time breeder has been heard to say, "don't breed to the top performance dog of the day but breed to that dogs parents".

**On the downside** >> many breeders frown on the use of outcross breeding as it does introduce unknown and sometimes undesirable traits into the bloodline. Also with an outcross mating of dogs that are already the product of outcross breeding, there is little predictability and uniformity in the traits that one will see in the offspring.

Within a litter of pups, you can see good pups, poor quality pups and everything in between.

Uniformity and predictability in the quality of the pups produced is the goal and the hallmark of a good breeder.

One of the most effective ways is an outcross breeding used by breeders is to select to breed to an unrelated dog with a sound pedigree that possesses an outstanding quality that is absent or lacking in the breeders bloodline.

From the resulting offspring (litter kept evaluated and tested) an individual is selected (the best of the litter) the best for and in that specific trait that the breeder is looking to introduce into his line. That dog is then bred back into the original bloodline (line bred or inbred) thus fixing the new desirable needed trait into the original bloodline.

About highbred vigor.

One breeder explained the breeding strategy of bringing a quarter outcross into his line to be used as a 'catalyst' for the line – highbred vigor.

A 'catalyst' in the sense of bringing together all the goodness and quality of his bloodline then also with that added kick of hybrid vigor.

Grading up: Breeding the females on hand to a male of better quality is known as grading up.

The best females in each generation are then kept and again bred to a top sire from an outstanding bloodline. This is one of the tried and true ways to improve the quality of a cattle herd and other livestock. This is also true of many dog breeders.

Many breeders have started with a very average bitch from a good bloodline and have invested their money wisely in breeding to an outstanding champion stud. As their experience increases they have refined their selection process ... only retaining the best in each generation.

The stud dog.

Careful selection of the top studs have in many cases produced a foundation of brood stock that have gone on to develop into a quality bloodline. There have also been many examples of breeders going astray and developing bloodlines that have consistently produced average or inferior dogs because of loss of focus into the selection of quality brood stock or chasing after the latest fad in breeding style or individual dogs.

Selection – selection – selection of breeding stock.

Selection of breeding stock, the pedigree analysis and the styles of breeding are all tools that a breeder can use to develop his bloodline of dogs.

High standards, diligent pedigree research and honest evaluation of the dogs the breeder is producing are so essential to guide the breeder to a successful program.

All this said >> what might work for one breeder may or may not work for another. This is why breeding dogs is considered as much as an 'art' as it is a 'science'.