

Twenty Basic Breeding Principles

by Raymond H. Oppenheimer

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There are a vast number of different breeding methods, some good, some bad. I should never presume to try to tell fanciers what is the right method because there is no such thing. Outstanding success can be achieved and has been achieved in a variety of different ways, so all I am going to do is to make some suggestions which I think helpful and to warn against certain pitfalls which trap too many of the unwary.

1. Don't make use of indiscriminate outcrosses. A judicious outcross can be of great value, an injudicious one can produce an aggregation of every imaginable fault in the breed.

2. Don't line breed just for the sake of line breeding. Line breeding with complementary types can bring great rewards; with unsuitable ones it will lead to immediate disaster.

3. Don't take advice from people who have always been unsuccessful breeders. If their opinions were worth having they would have proved it by their success.

4. Don't believe the popular cliché about the brother or sister of the great champion being just as good to breed from. For every one that is, hundreds are not. It depends on the animal concerned.

5. Don't credit your own dogs with virtues they don't possess. Self-deceit is a stepping-stone to failure.

6. Don't breed from mediocrities; the absence of a fault does not in any way signify the presence of its corresponding virtue

7. Don't try to line breed two dogs at the same time; you will end by line breeding to neither.

8. Don't assess the worth of a stud dog by his inferior progeny. All stud dogs sire rubbish at times; what matters are how good their best efforts are.

9. Don't allow personal feelings to influence your choice of a stud dog. The right dog for your bitch is the right dog whoever owns it.

10. Don't allow admiration of a stud dog to blind you to his faults. If you do you will soon be the victim of auto-intoxication.

11. Don't mate together animals which share the same faults. You are asking for trouble if you do.

12. Don't forget that it is the whole dog that counts. If you forget one virtue while searching for another you pay for it.

13. Don't search for the perfect dog as a mate for your bitch. The perfect dog (or bitch) doesn't exist, never has or never will!

14. Don't be frightened of breeding from an animal that has obvious faults so long as they have compensating virtues. A lack of virtue is far the greatest fault of all.

15. Don't mate together non-complementary types. An ability to recognize type at a glance is a breeder's greatest gift; ask the successful breeders to explain this subject - there is no other way of learning. (I would define non-complementary types as ones which have the same faults and lack the same virtues.)

16. Don't forget the necessity to preserve head quality. It will vanish like a dream if you do.

17. Don't forget that substance plus quality should be one of your aims. Any fool can breed one without the other!

18. Don't forget that a great head plus soundness should be one of your aims. Many people can never breed either!

19. Don't ever try to decry a great Bull terrier. A thing of beauty is not only a joy forever but also a great pride and pleasure to all true lovers of the breed.

20. Don't be satisfied with anything but the best. The second best is never good enough.