

Dual Brittanys: *Back To The Future* ...

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The recent articles appearing in the American Brittany and comments heard recently at the Summer National, ringside and at field trials in the Northwest have prompted us to share these thoughts with other Brittany fanciers. First, some credentials. My husband and I have been "in" Brittanys since 1980 and presently have one living Dual Champion and two more waiting "in the wings" with both field and show points. Hal judges in the field and I am show-ring licensed by A.K.C. for seven Sporting and one Hound breed. We have attended and put on Hunting Tests in our region. We have also attended several of the AKC sponsored seminars for Hunting Tests, Field Trials and the AKC Show Institutes.

We have bred hundreds of recreational gun dogs and finished multiple Britts in the show ring. We also own or have owned English Setters, Golden Retrievers and Whippets. We obviously have a strong interest in the Hunting Test Program, Field Trials and the Conformation ring. We have also been successful in obedience. We both regularly see various breeds of Pointing and Retrieving dogs in the show ring and in their working environments, but Brittanys remain our primary passion and our breeding program is committed to maintenance of their potential for "duality."

Our intent is not to focus this article on our particular process for maintaining "duality." Instead, we want to issue a challenge to the membership and the ABC Board of Directors to consider taking the first step to make sure that the standard for our breed is protected as we move into the future. At the present time, it is possible for a Brittany to become a conformation {show} champion based on adherence to a standard that is under the protection of the American Brittany Club. Only the membership of the ABC can change the standard. Occasionally, the issue of size as a disqualification is discussed by the membership. The other two disqualifying faults have not been discussed much over the past twenty years.

Remember, our breed has but three disqualifying faults in our standard:

1. Any Brittany measuring under 17.5 or over 20.5 inches
2. A black nose
3. Black in the coat

Consequently our club is in the unique position of requiring adherence to one set of standards for our show dogs that are not required of our field, hunting, obedience, agility or tracking title holders. Only our Dual or Triple Champions carry the assurance to other breeders that the requirements for hunting instinct, trainability and maintenance of the conformation standard have all been met. But to acquire these coveted multiple titles is difficult, expensive, and time consuming. It is a significant

honor and achievement to obtain them. All these points have been discussed and re-hashed over the past twenty years and there is no solution to this particular dilemma. Those that have the time, resources and the interest will continue to pursue the title of "Dual" or "Triple"¹ champion for their dogs. Those with interest to pursue multiple titles are welcome to do so but in so doing should not disparage those who chose to place their resources in either the show ring, obedience, field trial, agility, tracking or hunting test competitions. This is part of the wonderful versatility of our breed. Individuals can compete where their passion lies and still have the funny, warm and often challenging companionship of a Brittany.

Here is our concern. We have three disqualifications in our breed. Recently we have the presence of the "French Brittany" which has a decidedly black nose and has black in the coat. We have seen these Brittanys at several field trials both in the Northeast and in the Northwest. They are as competitive as the "American" Brittany. We have no doubt there will be Brittanys with black noses, black coats and those over the standard in size competing for the title of "National Champion" in Booneville as well as for titles at the Classics and Futurities sponsored by the American Brittany Club. How would you feel with a photo of our National Field, Amateur, Gun Dog Champion or Obedience Champion gracing the full color cover of our national breed publication with a black nose or a black coat? What message does that send about how seriously we take the "disqualification" section of our standard? Most of us have hidden behind multiple arguments relative to the issue of size in our breed for years but this new development is just a bit much for even me to take. Think about it.

What we recommend is a small step but one that may lead to other steps for the next generation. What we suggest is, for now, that only at our National Competitions for the titles of the National Field Champion, National Amateur Champion, National Gun Dog Champion and National Obedience Champion that the membership of the ABC insist that all entrants have no disqualifying faults according to the standard for our breed. Then and only then could we be assured that all who qualify and compete at our Nationals are Brittanys in the sense that the membership is supportive of the standard. Later we can address the issue of all dogs in the conformation show at our nationals demonstrating an instinct to hunt.

In puzzling over how to implement this, we wrote for the requirements established by the Vizsla Club of America for entry into their National Field competition. In order to enter their Field Nationals, all dogs must

be issued a "Pass" by an A.K.C. licensed judge who checks only for disqualifying faults. Dogs under the age of two receive a pass check each year, dogs over the age of two receive a "Permanent Pass." When we inquired about how this is managed, we were told that each competitor with a dog under the age of two is checked during certain hours prior to running and is given a slip of paper indicating a "Pass" which assured adherence to the standard for field dogs. Below is a summary of how the Vizsla Club of America handles this program. Remember, these are implemented only at their National Events. In their breed as well, it is possible for a dog with disqualifying faults to obtain titles other than a conformation title.

To be eligible to run in the VGA National Field Events, all dogs must qualify according to the following guidelines. First, an AKC approved judge for Vizslas is selected by the host club with the approval of the National Breed Standard Qualification Committee. The judge performing the examination for disqualifying faults must be listed in the premium. One hour prior to the starting time of the first stake until noon and one hour before starting time of the second stake until noon, dogs are examined. If an owner/handler cannot be on the grounds during the published time, arrangements may be made through the Field Trial Secretary to have these dogs evaluated. The time schedule must be posted at the field trial grounds and club headquarters. It is the responsibility of the owner/handler to be present at the published times to have the dogs evaluated. All this information must be stated in the information packet.

The examination takes place on the field trial grounds out of view of the public so that the test can be performed discreetly. It is not to be video-taped or photographed. The location must also be published in the premium list. Those attending the evaluation include the judge, the owner/handler of the dog being evaluated, an officer or director of the VGA as an observer to be sure all guidelines are followed and a member of the Standing Committee for Breed Standard Qualification for National Field Events. This last individual is responsible for generating a list of dogs that qualify and delivers the list of dogs that have qualified to the Field Trial Secretary. Each dog is evaluated independently and only dogs that are questionable will be measured.

A dog may receive two types of qualification certificates. To obtain a Permanent Certificate the dog must be 24 months of age or older. If they have no disqualifying faults at that point, they receive a Permanent Certificate. The other type of certificate is a Temporary one. This is issued to dogs which qualify when less than 24 months of age. They must re-qualify for future nationals. Registration forms for dogs that qualify will be provided by the Breed Standard Qualification for National Field Events Standing Committee. This form contains the following information:

1. Name of dog with its AKC number
2. Name of owner •••••_____

3. Name of the judge with a signature
4. Type of qualification (Permanent or temporary)
5. Date

Two copies of each registration form are kept. One copy for the owner and one to be kept in a permanent file by the VGA Secretary. For those dogs with Permanent Qualifications, a Xerox copy of qualifying form accompanies the entry or a copy is to be given to the Field Trial Secretary prior to the starting time of the stake the dog is running. Dogs that obtain a Show Championship after 24 months of age are automatically issued a permanent qualification. It is not automatic if they attain a show championship prior to 24 months of age. Regional specialty clubs may or may not choose to utilize these guidelines in their events. (Ref: Vizsla Club of America National Events Guidelines, Rev. Approved 10/95, pg. 19-21.)

The Vizsla Club of America is also talking about guidelines for dogs competing for the Conformation title of National Show Champion. There is a strong movement in this club that show dogs would have to demonstrate ability to hunt in order to represent their breed at the conformation level as well.

We believe that those of us in the American Brittany Club who truly believe in the versatility of our breed and who want the standard that is under our protection to represent the uniqueness of the Brittany as a "compact, closely knit dog of medium size, a leggy dog having the appearance, as well as the agility, of a great ground coverer...strong, vigorous, energetic and quick movement...ruggedness, without clumsiness" would do well to examine when we choose to implement the disqualifications stated in our standard. We would argue that we would do well to begin to enforce these at least at the National Competition level. Think about it. This would mean that everyone would know that all the dogs who qualify and compete at our Nationals have no disqualifying faults. What an honor it would be to advertise that you were eligible to and competed in the Nationals! What a unique selection of choices for future breeders to consider for their breeding programs.

Perhaps we can also come up with a way to require that our conformation competitors demonstrate hunting instinct prior to entering the national conformation competition. I have some ideas but that is another article. As we move forward to the year 2000 we should reaffirm our belief in the versatility of this wonderful breed by insisting that our National Champions at all levels represent the standard and the intent of their breeding.

