

Why Test?

Testing is not just a measure of a single dog. In order for a controlled breeding system to work, all progeny needs to be tested – for generations.

***Estimates of breeding value.** Two additional tools should be mentioned, which are part-and-parcel of state-of-the-art breeding today. These are statistical estimates of breeding value via the inclusion of offspring and relatives' performances, and DNA tests.*

Without doubt, the estimation of breeding value is a useful tool to estimate more closely the genetic contribution a given dog can make. In the commercial livestock sector this method is widely used. Because of it, butter, eggs and meat are less expensive now. The breeding-value approach, however, is only as successful in livestock as it is because virtually 100% of offspring are evaluated and their performance-data incorporated. This is where dog breeding is likely to be different. If breed clubs rely on only 20-25% of tested offspring then the estimate will be much less accurate and success doubtful. . . . If the estimation of breeding value is to be useful in a dog population, then breed clubs must look after the prerequisite, which is to find ways to increase the rate of performance testing and making the data available. The approach is only as successful as the data are reliable.¹

So, along that line; the Jagdgebrauchshundverband (JGHV) which has been the umbrella organization of all hunting dog use, testing and breeding clubs and hunting associations in Germany since 1899 provides consistent evaluation of the breeding quality of dogs through examination of their performance record and that of their offspring; along with maintenance of health and conformation standards through the breed clubs.

The JGHV represents 315 Clubs and Associations, to include:

- 110 Hunting dog clubs
- 118 Breed clubs [Continental Pointers]
- 26 Special breed clubs
- 41 District associations
- 16 Hunting associations
- 4 Associations from abroad (including VDD-GNA and NADKC)

If you stop and consider how many people and dogs (over 180,000 dogs) have been influenced by the JGHV, you start to develop an appreciation for the the magnitude of the system.

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“In North America, separating what a dog is (pedigree) from what it does (performance) was seen as a problem too, but no coordinated correction happened. Influential sporting dog enthusiasts tried several times to write performance into a standard, but it merely led to splits in club membership and the formation of competing organizations. There was and largely still is a lack of institutional leadership (but see Animal Pedigree Act of Canada). The forerunner of American Field, the Chicago Field, began registering only dogs that placed in field trials. Still, no mechanism evolved that would link a performance standard to a breeding strategy (Frame 2002).

The element of performance as a defining part of a breed is not maintained in North America, nor is it in the U.K. In North America, CKC and AKC will register a pup based on pedigree alone. As a result, many North American breeds such as the German Shorthair, exist as three different types, a show dog, a versatile dog, and a specialist pointing dog (Thoms 2005). These types are as different within the same breed as some breeds are from one-another. To be sure, there are many excellent specimens of the German Shorthair in each of these three camps. However, this three-part existence with various combinations in between has also caused product confusion and disappointment among some owners who expected one type of dog and obtained another.

It is for the above product-confusion reason that various North American breed clubs have tried to include and enforce a performance requirement via their registry. This need for proof of performance is obvious to most hunters and has always been embraced with enthusiasm. However, as breed clubs grew, competing interests emerged and the resulting divisions did not allow breed clubs to maintain a firm foothold on their breed. There was no institutional leadership.²

This is why TopperLyn Kennels chose to use the C.B.V. breeding rules and the JGHV testing system to define our breeding program. By following this program we add the components of maintaining the FCI conformation standard for the Epagneul Breton and health (HD) requirements to the results of testing for a total picture.

In 2005 we became aware that our imported dogs (with FCI papers) were eligible for the JGHV tests in North America. Having participated in similar testing venues previously, as well as competing in field trials, we immediately recognized the value to these tests. Along with the practical application of the test elements, what has impressed us even more is the fairness and desire of the judges to give each dog a **consistent** evaluation of its performance and opportunity to be successful.

There is a similar testing format available to non-FCI registered dogs in North America which very closely mirrors the JGHV tests, with slight modifications to account for the

² **Institutional support – or lack of it - in the management of dog breeds.**

Sheila M. Schmutz, and Josef K. Schmutz, 2007, The Large Munsterlander Club in North America,[®] Thirty years.

differences in hunting laws, types of game, and terrain from those in Germany. This is the Versatile Hunting Dog Federation. (We [TLK] also utilize this format for testing our dogs that do not have FCI papers.) The main difference however is – without a supporting breed club in this country to set standards by which breeding decisions are made – it falls upon the individual breeder to institute their own standards. This leaves the breeder without a support system to guide them in their mission to “preserve and promote purebred Bretons in accordance with the FCI standard and performance examinations.” So, armed with just the test results, but without the knowledge and guidance of experienced breeders, the American EB breeder is left to their own devices to try to gain AND APPLY that corporate knowledge on their own. That in itself is a monumental challenge.

If it is truly our goal to “refine not propagate” the Epagneul Breton in the United States, we believe we can only benefit from utilizing this system and take advantage of the experience of the C.B.V. (over 30 years in existence). In addition, as a result of pursuing recognition by the C.B.V. as breeders we have the added benefit that the puppies produced from approved breedings will be registered in Germany (as are the dogs produced by the VDD-GNA and NADKC) and they will be issued FCI papers. These dogs will then be eligible for testing in the JGHV system.

This is just the first step. It is also our goal to establish a full chapter of the C.B.V. in North America whereby like-minded people can gain the collective benefit of support from the C.B.V. and eventually be able to offer this level of testing on our own. Currently we depend on the support of the JGHV through the VDD-GNA, NADKC, and JGV-USA, but some day we strive to offer these tests in the US under the auspices of the C.B.V. as well as to be able to hold FCI sanctioned events in the United States.