



## Mission Statements and Breeding True to Type

Every serious breeder should have a mission statement that can sum up their breeding program. We all want to breed dogs who fit the standard; you have to go beyond the written word of your breed standard and add your

priorities for form, function, silhouette, movement, coat, temperament, health, and breed character.

Over time, a breeder should be able to stamp a style to breed type that identifies a dog from his kennel. The kennels of old Russia had specific styles that easily identified their Borzoï, and you could even tell from what region of the country they originated.

The world of dog breeding is getting smaller, with easier travel, collection and shipping of frozen semen, and of course the Internet. We all have access to almost limitless opportunities. A difference between today and years ago is that up until the last century, the relative isolation and lack of technological advances caused there to be more diversity among kennels rather than the more homogeneous breed styles seen today.

Certainly, some stud dogs have influenced the breed in a positive way, and there is a leap forward in breed type that changes the breed's direction forever. Spontaneous positive mutation is as rare as getting struck by lightning, so as breeders we have to take a more measured and calculated approach to breeding. Establishing your priorities is important to breeding better dogs.

In our kennel we will use a young dog with an older bitch, or an older dog with a young bitch. For example, we seldom breed together two dogs of the same age. Using this method, if we develop something undesirable, we only have to go back half a generation to start over or correct a problem, rather than throw away the whole program. Breeding together two young dogs of similar age can be a gamble because of late-onset health or developmental concerns.

It all goes back to setting your priorities and establishing a mission statement. If someone asks what you are trying to accomplish with your breeding program, can you answer in a precise and brief statement that sums up your objectives? Saying that you breed dogs that fit the standard does nothing to identify your priorities or the direction for your ken-

nel. A short statement that is as simple as the following sums up a breeding program: "We try to breed beautiful dogs who are sound in both movement and temperament and who are a joy to own."

I enjoy reading the home pages of kennel websites to see just what direction the kennel is trying to progress in. Unfortunately many people cannot create a simple, concise statement that sums up their breeding program.

Years ago I went to a large kennel and after seeing dozens of dogs, all quite different in style, I asked the owner just what direction he was going with his breeding program. The answer was, "This dog has a good front, the one over there has a great head, another has a good topline, and somewhere in there is a good dog if you could just mix up those parts." I walked away shaking my head and wished him the best of luck.

—Jon Titus Steele, Hemlock, Mich.;  
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