

The latest news from the Director of Testing in the Jagdgebrauchhundverband (JGHV)

"Breeding does not forgive mistakes" also not in the area of temperament.

(Quote from the report Jagdgebrauchshund 5-2023 by Ms. Petra Blum.)

The final sentence of my article in the JGHV magazine 7-2023 was, "...further statements and thoughts on the subject temperament to come".

We all talk about the temperament of our dogs, but what is a dog with a strong temperament and where does a dog with a weak temperament begin, or how can we shape and promote a dog's temperament?

Temperament is made up of many different building blocks, and it is our task to shape, recognize and evaluate the dog's temperament correctly and uniformly. Already in issue 5/2023 of the Association's journal there is a very interesting and informative report on the subject of temperament by Ms. Petra Blum, who wrote a short summary of the seminar together with the speakers Dr. Udo Ganßloser and Wolfgang Peterhänsel on the occasion of the Cynological Day Seminar.

I don't want to add anything more to this now, as well as writing about where and when the shaping of temperament begins, the scholars certainly argue about this, but I would like to deal with one sentence from the report: **"Breeding doesn't forgive mistakes"**.

That is exactly where our problem begins. Surely, we have in our ranks, no matter what breed, excellent breeders, but unfortunately also a large number of breeders who do not deal intensively enough with the subject of breeding, the quality of breeding animals, and with the nurturing and shaping of the puppies. Therefore, I would like to speak at this point on the subject of "Quality of the breeding animals" and share a few thoughts and observations that I have personally experienced and observed as a Breed Warden of a German hunting dog breed (KIM) in the last 20 years at the litter inspections, although I have visited many litters and kennels of other breeds too.

As already described in Ms. Blum's report, there are many genetic factors that shape the temperament of our dogs, but it is also the condition of the kennel and the formation of the puppies by the breeder.

"The development of personality and temperament of our dogs lies to a very large extent in the condition of the kennel, as well as the learning opportunities available and offered at the kennel." (quote - Wolfgang

Peterhänsel).

It would certainly be a mistake to classify individual breeders and kennels by quality. However, one thing is certain: We have a large number of breeders who understand their craft extremely well, but unfortunately, there is also the other side, which unfortunately has only increased in number.

I do not want to present what constitutes a very good or not so good kennel again, because that has already been described in detail in the previous article, but just briefly address a few things that I have personally observed and have contributed to the shaping of puppies, whether in a positive or negative way.

All breeders, regardless of the breed, could be classified in an infinite number of levels or pigeonholes, because each kennel has its own life.

- There are the breeders or kennels in which everything is simply right. Starting with the quality of the breeding animals up to the whole rearing and shaping of the puppies. Calm, balanced breeding dogs, excellent kennels with a run appropriate to the species, different surfaces (wood, concrete, ground in the forest, fields for romping, sand for digging, play equipment, etc.), quiet and places of retreat for the breeding bitch, but also car rides with the puppies, getting used to water, game, shot, fishing pole with feathers (*Reizangel*), walks with the puppies, sale of puppies only to hunters and dog handlers, etc.. There everything is just right.
- Then there are the breeders, where you first think you are in a wonderland. Everything is perfectly built, clean, protected from the wind, nice and warm in the house etc. but without any environmental stimuli, no other noises, without contact to other people and dogs. Simply lovingly mothered, almost wrapped in soft wool--life in a rosy world, so that nothing bad can happen, but without a hunting mentality, without any connection to hunting, and so the training to become a hunting dog has been missed completely. In this context it should be mentioned that in some breed clubs of the JGHV, the breeding of hunting dogs is possible without a hunting license. Breed hunting dogs but never go hunting yourself! How is that possible?
- Unfortunately, there are also those who simply breed and have never heard the terms, rearing appropriate to the species, training, development of a good temperament, etc. This begins with the quality of the breeding animals, which barely meet the minimum requirements for breeding, with the minimum kennel size (whelping box, kennel/exercise) - also barely fulfilled, but the rest, such as an extensive offering of play activities and training of the puppies for hunting, is non-existent. There you will find puppies that have never left their actual kennel for walks or hunting excursions.

The temperament of our dogs has many building blocks. This is first and foremost the genetics with thousands of variants, the rearing and conditioning of the puppies at the breeders, and then the course of their future lives.

Let's just leave genetics aside, although it is certainly one of the major building blocks in life. Certainly, the rearing and conditioning of hunting dogs cannot be simply put into categories, but all dogs from the most diverse breeding kennels should/must be temperamentally strong for the future, optimally shaped and prepared for their hunting tasks.

The big question? How do we get all breeders to breed only with the genetically best, high performance and temperamentally strong dogs and to shape them in such a way that the requirements of the tests and hunting are fulfilled completely? We need calm and temperamentally strong hunting dogs regardless of the breed.

Let us first look at the factor "calmness". This is what everyone wants. It is certain that the dog that is calm inside performs better at the tests and while hunting. No doubt, the puppy needs an environment full of experiences, but it can also be too much, that is, we can also overtax the puppies.

"Puppies that are overworked tend to become hyperactive and have other behavioral problems later on."

(Quote Dr. Udo Ganßloßer, on the occasion of a lecture on 16.06.2018 in Fulda)

After all, shaping means preparing the puppy for life in the future. Along with all the learning opportunities, however, we must not overburden our puppies and give them time to rest, time to find themselves, time with littermates and especially time with the breeder, or other people and thereby encourage calmness. Simply to deal with the puppies in peace and to shape them through your presence for the future pack leader "human". We have found that humans and our society (children, young people) has changed due to the overabundance of television, computer, cell phone, etc., but sometimes we do this unfortunately in the figurative sense with our puppies.

A puppy needs about 18-20 hours of sleep and rest. This should not mean that we should offer our puppies nothing, no we should, we must indeed do something, but everything in its time and this always at the right time for shaping and forming them, the developmental stage of the puppies dictates it. I do not want to list all the individual steps in the formation process, because they are different in every kennel and should be experienced in this way.

Unfortunately, I have also experienced a lot of negative rearing or shaping of puppies, and it is then not surprising if these puppies subsequently show deficiencies in temperament in further life.

It is almost unimaginable but unfortunately reality to see and experience that some breeders do not know their puppies and cannot distinguish between them. Here it becomes clear how little time the breeders have spent with their puppies. Simply to have spent time with each puppy, to have studied its temperament and behavior, to know what this little guy is like, who will be able to handle this dog? Puppies that have never left their kennel, puppies that have never been exposed to dead game, that have never heard a gunshot, etc. Surely one could list a lot of positive but also negative things at this point, which are part of the shaping process and that contributes to the temperament of our dogs, but these are only two building blocks (genetics and breeding/shaping at the breeders) in the life of the dog. Further building blocks are laid by the future owners which are very decisive for the future life of the dogs. At the tests, which are actually only a snapshot in time, the Association Judges should/must then "determine the temperament during the course of the test" (annex to the VZPO/VGPO/VPSO).

The temperament of a dog, to judge the behavior of a dog which it exhibits at the time of the encounter.

Certainly, one of the most difficult tasks, to which expertise and experience is required, although it should be mentioned that the test is only a brief record of life, and each creature has a different temperament.

But one thing should be sure. The decisive evaluation of temperament for breeding animals should not be the sole responsibility of the Association Judges, but should actually be carried out by the owner, handler, and breeder of the dog in question. The evaluation by the Association Judge/Breed Judge is a brief snapshot in the life of the dog and should be done with the best of their knowledge and experience.

My dear hunting friends, these are all just brief thoughts/suggestions on the subject of the temperament of our hunting dogs, which everyone can personally expand upon, but we must address the issue.

Society is changing, the handlers are changing, but this must not result in our hunting dogs no longer meeting the requirements of hunting practice.

Back to the central theme: "**Breeding does not forgive mistakes**", also not in the area of temperament. Thus, my request to all Association Judges: The evaluation of temperament, like the evaluation of natural ability subjects, is one of the most difficult tasks of an Association Judge. Please take responsibility for this task!

My request to all breeders. Breed only with the dogs that are strong in performance and have a strong temperament. The building blocks "genetics" and "the breeding/keeping at the breeder" are, each in itself, decisive for the development of

the puppies. Only if both fit / are combined sensibly, will life, performance and temperament be developed from them.

PS: I will address the other building blocks of temperament in one of my next reports. It is important to think about the temperament of our dogs and to act accordingly, no matter where we stand.

***Josef Westermann, Obmann für das Prüfungswesen im
Jagdgebrauchshundverband e.V. (JGHV)***

From *Der Jagdgebrauchshund*, August 2023
(translation by Ken Bremer)