

CONDITIONING DOGS TO SHOW

By Francis G. Taylor

The Pinehurst Dog Show, held at Pinehurst each year, is especially interested in hunting dogs. Indeed this popular annual event is rapidly developing into one of the notable hunting dog events of the year in this country. North Carolina is the paradise of good hunting dogs and many very high class animals are owned locally. They did some winning last year at Pinehurst against a splendid field of dogs gathered together from all over the United States.

A dog show in these parts, however, is more or less of an innovation still, and many good dogs were not entered, despite the interest their owners took in the show, because of some feeling of doubt as to whether the dogs were in show trim.

The Pinehurst Kennel Club is desirous of having North Carolina's finest adequately represented; and through the courtesy of its show superintendent and of Mr. Francis G. Taylor, who combines a thorough knowledge of hunting dogs and the show game, are able to present below some suggestions that it is hoped will interest local dog lovers, and enable North Carolina entries to appear in force and in winning condition at their next show, which comes on January 30 and 31, 1922.

The flashing eye, glistening coat, and gay carriage of a bird dog as it enters the gate at a bench show or starts in a trial, betoken condition and give a dog so conditioned a marked advantage over the ordinary run of entries. Neglected specimens, however highly bred and otherwise promising, suffer a tremendous handicap in competition with the dog that is put down "fit."

With winter rapidly approaching it is reasonable that owners should be looking carefully after their prospective candidates for honors.

Perfect health is a boon easily maintained in the case of either man or beast if certain simple rules are intelligently and conscientiously followed. There is also an ancient proverb of which the owner of good dogs as well as the good farmer should ever be mindful: "The eye of the master fattens his cattle." Practically applied, the dog will likewise respond to his master's personal care.

Certain rules are to be followed by the amateur to whom these remarks are addressed, and these rules are as fixed and immutable as the laws of the prophets. They will be treated under three comprehensive heads, all equally important—food and water, exercise, kennel. Patience and a talent for detail in these matters will crown the ambitious breeder with success.

Food and Water

Careful feeding means wholesome and nutritious food in quantities as needed, clean pans and receptacles, fresh water.

As to kind, quantity and frequency of feeding, no set rules can be safely given. Much depends upon the dog's environment—whether he is alone or one of many; whether he enjoys the freedom of his master's home or is kept in a kennel. Where only one or two dogs are kept, the so-called "table scraps" will be ample. Where the number is increased, these scraps will not be sufficient and must be supplemented by food prepared especially for the dogs.

Meat is the natural food of a dog. Open his mouth and look at his teeth. Note the incisors—his teeth are fashioned for tearing flesh and grinding bones. This is nature's admonition that this species of animal should be supplied principally with flesh and bones.

Butcher's meat well cooked, set aside to cool and the fat skimmed off, then well mixed with vegetables and cereals, is a good diet. Plenty of raw bones delight a dog as ice cream delights a boy. Dogs kept in kennels where exercise is limited should not be fed fat and greasy goods. Indigestion and bowel trouble follow neglect in this particular as surely as night follows day. When conditioning a dog, the writer has found a raw egg for breakfast for a period of about six weeks before the show or trial helps materially as a flesh

and muscle builder and lends luster to the coat.

Variety in the matter of food is almost as important as quality. There are a number of prepared foods on the market which give admirable variety to the setter's diet, and while the writer generally prefers and uses home cooked foods, he keeps on hand and feeds as a change, biscuit and meal specially prepared as dog food.

As to quantity of food—bare in mind "the eye of the master." Food enough for one dog is frequently too much for another, and care should be taken that the quantity fed is just enough to keep the dog in good condition and appetite. A fat and overfed dog is in worse condition than a lean and hungry one. Each dog should, therefore, be fed separately and watched with care as to results. If several dogs are fed at the same time in one kennel, they should never be allowed to eat out of a common pan. Just before feeding, the dogs should be chained up separately. Then place before each animal the amount of food that that particular dog needs. Note how the individual dogs eat at each meal, increasing or diminishing quantities as appears necessary. Release the dogs, of course, as soon as the meal is over. When this method is followed the dog has confidence that the plate of food before him is for him alone and that he will not be interfered with by his companions, and the bad habit of "gobbling" food is avoided. Because it induces to quiet—no fighting or growling—slower feeding, good digestion and well-bred habits result.

Regularity in feeding is another important detail. Two meals a day are usually sufficient—a reasonably light breakfast at a regular hour in the morning, with a heavier meal in the evening. One meal suffices for many dogs, whose need for more food, owing to lack of exercise, is not indicated. Of course, nursing mothers and young puppies after weaning should be fed more frequently—three, four or perhaps five times a day, according to circumstances.

Care should be taken that all pans and vessels used in and about the dog's kennel, whether for preparing the food, feeding, or watering, be kept absolutely clean. As soon as the dog has finished eating all plates and pans should be removed, whether all is eaten or not. No food whatever should be left in the kennel between meals for the dogs to mull over, and to become fly-blown and sour. Each dish should be scrupulously washed and scalded. This prevents disease.

Pure water in clean drinking vessels is of equal importance. Setters require plenty of good pure water. It is in fact the most essential and cheapest material needed to bring and keep a dog in good condition. Muddy, dirty or stale water will not do because of the risk of disease germs. The setter's appetite for water will vary with conditions, but make it an inviolable rule to place a bucket of clean fresh water in the kennel at least three times daily. The cleaner and purer the water the better will be the response in growth and condition, and the greater will be the safety from disease. Furthermore, water is essential to digestion, and without plenty of pure water, digestion will be retarded and the value of food and other attentions be cut down. Remember you are out for "perfect condition" and the resulting blue ribbons, and just such little details as fresh water and clean pans help amazingly in landing them.

Exercise

To the setter this is an absolute necessity. Without sufficient and regular exercise perfect condition is impossible. He is a dog of action, and unless unusual care is observed does not thrive when kenneled in a more or less restricted yard. The setter is the aristocrat among dogs and is essentially his master's companion. He is used for a gentlemanly sport and is a dog of utility. He smacks neither of the stable nor the dung hill, and is usually accorded the freedom of his master's abode. Hence, to kennel him is to break his heart, and a grieving dog is soon an unhealthy dog. The setter more than any other breed suffers from ennui when kenneled in a yard of limited dimensions. Observe him some time—being yourself unseen; he will get up, take a sniff and survey, stretch and yawn, scratch him-

self and walk listlessly about with head and tail down, dejected and sorry looking, grieving for his master and freedom; scratch one place and then another, lick that and scratch again, and soon, if not carefully looked after, some objectionable skin disease makes itself apparent.

The setter is a dog of varied tense emotions. Generations of breeding have intensified in him a love for the companionship of his master and his gun afield. In consequence he has become the embodiment of courage, sensitive nerves, exquisite sense of smell, bird sense, judgment, speed, range and docility. Therefore to breed, develop and put down in the ring a setter in fine condition requires more than ordinary care—it demands from the master a natural love for and intuitive knowledge of the breed, and that the setter's tense emotion and love of the open find a response in the master's heart. So daily exercise—a dash in the open fields for an hour or longer—is an absolute necessity. For many years the writer, being fond of horseback riding, took his setters along with him for their daily run. When the season for their competing arrived, they were all in fine physical condition and as hard as nails. If a saddle horse is not handy (and of recent years, owing to the universal use of the automobile, such method of exercise is neither safe nor practical for the dogs) it becomes necessary for the master—to whom it is equally beneficial—to get out of doors every day for a hike in the fields and woods with his dogs.

Kennel

The setter is by no means a hot house plant, and should be housed out of doors in a clean, dry building, free from draughts and dampness in winter; in summer, cool, shaded, and as free as possible from the pesky fly. In winter his bed should be made preferably of fine hay or clean straw, while in summer a thin layer of sawdust keeps him more comfortable. The bedding should be changed frequently and the kennel and yard kept scrupulously clean.

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