

tion resulting in profound weakness and incapacity of the rear quarters, is a major cause for concern in the aging German Shepherd Dog and Boxer, but we might occasionally see it in the older Cavalier. (I know of one breeder who recently used the new DM DNA test to rule out the condition in her elderly Cavalier.)

Researchers worldwide are now investigating inherited cataracts, mitral valve disease (MVD), syringomyelia (SM), and other conditions that are vitally important to the future health of our breed.

If additional DNA tests result from this research, all the better—but even if not, collateral and expanded facts about these conditions may be uncovered by the DNA researchers and should benefit us all.

At the very least, knowledge truly *is* power. —Stephanie Abraham, Scotland, Conn.; landmarks.properties@snet.net ♦

Chihuahuas

Faults, Failings, and Virtues

Most of us know that faults are about the construction of the dog and failings are more about the cosmetics. Construction (conformation) is the most important part of any animal. If a dog isn't constructed properly, he isn't moving properly, and therefore he cannot do the job he was developed for. When you hear of a particular judge who likes good movement, it means that she likes a well-constructed dog. These qualities go hand in hand.

We rarely see a major fault such as a poor front or unlevel topline on a top breeder's dog, but we might see a failing, such as less coat than desired, or ears that are smaller than we like.

One breeder may select a fabulously constructed dog with a moderate head and longer muzzle for her breeding program, while another breeder may settle for a dog with a weak rear and



low tail-set who has a fabulous coat and a beautiful head. The second breeder has just made the decision to continue structural faults in her breeding program. The old saying "A dog doesn't walk on his head" sums up the poor decision that this breeder made. It's possible to put a beautiful head on a dog in one breeding, but developing great conformation can take many years and generations once the structural fault is present.

The whole package of balance, beauty, quality, soundness, and temperament is what all top breeders strive for. When you see the "total package" in the ring, you can be sure the breeder has done her homework and made selection for structure a top priority.

Developing an eye for a good dog takes time. Every new breeder should be at the group ring watching each and every group of dogs to educate her eye as to how great dogs move. Once you have developed your eye for movement and balance, the selection of your breeding dogs will improve in record time.

Most-valued traits differ from breeder to breeder, but good conformation, type, substance, balance, and soundness are essential. Temperament is of great concern for a Chihuahua breeder, since developing the proper "saucy" personality isn't the easiest task. There are many beautiful dogs in the show ring who have fabulous conformation but exhibit personality failings. A dog might stand like a well-trained robot with no expression, or it may misbehave. There is nothing more beautiful to the eye than a gorgeous Chihuahua strutting around the show ring and loving every minute. A good show Chihuahua will enjoy a little playtime during appropriate intervals while in the ring. When another dog approaches him, he will gladly investigate this new friend, and many will strike a "sparring" posture. This dog truly exhibits the saucy personality. Since temperament is an inherited trait, it should be highly considered during puppy selection.

Once these virtues are achieved you can begin to focus on expression, coat,

pigment, ears, eyes, and other cosmetics to perfect your ideal dog, imprinting them with your "look."

All of this takes time, but with patience, knowledge, and the help of a good mentor, success will be a joyful journey. —Virginia (Jerry) Hauber, East Tennessee; wynjyrchis@yahoo.com ♦

Chinese Cresteds



The Beauty of Old Dogs

One of the tragic realities of dog ownership is the fact that canine lives are almost always shorter than human lives. When we hold that tiny, squirming puppy in our hands, we always know that someday he will break our heart because his time here is short.

In comparison to many breeds, Chinese Cresteds live a relatively long time. We can expect about 15 years on the average, but it's still never long enough. Some breeders try to cheat the loss of an older dog by placing the dogs whom they are through showing or breeding with someone else, but in my opinion they are missing one of the very best parts of their dogs' lives.



Old dogs know us best. They have been through a big part of our lives with us and they understand us. They know our moods; they know what we like; they know how to make us crazy. We're comfortable together, and we probably share a lot of the same characteristics. Like old couples who have been together for years, we have grown to be alike in many ways. (It kind of scares me that maybe we start looking alike, too.)

Old dogs know things. They have been observing the world for a long time and, unlike humans, they are not distracted by the "shiny stuff." They understand human behavior better than we do. They know when to lie next to us or put their heads on our