

ovulate, the process takes about 24 hours, give or take. Then the eggs require a further 48 hours, give or take, until they are ready to be fertilized. They remain viable, waiting for the sperm, for another day or two—give or take. Well, there is a lot of “give and take” in those formulas, and if you are off by much, you may be puppy-less at whelping time in 63 days (counting from the day of ovulation, by the way, not from the breeding date).

If you are fortunate enough to have two willing participants in the household, you could use the age-old method of putting the dog and bitch together every other day from the time she will stand until she is no longer receptive. Hopefully that will take place over a week or so, and no longer, or your poor stud dog may be exhausted and your bitch thoroughly bored. But since sperm can live three to five days (give or take) in the reproductive tract of the bitch, you will pretty well cover your bases this way.

If you are using chilled or frozen semen, however, you need to be much more scientific and exact. Chilled semen is challenged semen, and frozen semen is *very* challenged—so while sperm treated this way are still capable of fertilizing eggs and producing your next Best in Show dog, they need to get to the eggs at or near the time they are ready to be fertilized. These are sperm that will not wait around long to get the job done.

Nothing quite takes the place of experience and instinct on the part of the breeder. *If* you can see through all that hair to check the vulva, *if* you did not miss the first few days of season while she was keeping herself so clean, *if* the color fades to nicely to light pink—you (and the dogs) will usually succeed. Otherwise—and especially if you are relying on hi-tech breeding solutions—get out your checkbook, and pinpoint the magic Ovulation Day to give yourself the optimum chance for ending up with little bundles of joy.

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Chinese Cresteds Questions to Ask

A lot has been written lately about what potential puppy-buyers should expect from a breeder and what questions they should ask before they buy. This is certainly a good thing, and informed buyers are more likely to be happier dog owners. However, there are also things that a breeder should expect from potential owners, and questions that they should ask, too.

It's important to know about the puppy's (or even older dog's) prospective living environment. How many people live in the house? How many are under the age of three? Are there any people in the household with special needs? This could include elderly people or people with health issues or mental illness. Not that all of these things would mean not placing a dog there, but not every dog can cope with every issue.

How many hours a day is the house empty? Do work schedules mean that the dog will be alone for long hours? How much time do the humans have for socializing, training, and just playing?

Are there other dogs in the house? Ages? Size? Breed? Placing a Crested puppy in a home with a very large, dominant dog could easily spell disaster. Likewise, a very old, infirm dog would probably not appreciate a lively puppy invading his space.

How about other pets? Cats? These are probably OK with Cresteds. Birds? Maybe not. We had one disaster with a Crested who “played too hard” with a beloved parrot, and the result was heartbreaking for the owners.

Common sense goes a long way here.

What about a fenced yard? It's maybe not a necessity, but how will the new owners handle “going outside”? It is essential that a Crested be a housedog; he simply cannot be an “outside dog.” Letting him go out on his own using a doggie-door can be dangerous, since predators are everywhere and an unsu-

pervised dog is just a snack. Coyotes are in the cities. Owls and hawks are common. Even bears can be found in populated areas, often attracted by garbage cans. As civilization encroaches on the wilderness, the animals that used to find their food there must now forage in cities and suburban areas in order to survive. This means that pet owners must be ever vigilant in order to keep their animals safe.

While it is a sensitive issue, it is important to be sure that a prospective owner will be able to afford to care for their dog. High-quality food is expensive. Routine health care costs are high. What if the dog gets sick? More and more sick animals are simply being abandoned at the vet's offices. A red flag goes up for me anytime someone asks me to lower the price that I'm asking for a dog. The initial price of a dog is insignificant compared to what is spent over the lifetime for its care.

A contract with someone who buys a dog is essential, but in truth, once they go out the door, the conditions are very difficult to enforce. There must be trust on both sides. If I can't feel confident that my dog will get the same quality of care with a new owner as he would with me, then I just can't sell him.

And, of course, there are those who ask whether I make a lot of money selling puppies. (These folks would *never* get an intact dog from me. Probably not any dog.) As we all know, this is such a funny joke. Nobody who does it right can even break even, right?

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Chihuahuas *Selection, Selection, Selection: These Changing Times*

Ever wonder why your friend succeeds in her breeding program while you keep struggling for the next best show dog? I believe success is determined by the reasons for breeding and the selection of puppies.

Think of the importance of *location, location, location* as that concept applies in the world of real estate. A house may not be the best on the block, but it has the location you want, and you can build onto it. Also, a good foundation is the key to the longevity of a home, but you must also make repairs to keep it in tip-top shape.

With our fast-paced world, development of a “line” seems to be a thing of the past, and breeding the next great show dog has taken priority for many these days. There are still a few old “dinosaur” breeders left out there, however, who breed because they love the breed. They are patient and select puppies not because they are the best for the show ring, but because they are the best for the future of the line and future of the breed. They consistently have winning dogs in the ring year after year, just as an added bonus for doing what they love. Their breeding stock is “proven,” and they know what their lines may lack and what it will take to get what they need.

Selection of the puppies they keep is the key to these breeders’ success. A kept puppy may not be the best show dog in the litter, but he has the missing piece that their line needs to move forward. They are forever reaching for that elusive “perfect dog.” Again, I point out that they have a line developed and know all the dogs in that line and what those dogs are capable of producing. Adding a new dog to a line can take up to five years before learning what the new genetics carry.

This is why line-breeding is preferred to outcrossing. In the outcross you get the good genes with the bad, and you must discover any unwanted genetics through breeding and combining the new bloodline with the old one. This takes more time than most want to devote, and therefore some will focus on the selection of “the next best show dog.” This type of selection and breeding can produce hit-and-miss results. We’ve all seen that top-winning dog never to be reproduced or heard of again. What happened to that dog, and

where are his or her puppies? Many top-winning dogs have never produced great get.

When entering the world of dog showing and breeding, we all must decide what we hope to gain from our efforts. Which path suits your needs and desires? Is showing dogs and winning in the ring your priority, or are you the “dinosaur” breeder whose joy comes from years of development of a line? Both are needed in the dog show world.

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English Toy Spaniels When to Retire a Dog?

After a particularly difficult weekend in the agility ring, I am faced with the decision of retiring my dog or proceeding in trying to reach our goals. As any Wisconsin football fan can tell you, retirement can be a very difficult decision that can fail to stick.

Whether it be in conformation or performance, there are two types of dogs whom people consider retiring. First is the dog who has reached all of your goals and may be getting older or a little worn out. Second is the dog who has not reached your goals and who you feel perhaps may never do so.

If the dog seems to be physically struggling, the decision should be an easy one; our dogs’ health and welfare should always come first. When it is more of an issue of his training or mental health, however, the decision can become quite complicated. This is especially true when there is no other dog to step into his place. I feel this is too much pressure to put on any dog. If it is the case, I would suggest the owner take this out of the equation by considering a new dog sport or adding a second dog. This way the decision can become more about the dog and less about the owner’s desires.

When you reach the goals you have set for your dog, it must be clear what the value of continuing may be for both of you. If your dog is healthy and

both of you are truly enjoying yourselves, then by all means continue. There is always another Best in Show or another title to be achieved. Be aware, however, that they become harder to obtain as the dog ages. I personally think that going out “on top,” especially in conformation, is something to be proud of.

The really difficult decision is regarding the dog who is healthy and young but struggling to reach the goals you have set. This might be a time to ask for input from friends, trainers, and fellow exhibitors. Is it a training problem that you could work on? How much time should you give it? How much money do you want to spend? It would be easy to say that if the dog is not enjoying himself, you should call it quits. However, you must decide whether this is due to your inadequacies as a trainer or an inherent issue with the dog’s personality.

There is no shame in changing your goals. Maybe your conformation dog is more suited for performance. Maybe your performance dog has reached his potential, and that MACH is just not in the cards. Be proud of what the two of you have accomplished, and celebrate the bond you have developed trying to get there.

For my own dog, I have decided to be content with what we have accomplished. He has surpassed my expectations in the agility ring, and we have plans to pursue further obedience goals. Then again, maybe we will only show in certain conditions and see if we cannot get those last two legs.

What can I say? ... I live in Wisconsin!

—Janelle Smedley, jsmeds@cheqnet.net

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Havanese

The following is contributed by Stan Kovak, chair of the Havanese Club of America’s Survey Committee.

Breed Health Survey

The Havanese Club of America finished its health survey last year with the help of members and nonmembers