

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 that 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 their kennel. The kennels of old Russia had specific styles that easily identified their borzoi and you could even tell what region of the country they originated. The world is getting smaller with travel easier, frozen semen collections and of course the internet. We all have access to almost limitless opportunities. The differences today, is that years ago the remoteness and lack of technological advances in the last century caused kennels to have more diversity rather than today's homogenous breed styles.

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. 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 bred 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 two young dogs of similar age can be such a gamble because of many late onset health or developmental concerns.

It all goes back to setting your priorities and establishing a mission statement. If someone asks you 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 you breeds dogs that fit the standard does nothing to identify your priorities or direction for your kennel. A short statement that is as simple as the following sums up a breeding program; "We try to breed beautiful dogs that are sound in both movement and temperament that are a joy to own."

I enjoy reading the first page of internet kennel sites to see just what direction a kennel is trying progress. On the other hand many people cannot vocalize 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 had a great head another had 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 Steele