

PICKING A PUP AND GETTING STARTED

(from *The Brittany: Amateurs Training with Professionals*)

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A Brittany pup that is eight to ten weeks old is about the right age to bring home. The possibility of developing a gun dog for hunting, field trials, the show ring or simply as a great companion are usually much better when you make the pup a part of your family. A kennel-raised pup with little human contact does not develop into a "well mannered" gun dog for which the Brittany has become so well known.

That does not mean that the pup must live in your home, but it does mean that as his new guardian, you must spend as much time as possible with pup. You will become the central figure in his life. You are replacing his mother and littermates. You will become his best buddy. You feed him; provide him with a place to sleep; you take him for walks and give him "happy times". You are going to develop a relationship or bond with this Brittany that will last his or her lifetime.

When selecting a pup keep "in mind" that the gundog breeds including the Brittany will be going afield in pursuit of upland game birds. As the new owner of a pup, you need to consider that serious hunting and competition either in the show ring or at field trials should wait until pup has started to mature. This could vary from twelve to eighteen months. Puppies need to be puppies and have fun. When you push too hard with strict discipline too early, it can have adverse effects on the dog's desire to hunt, run in trials and perform in the show ring.

Choose from a breeder carefully and take note of the bloodlines. When selecting a pup look to the parents and grandparents of the litter. With the hunting prospect it is important to see the dam and sire of the litter and observe their manner in the field hunting and pointing upland birds. It should be noted as to how these Brittanys perform. How do they range; would either of them be the hunting partner you would want to take to the woods and spend an afternoon gunning over them? As the new owner of a pup from these parents, you are looking for the dog to be biddable along with retrieving birds. Will they "hunt-dead" and/or will the Britts retrieve the birds to hand?

With the potential field trial prospect, it is recommended you look more closely at the parents and grandparents. Have they participated in trials? And of most importance do they have winning records? Do they have the temperament and stamina to run hour-long stakes?

Above all else when you bring pup home, promise yourself that you will spend

time with pup, most every day of the week. Short 15 to 20 minute sessions – walking in the woods, using pup's name and having him come-in when called. Remember you have a certain amount of responsibility to guide this Brittany through the early months and years of training.

There are three considerations that should be taken in account when raising a pup that you want to become a well-manner adult:

- Select a pup from a reputable breeder
- Socialization
- Crate training

Note articles will appear concerning the later two subjects in the next several issues of the magazine.

To keep pup healthy, find a good veterinarian and keep him up to date on vaccinations and preventative medications like heartworm. Talk to your vet about any problems pup is having, either physical or behavioral.

Remember puppies are forever forgiving when during their early growing stages you make it fun and make them your best buddy. Don't over react and expect perfection. Too much training can be counter-productive. Allow your pup the freedom to enjoy many different experiences; with a certain degree of education for him to develop into a well-mannered matured adult birddog.

In addition, remember that pup thinks you are wonderful. He learns his name and easily comes to you. He has a strong desire to please. (Note he won't always be small and eager to please). Let the pup be a pup. Have fun with him for he will be grown before you know it.

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