

## News from the JGHV Director of Testing

### **Stable Temperament (*Wesensfestigkeit*)**

exceptional calmness, despite fiery passion and speed

Dear friends of the hunting dog. When I received the article below from Mr. Konrad Andreas about Mr. Eike Behrens some time ago, I had the feeling that time had stood still. Already 50 years ago, there was concern with the subject of a strong temperament. I ask myself why we have not managed to come to grips with this issue over this long period of time. Especially the inner calmness is missing in all our hunting dogs at present. Despite all the problems in today's dog breeding and handling of hunting dogs, this must be one of the highest goals of the hunting dog movement. Our society, as well as hunting and the handling of hunting dogs has changed a lot since 1969, but still our goal, the preservation of hunting, the handling of a healthy, high performance, game-sharp, calm and temperamentally strong hunting dog must be our highest goal.

Dear readers of *Der Jagdgebrauchshund*. First of all, a big thank you to Mr. Konrad Lorenz who wrote this report and also to Eike Behrens who made this report available. I have shortened the report a bit, as the report was focused on single dogs or kennels, and I have deleted these names, because the words apply to the overall breeding of the *Jagdgebrauchshund*. I hope you enjoy reading this report and wish you success in the breeding and handling of your hunting dogs.

Excerpt from the book by Konrad Andreas "*Der Hund - mein Waidgesell*" *Studien am Hund, Erinnerungen an Hunde.*" ("The Dog - my Hunting Companion" *Studies on the Dog, Memories of Dogs.*) With the kind permission of the JGHV magazine "*Der Jagdgebrauchshund*".

By firmness of temperament, we mean the inner balance by virtue of which the dog, which has not been trained, cannot be easily shaken by external influences. The nerves of such a dog are sound; they provide the dog with the calmness which makes it so pleasant to handle. This calmness must therefore not be confused with being phlegmatic; it has nothing to do with lethargy! It is rather a mental balance, the expression of that splendid firmness, which also puts its stamp on a dog's work. Such dogs, if they also have good hunting abilities and are properly prepared and handled, can be counted on.

Ingrained fearfulness, aggressiveness, biting out of fear, unsettled excitement, fear of gunfire and **thunderstorms**, as well as jumpy reactions to anything unfamiliar are defects of temperament and, as such, characteristics of weakness of temperament. They impair the dog's ability to cope with the environment. It is obvious that this lack of mental stability must not only reduce the dog's ability to train and perform, but under certain circumstances may even jeopardize the dog's ability to perform at all. Therefore, weakness of temperament as a sign of malformation and a damaging

factor must never be disregarded in breeding. As a matter of principle, it must result in the exclusion of such dogs from breeding. Just as, conversely, special importance must be given to deliberate breeding for temperament.

Health, performance, strong nerves, and superb calmness, in spite of intense passion and speed - these are the most important requirements for a hunting dog. These are the very dogs that trainers call a good gundog. Just as with humans there are skilled and unskilled candidates for examinations. Just as there are students who, despite great knowledge, fail in the test because their anxiety and nerves make them self-conscious and inhibit their answers, there are dogs who are infected by a nervous, anxious handler and made insecure in their performance. Dogs that cannot be made to lose their composure by anything and do not quiver with excitement even at the sight of game, but still continue to maintain their composure, are not struggling in their collars, but wait to be called up to work, this is called natural calmness - combined with temperament and speed.

Regardless of the service (use) of the dog, whether as a messenger, guard, tracking dog, or as a hunting dog, they must have the right abilities for the intended use. In spite of all the differences that exist, for example, between guard, tracking or hunting dogs in their special abilities, the basic condition for the fitness of all these dogs must be their absolute strength of character.

In his book "*So kam der Mensch auf den Hund*" (3rd ed. Vienna 1951), which is worth reading, the well-known behavioral scientist Professor Konrad Lorenz writes "the following lines:

"It is sad, but not to be denied that a strict selective breeding for physical characteristics cannot be reconciled with selective breeding for mental characteristics. Individuals who meet all the requirements on both sides are rare, so that they could be used as a basis for further breeding ... Even if a dog breeder aims at the strictest breeding selection for both aspects, they will not succeed in practice without compromises. In earlier times, when the dog was still largely a working animal and when fashion played a secondary role, there was no danger that mental qualities were neglected in the selection of breeding animals ... However, the situation becomes really bad when the almighty tyrant fashion, presumes to dictate to the poor dog what he should look like. There is not a single breed of dog whose original excellent mental qualities have not been destroyed completely as soon as it became the "great fashion". Only if in some quiet corner of the world the dogs concerned were further bred as working animals, irrespective of their becoming fashionable, could this disaster be prevented.

In our four-legged companions, we hunters seek not only a friend, but also a bit of nature. However, only a dog that is healthy and balanced both physically and mentally can offer us this in the most natural way possible. Dealing with nervous,

mentally defective dogs has a demoralizing effect, which affects even the calmest mind in the long run.

As we know from experience, such deficiencies can also appear in a breeding selection which is exclusively and strictly directed towards practical use. Even if the temperament of the dog may often be very different in the individual, in general it must still correspond largely to the purpose for which it is to be used. However, weakness of temperament, wherever and however it may appear, is, as already noted, an unmistakable sign of malformation. And this must be prevented by not using such dogs, at least not for breeding. Only the best is good enough for breeding. This is especially true with regard to the hereditary determination of health. *Mens sana in corpore sano!* Whatever is not fully acceptable for breeding should be abandoned.

A dog can be trained to be calm only to a limited extent. It has it or it does not have it. If it is missing, however, then all art applied in the training of the dog will fail because of the dog's innate agitation. Calmness, the calmness that allows the dog to cope with all difficulties and never become agitated and fidgety, must be in the dog's blood. Only then can the dog develop into a helper that can be relied upon after the correct preparation and when properly handled - provided, of course, that it also has the other characteristics that we desire in a hunting dog: a good nose, the desire to find and, as a result, the inherited "urge to go forward" as well as the necessary sharpness.

The sign of a dog with a strong temperament is its unshakeable calmness and unconditional reliability. What such dogs have "eaten" once, sticks. They can then be trained relatively quickly to do something that they are not used to doing. The dog may be a messenger dog or a guard dog, a herding dog or a hunting dog, but in any case, the special professional qualities of the dog, as a foundation for practical use, include strength of character. In other words: Natural abilities of any kind can only be developed fully on the basis of innate strength of character. It is the mark of healthy nerves. And these are a basic condition for a breeding dog, or at least they should be.

Breed clubs everywhere should have trusted advisors - people who are so beyond reproach in their character, and so firm and incorruptible in their objectivity, that they will not lie to themselves. The Breed Warden depends on their help. They are needed to determine the true breeding value of all the dogs in their area. Only in this way can they fulfill their duties as breeding advisors to the greatest possible extent. A characteristic that cannot be appreciated and observed enough in the working dog is strength of temperament. Every Breed Warden should try to identify this in practice as carefully and thoughtfully as possible.

During a public test, this is usually only possible to a limited extent, but it is most likely where the assessment is carried out by the same Judges in every subject. It would therefore be a good idea if, in the future, the overall picture of each dog that passes the test could be clearly summarized in as few words as possible, but with as

much content as possible. The temperament of the dog should never be judged frivolously and only if a clear impression can be formed. In such a case, however, without doubt, regardless in which direction. What is written must be indisputable, as a breeder you must be able to rely on it. What is at stake here is the nerve and backbone of our performance breeding.

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(Translation: Ken Bremer)