

COONHOUNDS AT THE AKC _____ by Steve Fielder

Breed Clubs Are Important! I just returned from the annual Plott Days events in Holmesville, Ohio. The annual pilgrimage to the gathering of fanciers for my breed of choice is something that started when I was in grade school. I remember sitting in the club-houses and listening to the legends in my breed talk dogs. The Plott breed was in its infancy when I first came to know it. I was seven years old in 1954 when my dad bought his first registered Plott. The breed was first registered in 1946, just eight years earlier. Some of the dogs on the pedigree of my dad's first Plott didn't have registration numbers and were the ancestors of the first dogs accepted into registration.

Breed associations serve many purposes and are important to the future of our breeds. The American Kennel Club prefers to call them parent clubs. Each breed should have an organization comprised of individuals with a genuine interest in seeing their breed of choice survive and prosper.

Breed associations become like families as they should and as anyone that will admit it knows, not all members of our families share the same point of view. One needs to only think back to the last family holiday or reunion to illustrate the point. Families exist because of the love we share. Breed associations survive because our love for the breed surpasses our differences of opinion.

The year 2012, with the acceptance of the Treeing Walker, will mark the acceptance of all six coonhound breeds into the AKC registry, something that has been a long time coming. As a result the coonhound breeds are gaining universal popularity and with that comes the need for parent clubs to guide the future of the breeds.

It's not enough to form straw organizations that exist on paper but lack support and substance to perform the important functions of the parent club. Unselfish passion for the breed is paramount and is, apparently, a precious commodity. Few of us can get beyond our personal wants to sacrifice the time and energy to provide all-important leadership the breed association needs.

There's no doubt the coonhound breeds will flourish with AKC's acceptance. Coonhounds are commanding the attention of individuals lacking prior knowledge of or experience with the breeds. Experience and leadership from individuals with fundamental experience in the breeds is sorely needed if they are to prosper. Now is the time for those individuals to step up.

Considering the longevity of my career with coonhounds, I'm often asked by young people how I got started. I spoke with a couple of fine young men about the subject just last week. The answer is founded in the Plott Association. I returned from military service in July in time to attend Plott Days in August where I met the new owner of the registry with which the Plott Association was affiliated. That meeting, combined with election to a breed representative's position and a seat on the registry's rules committee built the stage from which my thirty-three career was launched.

Breed associations (parent clubs) serve many important functions, the chief of which is the control of the registries standards for the breeds. I attended the annual business meeting at Plott Days this year. The breed's standard was a central topic of the ensuing discussions and as expected, there were extremely passionate discussions at that. The breed standard should be guarded like Coca Cola guards their formula. Once the breed is established, it should be preserved. Refinements and changes should be done with extreme care and consideration. For that reason, AKC permits changes to the standard in five-year increments only. Changes must be approved by the entire membership and approved by the registry. It's important that each breed has unselfish, passionate leadership to preserve the formula.

There are many fringe benefits to parent club membership. Annual meetings, referred to as breed days or national specialties, bring friends of the breed together. They provide opportunities for

members to showcase their efforts at proving and improving the breed. The event I attended last week included shows, nite hunts, field trials and water races. Nightly raffles provided opportunities for fun and entertainment. Friendship circles flourished throughout the campground and reunions with old friends and first-meetings brought smiles and no doubt will provide endless memories.

The AKC breeds are in need of passionate individuals to join and support the parent clubs. For the purpose of promoting our breed associations I am listing the contacts for each of our established parent breed clubs. Some of the clubs are well-established while others are in real need of members and leadership. As the clubs form and advance, they may pursue membership status and may gain seats in the delegate body, the governing body of the world's largest kennel club. It is my hope that each of the AKC coonhound breed clubs will accept the leadership role, will establish effective judge's education programs and will provide activities for their membership that will stimulate growth and prosperity. It all starts with joining the club. With that first step opportunities will open up for you to display and distribute your love for your breed. You just may be the leader the club is looking for.

American Black & Tan Coonhound Club, Inc.
Secretary: Edith Atchley
Address: 269 Moonridge Trail, Gurley, AL, 35748-9737

American Bluetick Hound Association
Secretary: Jerry McAvoy
Address: 5858 County Road 30
Mount Gilead, OH, 43338-9704

American English Coonhound Association
Secretary: Curt Wills
202 Tearing Run Road
Homer City, PA 15748-1658

Redbone Coonhound Association of American Kennel Club
Secretary: Denise Geffs
22455 E 2150th Avenue
Casey, IL, 62420-2502

Southeastern Treeing Walker Association
President: Randy Hall
3820 Live Oak Hog Company Road
Deep Run, NC 28525-0000

Four Ways to Qualify! The AKC World Championship will be held in May of 2012 in Crittenden, Kentucky. Regional Semifinal hunts will be held two or three weeks earlier in Virginia, South Carolina, Indiana, Ohio (2), Illinois, Texas and Arkansas.

You may qualify for the World Championship Finals in four ways:

1. Win a cast with plus points at an AKC Qualifying Event.
2. Win two casts with plus points at AKC Sportmix Showdown Series events.
3. Win three casts with plus points at any AKC-licensed Nite Hunt other than Qualifying Events or Sportsmix Showdown Series events.
4. Earn the Supreme Grand Nite Champion title with which you can bypass qualifying and the Regional Semifinals and go directly to the Finals.

Dogs must also qualify for the AKC World Bench Show Championship by qualifying at a World Qualifying Bench Show. Win Best Male or Female of Show, Best Champion Male or Female, Best Grand Champion Male or Female, or Best Supreme Grand Champion Male or Female at the qualifying show in order to enter the World Show Championship.

Qualification ends December 31, 2011. Now is the time to qualify!