

sold as pets and likely neutered. And sometimes breeders just make poor choices and keep the pup that turns out to be the lesser-quality animal, relegating the potential “wow” to strictly pet status.

Often these regrettable decisions involve our inability to look at the overall dog without fixating on one fault or another. We need to remind ourselves that perfection is unattainable. And I suspect that quite often we do not have the patience to wait for a slow-maturer. We are so tuned into the “now,” we forget that the Cavalier is a notoriously slow-maturing breed and we may need to appreciate him at the age of 3, not expect him to take top honors at 13 months.

Homeranne Caption was such a slow-maturing dog, and he had a mantle coat besides. How many of us would have had the foresight to keep him? Ravenrush Best Dressed of Luxxar, Elvenhome Buckthorn, Ricksbury Royal Temptress, Craigowl Replica, Prestonville Blackmoor, and Rattlebridge Masterpiece—these were “wow” dogs for me, and for many others who saw them. I’m sure each of us could give his own special list.

Notably, the “wows” are often great producers and are prepotent for the qualities that we admire. We must not let such potential fade into obscurity from our own whelping boxes. The fancy deserves the chance to see these dogs as living models of what we can achieve as breeders and for what they have to offer to future generations of Cavaliers. These are the dogs who rise above excellence and live in the memory, and the pedigree, long after they have passed away.

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American Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club website: ackcsc.org

Chihuahuas

Selection—The Future of the Chihuahua

Our breed’s parent club, the Chihuahua Club of America, and

the American Kennel Club are guardians of the Chihuahua’s *breed standard*. The breed standard is a blueprint of the breed’s specific qualities such as *appearance, movement, and temperament*. It is our “word picture” of the appearance and behavior of an idealized Chihuahua. The breed standard is “the standard or model which breeders endeavor to achieve.”

The basis of judging in conformation dog shows is *breed type*, which is the combination of characteristics that are typical of a particular breed. The judge looks at the entered dogs to discern the ones who most perfectly resemble her mental image of ideal breed type. The goal of the conformation show is to identify breeding stock for the future of the breed.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks to proper selection is allowing what we *like* to stand in the way of something that is equally correct and fully acceptable. These “likes” can develop into obsessions, and sometimes they do not fall within the range of preference. Restricted vision serves as a detriment to the breeder and to our breed as a whole. If decisions during puppy selection are based entirely on a personal preference, we risk inaccurately interpreting the breed standard.

We see this in our show ring, with Chihuahuas exhibiting such traits as extremely short muzzles and curly tails, both of which are incorrect according to the standard. Only when we select within the confines of our breed standard do we work to produce better dogs.

Selection of our puppies will influence the future of our breed and should not be taken lightly. The longer people breed and watch puppies grow and mature, the more proficient they will be in evaluating what stands before them.

If we are doing our job as breeders with the best possible intentions for the future of our breed, some very good dogs will be neutered or spayed, while those who are even better will be retained for future breeding. There is no doubt that neutered and spayed

stock of the best breeders is far superior to much of the stock being used by others.

It behooves all breeders to work in the best interest of the breed. *Selection* is what it’s all about, and it’s the key to breeding success. An inability to look at your dogs objectively can wreck your dreams for the future and derail years of hard work. Successful breeders who produce quality dogs year after year are consistent with their selection process. They maintain a picture of the type they are trying to produce and know the ingredients that make up that type.

Finally, your ability to select wisely will depend both on your in-depth knowledge of dogs in general and your breed-specific knowledge. Read your standard until you know it forward and backward, and understand what you are reading. Above all, think of the future of our breed when selecting your next show puppy.

—Virginia (Jenny) Hauber, wynjynchis@yahoo.com

Chihuahua Club of America website: chihuahuclubofamerica.com

English Toy Spaniels

Raising a Breeder

If you are considering becoming a mentor for an aspiring breeder, first I would say congratulations and thank you for doing your part to keep all that we love growing and flourishing. Next, there are things I would like you to consider.

Becoming a mentor should not be undertaken without a lot of soul-searching on your part. Are you really ready to not only share your knowledge, but also open your mind to someone who has her own dreams and ideas?

Becoming a mentor is very similar to raising a child. It is your job to give this newcomer all of your wisdom and guide her as she makes their way. After all, you have traveled these roads before her. You have bred multiple litters and seen all that can go wrong, as well as the joy in finding that perfect breeding. You have probably dealt with a lot of different people, some of whom have treated