



Yours, Mine and Ours: The Value of Co-Ownership

By Jodi Quesnell

When I first became involved in GWPs, I didn't like the idea of co-owning my dogs with others. After being involved a little longer, I was certain that co-owning was a bad choice.

I'd seen plenty of bad co-ownerships. The arrangement can end in a nasty dispute when the owners have different goals or can't agree on how to breed or show the dog. Sometimes the co-ownership is set up lopsided from the beginning so that one owner gains most of the benefit while the other ends up with most of the work and expense. This imbalance is typical of arrangements made by some breeders who take advantage of newcomers desperate for a quality dog. Newcomers agree to these lopsided agreements because it seems to be the only way they can get a nice dog when starting in the breed.

Co-ownership arrangements that take advantage of newcomers are simply wrong, if not unethical. If we want newcomers to be successful and stay involved in the breed, we need to support them - not try to figure out ways for them to support us! Co-owning a nice dog with a newcomer can be done on reasonable terms. Asking for a pup (or two) back from a bitch's first breeding or stud service from a dog is fair, as long as the sales price of the pup is adjusted accordingly. When breeders start getting multiple pups back from a bitch's multiple litters, however, the deal begins looking like a pyramid scheme - not good!

That said, after becoming a breeder myself and gradually getting to the point of having too many dogs to be able to add even one more, I've learned that there is

value to co-ownership. More specifically, there is value in co-breeding. By sharing breeding stock with other breeders who have similar goals, I can "keep" more of my quality pups by letting them go to these breeders. And when I have room for a pup, I can take one of their pups from our shared lines. It fits right into my breeding program, and I have the same pride in showing these pups that I have in showing those I have bred in my home.

Another advantage is that if there are two really nice pups in a litter, I can keep one and send the other to the co-breeder. We then have two pups to "run on" and see which grows up nicest. And if it turns out that for some reason one of the pups can't be shown or bred, there is still another available from the breeding.

I think a valuable co-owner/co-breeder relationship grows when each person has a mutual respect for the other and the quality of her dogs, a trust that she will take good care of the dogs, and an understanding that each has her own breeding program. There is mutual benefit to sharing your lines in this way. By sharing pups back and forth, you gain the benefit of what the other breeder adds to your line, and she benefits from what you've added to her line. If she likes one of the pups from my litter, she can have it - and if I like one of her pups, she sends it to me. She has "her" litters, and I have "mine," but we are proud of "our" pups!

This article originally appeared in the January, 2010 AKC Gazette In the German Wirehaired Pointer breed column; and is reprinted here with the author's permission.