



Breeders' Briefcase

by Amy Anderson & Bonnie Lane
co-chairs of the Breeders' Education Committee

Just A Humble Opinion

Several years ago I was asked by the Board of Directors of the Weimaraner Club of America to discuss important virtues of the Weimaraner that we do not want to see lost, as well as problems that we are seeing in the ring today. I provided a response that has been used in Judges Education Seminars in recent times, but I felt strongly that my opinions/experience could be beneficial to others as well. As either the breeder/owner, trainer or handler of National Specialty Winners, Show Futurity Winners, National Field Champions, and Field Futurity Winners, I feel uniquely qualified to provide an opinion on the subject because I have an in depth understanding of both the show dog and the field dog side of things and of how both are supposed to be one animal. It pains me to see the decline in popularity of our breed and the decline in participation in the field and show venues provided for our breed. It is my opinion that the show and field venues will never completely come together and maybe they shouldn't, but we all should understand and breed true to our standard. We should support our Futurity programs and not be so caught up in the politics of it- when most of the time there aren't any politics at all. Judges do not take prestigious assignments so they can be crooked; they take them to find...in their opinion...outstanding dogs that best conform to the breed standard.

The Futurity program should be held in as high a regard by today's breeders as it was by those of us twenty years ago or more. The Futurity program above all else is designed for the breeder and stud dog owner to showcase the fruit of their efforts. All of us should support it.

Why then has there been a decline in Futurity nominations and participation? Is it truly based on the difficult economy or is it a result of our breed becoming further divided between the show and field venues? Or, is it ...oh my gosh...the unthinkable failure of today's breeders to do a good job with their breeding programs? Are we failing as stewards of our wonderful breed? Ask yourselves these questions and please review the following excerpts from the document provided to the Judges Education Committee awhile back. I think these comments are still very relevant today.....

First, I would like to point out that our standard appears to be very vague in the way that it is written, however, upon closer scrutiny it becomes apparent that this is not the case. In fact, our standard is very easily understood and very clearly describes Weimaraner type. When judging the Weimaraner, **primary emphasis** should be placed on the opening description of the Weimaraner's general appearance which states

...a medium-sized gray dog, with fine aristocratic features. He should present a picture of grace, speed, stamina, alertness and balance. Above all, the dog's conformation must indicate the ability to work with great speed and endurance in the field.

Unfortunately most dog show judges and sadly, a large number of breeders have not had the opportunity to see Weimaraners working in the field *with great speed and endurance*. Dog show judges are forced to evaluate our dogs at the trot in a ring often no bigger than postage stamp. Weimaraners do not work in the field at the trot, they RUN, and must have the endurance and speed to do so for long periods of time. Above all, judges should take the ability of the dog to work in the field into consideration when evaluating our breed. They must look like athletes and be in proper muscular condition.

In order to work in the field for long periods of time (endurance), a Weimaraner cannot be extreme in any way. Today we are seeing a lot of overdone fronts and overangulated rears that are not efficient for field work. Dogs constructed in this way are not efficient in their movement and cannot RUN for long periods of time without tiring. Nothing in our standard says anything about the Weimaraner being extreme in comparison to other breeds. Actually, our standard uses adjectives like medium, moderate, balanced, muscular, graceful, aristocratic and effortless. Nowhere does it mention extreme! Heavy fronted, over-angulated, out of balance dogs are being seen more often in rings today and must be evaluated in terms of their ability to work in the field and not how they fit some extreme silhouette or erroneous

interpretation of Weimaraner type. The conclusion would most often be made that these dogs would not be able to work with great speed and endurance for long periods of time. Weimaraner type is truly determined by the the appearance of the ability of the dog to perform what it was bred to do....*work with great speed and endurance in the field.*

Another important characteristic of our breed is temperament. Temperament for the Weimaraner is described in our standard as

...friendly, fearless, alert and obedient... Very serious faults are Dogs exhibiting strong fear, shyness, or extreme nervousness.

This description is about as clear as can be. Unfortunately, bad temperament is one of the most prevalent problems in our breed today. We see far too many dogs being shown that exhibit fear, nervousness and downright wackiness and their owners/handlers can come up with about every excuse imaginable to downplay it. The reason for it is bad breeding, not flashbulbs, doors slamming, strange people, lack of travel experience or any of the other more common excuses for it. Poor temperament in the Weimaraner should not be tolerated in the ring for any reason. It occurs so often today that I often hear other handlers and judges commenting about what a problem it is. Our dogs often do not appear friendly, fearless, alert and obedient, and we must all assist each other in correcting this problem. Breeders should not ignore it or make excuses for it, they should correct it by not breeding animals plagued by it, regardless of how beautiful.

Movement in the Weimaraner is tied closely with the expected athletic ability of our breed. Adjectives such as effortless, smooth, and co-ordinated are used to describe our breed's gait.

In recent years it is very interesting to me that more emphasis has been placed on side gait, although undoubtedly very important, less emphasis has been placed on the down and back. This does not seem correct when the down and back is really the only aspect of our breed's movement, except for the above mentioned adjectives, that is described in great detail in our standard. The detailed description in the standard states

When seen from the rear, the hind feet should be parallel to the front feet.

This is a pretty clear description of the down and back and should not be ignored in our breed.

I hope that I have been of some help in pointing out concerns that hopefully our new judges can help knowledgeable breeders address. We together are the stewards of our breeds and it is extremely important to work together through education to move forward in our pursuit of excellence.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy V. Long
Von Luchbach Weimaraners

The Breeder Education Committee is pleased to welcome Cindy Long as a member. Cindy Long has been a member of the WCA since 1976 and has interests in both Conformation and Field. Cindy began showing dogs and horses as a teenager and began occasionally breeding Weimaraners under the Von Luchbach kennel name. Involvement with the WCA has included an approximate ten year stint as a board of director and past Vice President. She also initiated the WCA Calendar and photo contest and served as the committee chair and editor of Volume Three of the Pictorial History. In 1997 Cindy married Dan Long and since that time has lived in Ohio and shown dogs professionally and assisted her husband in professionally training and campaigning field trial dogs.