



Hollow Creek's "Allie"



Hollow Creek's "Belle" & Pat Watts



Hollow Creek's "Fisher"



Texas Trace's "Jaeger"



Hollow Creek's "Cocoa" is wonderfully active, funny, smart and I can take her anywhere. While we were waiting for AKC acceptance Cocoa learned to hunt (a natural) and received her Junior Hunting title. In between showing she received her Rally title and then went on to finish her Senior hunting title. She now has one master leg and after the garden will finish this title in the spring. She has the most gorgeous eyes that go right through you even when your not looking at her. She lives at home with my 5 labrador retrievers and two jack russells. Ch. Carolina's Cocoa Chanel, RN, SH owned by Jacquelin DeAngelo



Texas Trace's "Kelley"



Hollow Creek's "Woody"



"Strauss", who is also featured on our cover this month, is owned by Dan, Sharon and Katie Kauzlarich. CH Sunseeker Kiss My Britches Beekauz SH RN. Strauss had an outstanding ride to Westminster. In the first ten months of 2010 he earned both his AKC Junior and Senior Hunt titles while finding time to complete his AKC Championship. He was awarded Best of Opposite Sex at Eukanuba. Strauss has accomplished many wonderful things for a 2-year-old boy.



Photo taken by Susan Jonis of Sobaka Kennels

# Otis THE BOYKIN SPANIEL

by Magda Fernandez

Since my last column, so many wonderful things have happened to young Otis. Otis experienced his first nor'easter, the first of several we had this winter, and boy did he love all that fresh snow! Before the first storm hit, I didn't know what to expect. Would Otis find our New England winters too cold? To my delight, Otis took to the snow like a Boykin to water. Otis quickly figured out that he could spray me with the white stuff after a hard skid, and that it was there to quench his thirst after some good rough play. I have young Otis to thank for injecting lots of fun into this brutal winter.



During the past few months, Otis has grown into a magnificently handsome Boykin. I'm hardly objective here. But, really, look at those pictures of him and dare to tell me otherwise. At 10 months, Otis has 2 more months to go before shedding his puppyhood and officially becoming an adult. Young Otis has gone through most of his growth spurts, and most likely will grow in muscles rather than bones from this point forward. I could be wrong, but we'll see.

During the past few months, I've also learned that Otis has food allergies, but to what remains a mystery. After ruling out parasites and placing him on prescription hypo allergenic food, Otis stopped scratching significantly in one week and completely by the third week. I consulted a leading veterinary nutritionist who happens to practice in town, and learned a great deal from her about the pitfalls of over-the-counter dog food. I had been feeding Otis high-quality foods like Taste of the Wild and Primal Frozen Raw Foods, trying to find a protein that wouldn't make him scratch. According to the nutritionist, tests have shown that even these so-called quality foods contain unlisted ingredients such as soy and/or corn. Some other brands, she said, even contain traces of harsh cleansers that are used in the processing plants. Unfortunately, they all get

away with it because they're unregulated. This is why the nutritionist recommended certain prescription foods (such as Royal Canin's Hypo allergenic Venison/Potato, in Otis' case) because, when tested, they don't contain unlisted ingredients. If it were so easy! Of course, Otis decided that he didn't like his food anymore after 6 weeks. So now we're on Hills d/d Venison/Potato prescription food. Anticipating that Otis eventually will reject this one, too, I've already made an appointment with the nutritionist to request a meal plan for Otis. So many dog owners I've talked to advocate cooking for your dogs, especially if allergies are involved. So I'll report more about how this goes in a future column.

Additionally, the nutritionist taught me how to calculate the ideal amount of food to feed your dog. She explained that each dog is wired at birth to know its unique caloric ceiling and will not gorge beyond it. This means that some dogs are destined to be slimmer or heavier than others, regardless of their breed standards. Furthermore, even though the suggested doses on food packages are broken down according to goal weights, those calculations are reached by averaging a 2 lb. dog with a 250 lb. dog. This means that a particular dog's ideal food quantity might be 50% more or less than those printed recommendations. Although I had been feeding Otis the printed maximum for his goal weight, he looked too thin to me at 33.4 lbs. So I increased his food quantity by 50% and he gained about 3 more pounds in 3 weeks. Frankly, he looked to me a little too rotund at 36.8 lbs. He suddenly was panting after his runs in the woods, too. Interestingly enough, Otis gradually started eating less of the food on his own and has plateaued now at 35 lbs. This weight looks just right to my eyes, and the panting has gone as well. The nutritionist warned me that a dog that is fed more than is required to maintain his unique ideal weight might eat the extra food in the first 2 weeks. She referred to this as "the palpability factor." However, their innate checklist kicks in shortly thereafter. At that point forward the dog gradually starts refusing the extra food on his own until he settles at his right amount. Additionally, the nutritionist said that dogs grow overweight if owners don't reduce their food intake by 30% after they're spayed or neutered. This is because a dog's innate caloric limit doesn't adjust on its own.

This also explains why we see overweight dogs out there.

In addition to understanding Otis' nutritional needs, I now have a better sense of his personality. I find that Otis is many things. In the outdoors, Otis is spirited, athletic, fearless but discriminating, and totally social with most dogs and people he meets. Otis is in heaven whenever he plays a good game of chase with another dog. As an intact teenager, he's a bit of a clueless Merry Mounter right now. But most dogs are good about telling him to cool it, and he does listen to them, thankfully. And, yes, I do make sure that the adult females he plays with are spayed and that the intact males are not aggressive. If people are interested in greeting Otis, he rewards them with a gentle hip-bump to their knees. When it's just me and him in the woods, I see the keen hunter in Otis track all sorts of scents in the trails, some of which lead him to small dead game, such as rabbits, birds, and frogs that are left behind by the resident hawks. I let him eat those occasional finds because the arboretum that is our daily haunt practices a no-kill animal policy. This means that none of the dead animals there have been poisoned. The downside (or rather, my challenge) is preventing Otis the Hunter from devouring discarded tissues, coffee cups, and whatnot that sadly also dot the landscape here and there. Fortunately, his obedience training is paying off in those situations. Since we still don't have a sure-fire Drop It, I usually can rely on switching his focus with a game of Fetch the Stick. And now that I've added Wait and Release to Fetch, Otis finds the suspense of that game irresistible. This is because, at heart, I think that Otis prefers play and sport to food. That's just the way he is.

Based on Otis' confident athleticism in the outdoors, you'd think that he'd be a natural for a sport such as Agility. Well, not quite. You see, Otis is not so self-assured indoors. Large, vacuous interiors pose a particular challenge for him, and many classes are offered in such spaces. When Otis was a young puppy, I had to shop for the right Puppy Socialization classes because he also was shy with other dogs. They had to be sited in small rooms with few students. It was providential that one of the best dog trainers in town teaches classes in such a space. Her name is Vera Wilkinson, and she is the longtime  
*(...continued on page 6)*