

Owner's Choice (continued from page 4)

of Sumter who has been associated with the breed for 40 years. "The ideal pet as well as hunting dog... the more love you give him, the more affectionate he becomes."

All owners emphasize, however, that the animals are much too good as hunting dogs to be used just as family pets. Intelligence, willingness to please, and their natural flushing and retrieving instincts combine to make Boykins a breed that practically train themselves through their desire to please.

"They are just as smart as a whip... They have plenty of sense," says Nat Gist of Sumter, who has trained many Boykins.

If the true worth of a hunting dog is measured by performance afield, the small but stout-of-heart Boykin has changed many a hunter from skeptic to enthusiast. A gathering of owners is sure to unveil stories such as that told by Mahone about a ribbing he took about his dog Willie's small size while the two were in a South Dakota hunting camp. At day's end, after seeing Willie work, the same doubter offered to buy him. Mahone, of course, wouldn't sell. How could he when infected with the Boykin mystique?

Like the cry "Gold" among California's early miners, Boykin "fever" is sure to produce a contagious "rush." The case of fifteen-year-old Clay Watkins of Lexington is not too different from that of many juvenile and adult owners. At 13, Watkins read about the Boykin's talents as a hunting dog and, determined to have one, traded his hard-earned cash and new shotgun for a pup. He's since purchased another gun and when not hunting, he and Duxbak are found competing in field trials while father, Bill, and mother, Sarah, are judging the puppy classes.

In a breed known for boundless energy, a hyperactive dog is occasionally found. Owners say that a degree of this trait, however, is beneficial, giving the Boykin the extra energy to retrieve when other

dogs quit.

Every breed of dog has physical problems, and the Boykin is no exception. Malocclusions (over-shot or under-shot jaw) occasionally occur, but hip dysplasia, a degenerative disease of the joints, is a more serious problem for the tough little dogs. Both defects are apparently hereditary and can be diminished through time and carefully-controlled breeding programs. Informed buyers and conscientious breeders are the keys.

One organization dedicated to maintaining the Boykin as a top-caliber hunting breed is the Boykin Spaniel Society. This Camden-based organization began in 1977 with a makeshift office and volunteer staff. Within one year over 300 people from 25 states had joined. A permanent facility and two paid employees with nearly 2,000 members attest to the society's current status and to the popularity of the Boykin.

To promote the dogs nationally and to preserve the purity of the breed, the society has established a breed standard. While encouraging breeders toward this standard, the society emphasizes the primary importance of retaining the Boykin's natural hunting instincts. "We are hoping that breeders will take this overall concept and breed toward a better dog," says society executive director Kitty Beard.

As a further step toward promoting and preserving the breed, the society has founded a Boykin Spaniel Registry. From a foundation stock of 677 dogs in 1979, the registry now has over 4,000 Boykins in its computer bank. Of these, the majority are listed in states east of the Mississippi while the remainder are scattered throughout the nation with a few in Canada.

The Carolina Boykin Spaniel Retriever Club, another organization devoted to maintaining the Boykin as a hunting companion, promotes the breed through its hunting trials. Club president McKee Boykin Jr. emphasizes that the courses

used in club trials are designed to conform as closely as possible to actual hunting conditions.

"These trials give us a chance to work our dogs during the nonhunting months," says club member Kirby Jordan of Florence. "It's also a good way to keep the family together."

Hunting and the trials' hunting tests keep the dogs working at top performance. Equally important, according to Boykin owners, is the daily contact between dog and master. Boykins, like other breeds designed to work closely with the sportsman, need attention that can't be given by locking them up for use only on weekends. If testimonials from Boykin owners can be believed, this is not likely to happen to the little spaniels.

The names given many Boykins - Wade Hampton, John C. Calhoun, Swamp Fox, Pocotaligo's Water Moccasin, Governor Riley - reflect the breed's South Carolina origins and owners' pride in their state and its dog.

Efforts by the Boykin Spaniel Society and the popularity of field trials held by the Carolina Boykin Spaniel Retriever Club will continue to spread the discovery of South Carolina's little-known hunting treasure. Performance of the dog under the gun and around the home, however, are the deciding factors that will make the Boykin an increasing choice for owners nationwide.

Gigi Mabry Huckabee is a freelance writer from Lexington.

Following are remarks that are under several Boykin pictures in the article:

Another of our home-grown treasures has been discovered. Unlike some prized possessions, however, this one is not being hoarded but shared enthusiastically nationwide.

If the true worth of a hunting dog is measured by performance afield, the small but stout-of-heart Boykin has changed many a hunter from skeptic to enthusiast.

Owners say the Boykin's sterling qualities as a hunter and its lovable disposition combine to make it an ideal weekend companion afield and everyday companion at home.

Intelligence, willingness to please and their natural flushing and retrieving instincts make Boykins a versatile breed.



- Gigi Mabry Huckabee



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Puppyhood: Immaturity vs. capability *By: Sharon Potter*

Expecting mature behavior from an immature dog will guarantee failure, instead use puppyhood to foster your dog's desirable traits

Gently yet firmly hold a puppy until he accepts your restraint and ceases wiggling and struggling. This establishes your leadership early in your pup's development.

You've waited for weeks for this day, maybe even months. At last, your new puppy is old enough to take its place in your home, your family, and your heart. In all their innocent and youthful exuberance, puppies have no idea what a heavy burden they are carrying — and most of us don't realize we've placed it upon them. That cute little ball of fur is carrying our hopes, dreams, and expectations.

Whether it's your first puppy or your tenth, the fact remains that we have a pretty good idea of what we expect him to do for us as an adult dog. Sometimes those expectations are the result of trying to replace an old dog that we've lost, or they may be thoughts of having a dog that hunts and performs as well as a friend's dog we admire, or perhaps we have dreams of winning in competition. Whatever the reason, we've unwittingly put our new puppy in the difficult position of fulfilling our dreams.

Can this puppy do all that? Assuming that we did our homework before we decided on this particular puppy, the answer is yes. Before we go any further, let's explain what we mean by homework.

First of all, does our puppy have the right genetic material to please us? That depends on what we want. If the parents were high-powered, big-running competition dogs and we want to compete in field trials, then yes, there's the genetic material available for our puppy to succeed. If we want that same puppy to hunt very close on foot, we've probably set ourselves up for disappointment.

Gently yet firmly hold a puppy until he accepts your restraint and ceases wiggling and struggling. This establishes your leadership early in your pup's development.



The reverse can be true if mamma and daddy were good, solid, close-working pleasure-hunting dogs and we expect something different from Junior. That's not the puppy's fault — it can only use what was bred into it. The puppy can only have the

genetic potential provided by the pedigree.

The rest is left up to us, as owners, handlers, and trainers of our young protege. When choosing a pup, have a vision in mind of what the end product will be, and keep that vision in mind throughout the dog's training. Use it as an end goal to work toward. The important part here is to keep it a vision rather than an instant demand. Getting to that end result takes time, patience, and training. Too often, expecting three-year-old behavior at 12 weeks or 12 months ruins a good puppy.

Learning by experience



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One of the most critical mistakes made with puppies is not allowing them to learn by experience. Every experience comes with a "first time," and there's no way around letting them learn. Don't deprive your dog of the consequences of its behavior!

This is the best way for our puppies to develop good thinking skills, and by over-protecting and over-controlling them, we teach them to not use their brain.

It's kind of like rearing kids: You can tell them the stove is hot, and even pull their hand away, but eventually they will touch it; and at that point, they will find out what "hot" means.

As our puppy gets older (to the "teenager stage") at around eight to 12 months, the lessons become harder.

Think of telling your teenager not to speed when driving the car. If he's like most of us, the lesson will come in the form of a speeding ticket, and having to pay for his mistake out of his own pocket will make a valuable impression.

Again, we repeat: Do not cheat your dog of the consequences of its behavior. (Please note that there are times to make an exception, such as running after cars or onto the road.)

While you're allowing your puppy to

learn by experience, you do have some level of control over what those experiences are and in what order they are presented to your puppy. We've found that doing a good job of socializing puppies and letting them explore as their world expands allows them to learn with confidence.

One extremely important experience that is often introduced way too soon is gunfire. This usually happens due to human impatience: "Let's make sure he's not gunshy." If you have to see if he's gunshy, you'll probably be responsible for making him gunshy!

Loud noises need to be introduced carefully, and preferably combined with another distraction so the puppy doesn't focus on the noise. Introducing a pup to gunfire should be the last thing on your list of things to do.

If you take the time to do the socialization and allow the puppy to learn, gunfire will be no big deal. On the flip side, if you rush the introduction to gunfire, you may create the very same fear you are trying to prevent. You cannot make a mistake by going too slow!

Control and domination

One of the finest qualities a good bird dog can have is the ability to think on its own. We want a dog to go and hunt for birds, and this requires a level of independent thinking.

Expecting mature adult behavior from an immature dog will guarantee failure. One thing we see far too often is too much control

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or domination on the part of the people around the puppy. When we say control and domination, we're not talking about basic obedience. Basic obedience is what makes any dog a good citizen, both in the field and in the house.

Too much control and domination, on the other hand, refers to telling the puppy what to do every second and trying to make it into a robot.

One of the finest qualities a good bird dog can have is the ability to think on its own. We want a dog to go and hunt for birds, and this requires a level of independent thinking. A puppy that has been controlled too much will wait for you to tell him where the birds are, and if you knew that, you wouldn't need a dog!

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