

Breeding Philosophies

Breeding Philosophy:

n., pl., -phies.

1. Love and pursuit of wisdom by intellectual means and moral self-discipline.
2. Investigation of the nature, causes, or principles of reality, knowledge, or values, based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods.
3. A system of thought based on or involving such inquiry: *the philosophy of Hume.*
4. The critical analysis of fundamental assumptions or beliefs.
5. The disciplines presented in university curriculums of science and the liberal arts, except medicine, law, and theology.
6. The discipline comprising logic, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, and epistemology.
7. A set of ideas or beliefs relating to a particular field or activity; an underlying theory: *an original philosophy of advertising.*
8. A system of values by which one lives: *has an unusual philosophy of life.*

Now more than ever, we breeders have so many tools that we can utilize when it comes to making better breeding decisions. I am sure you have all heard the phrase “ Don’t Throw the Baby out With The Bathwater” This expression is used to suggest an avoidable error in which something good is eliminated when trying to get rid of something bad, or in other words, rejecting the essential along with the inessential. More and more frequently these days, we are seeing the newer breeders and even a handful of the veteran’s discarding exceptional dogs for really “in my opinion” are some of the silliest reasons, e.g., testing came back on the dog and he is an PRA Carrier. Or he got an OFA Fair. So What... SO WHAT!!

We all want perfect dogs but they just do not exist. That is why we can use genetic testing as TOOLS to help us not only make better breeding decisions but to help improve upon the next generation that follows.

Culling dogs from breeding programs is essential. No need in keeping back a dog with deplorable temperaments or serious health issues as they will only create more problems.

Let us say that you own a mediocre brood bitch. Mediocre because she is weedy, light boned, little coat, light eyes, harsh expression and a hard headed, hyper temperament to boot and your reason to keep her is because she has OFA EX. Hips, elbows, Heart, CERF, PRA, EIC, CNM, NARC, THYROID

NORMAL and even Patella's too! YAHOO! WHOOP-DIDDY-DO! You bred her last year to that gorgeous BISS winner and he too has OFA EX hips and NORMAL everything else under-the-sun. Yet you were surprised that the resulting litter all turned out just like the dam. So this year you want to breed her to the No.1 Labrador on the charts right now because he too is also health certified to the moon and back. Maybe you will get something better and maybe not! One thing is for sure...All those health certifications are not going to produce that great Best in Show winner with an incredible desire to please you, a retrieving fool and a cuddle-bug in the house if both parents do not possess those individual qualities!

I would rather have an average to excellent bitch in type with a wonderful temperament with Fair hips, PRA carrier, etc. I can always improve on genetic test scores by selecting a stud dog that complements my bitch in type, temperament AND health. It is not like we do not have enough stud dogs to select from! Your bitch line is the most important aspect of your breeding program...not WHICH Champion you are going to breed her to next!

What I see happening is that so many are concentrating on keeping dogs, especially bitches that only get the highest hips ratings and "Normal" DNA's and will only breed to the same. While that is certainly NOT a bad thing but to add the "cherry on top" would great "IF" both sire and dam are of exceptional type and temperaments THEN you would have all your cards stacked! One other point is that yes, you CAN HAVE a mediocre bitch that produces WAY better than herself providing she comes from a strong bitch line of producers.

Everyone has their own breeding philosophies. Even breeders of the same breed that are best friends agree to disagree on certain issues. That is all okay. Just take note that there is and probably will never be absolute perfection and we each have a different eye for what we consider the "type" in which we wish to produce. Everyone has their own opinion, which is what makes each of us an individual.

For me, I believe in breeding for the entire dog but also I have a greater understanding about using genetic and health testing as the tools that are intended for. With my own breeding program, here in the last several years I have set back and re-evaluated what my goals were. By doing so and letting some of the lesser quality but otherwise "certified-to-the-moon" dogs be re-homed, I have come to really enjoy the ones that are here as their temperaments are just fabulous and all are pleasing to my eye. They are "My Keepers". Perfect? Ooh absolutely not! But alas they are dogs I really enjoy to share my life with, love and cherish. Some are DNA Normal, some are carriers. Some are OFA Ex and some Fair. The ones I have chosen are here because they complete the "ideal Labrador" that I am seeking to produce. I think I can inch closer to my goals with a great dog "as per type and temperament is concerned" that has Fair hips faster than I can with a mediocre dog that has excellent hips. So throwing the baby out just because the bathwater is dirty is in my eyes the same as throwing away perfectly beautiful and structured specimens of the breed because a test result was not the

“perfect result” that you expected. Setting your standards too high, too fast can lead to you stumbling or even falling backwards in your breeding program.

While I can surely go back and say that “Maggie” was an ugly bitch and she was hyper but she had great hips....I am so glad I asked myself: “How is that really going to help me improve in regard to producing the Entire dog? In my case, it wasn’t!

One last topic: EIC, CNM, NARC, HNPk and God really only knows what the heck is going to pop up next!! There are some breeder’s still not doing these more recent, very affordable and easily available DNA test. Some just flat out refuse to acknowledge another health test to perform and others I guess just set back and wait until it becomes an issue. I strongly feel that eventually everyone will adapt it into their breeding programs at one point in time or another just as we did in regard to OFA elbows and with PRA. If not, their stud dogs will probably become less in demand and they might find it harder to breed their girls to other breeder’s studs and eventually as it becomes more popular the EDUCATED puppy buyers will take notice as well.

Hey, I am guilty of it too! Heck when OFA came about with Elbow certifications...I said: “Bull Crap”, the OFA just wants more money! I still believe to this day elbows to be controversial but nevertheless, I do them. And I still believe the OFA should stick to just Orthopedics and not use their program to generate revenue by making you pay for a certificate on a thyroid, heart or other non-orthopedic issue. I would prefer to see other Organizations adapt a certifying or genetic database instead of paying the OFA. Enough said on that point, and again just my opinion.

IF you are a breeder and you expect stud owners to certify their boys for EVERYTHING (which most do), yet you do not do it on your own bitches then I personally would say your LAZY. Get your bitches tested. It's affordable, it's easy to do. END OF STORY!