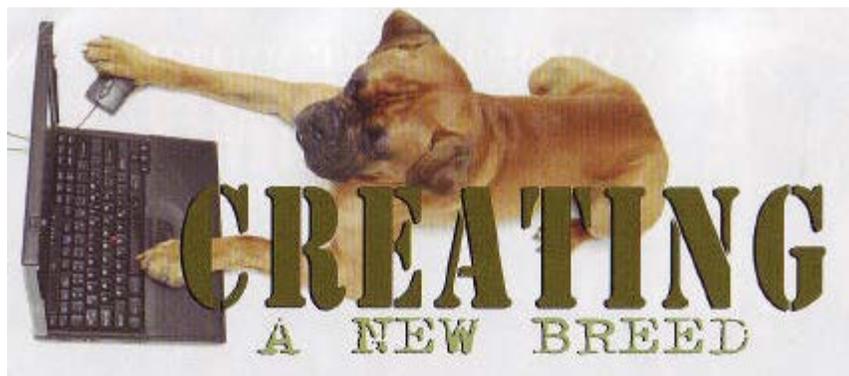


Creating a New Breed

by Dr. Carmen Battaglia

This article was originally published in Canine Chronicle's February 2007 issue.



Business-minded breeders are a growing industry at a time when quality care and new services have both become attractive selling points. According to the American Pet Products Manufacturers' Association's National Pet Owners Survey, Americans spent \$ 35.9 billion on their pets in 2005, more than double the \$17 billion spent in 1994. Industry estimates also show that \$19.5 billion was spent on products and services other than veterinarian care. The Census Bureau's tracking service of retail sales reported that Americans spent more money on pets than on hardware, jewelry or candy in 2004. Tufts University Veterinary School reported that dog owners would spend \$9.4 billion on veterinary care in 2006, a 6% increase. Based on that trend and these figures, it seems clear that breeding and selling pets and their related products has become an industry with ample opportunity for growth and creativity. From airline miles for pets, to pet care and new breeds, the pet world has proven to be an industry in an expansion mode.

During the past decade, this industry grew at a brisk pace. One area receiving a great deal of attention has been the efforts by some to create new breeds.

Over the past half century there have been many attempts to create exotic or designer breeds. Most have failed because the breeders did not take the time to understand what is required to produce a new gene pool or what the American Kennel Club (AKC) requires of a new breed seeking to be recognized. The time, dedication, resources and administrative work necessary usually escapes their notice. The following scenario touches on some of the problems that these breeders will encounter during the long, tiring and demanding process required to create a new breed.

NEW BREEDS

The ideas for creating a new breed usually begin with a group of breeders or an individual. They start with the notion that they will share breeding animals and the resulting offspring. For reasons which are not yet clear, those who have taken this path rarely think about the time and the requirements of such a breeding program. Too often the idea for a new breed is simply to cross two or more existing breeds whose characteristics they like with the expectation that cute puppies will appear.

Once the decision is made to create a new breed, what follows are talk, rumor and excitement, all of which make for interesting newspaper and TV stories. The hype typically begins with an announcement about the new breed. This is followed by a bombardment of questions from the media and curiosity seekers. The motivation that drives the idea is the belief that they can demand higher prices for their new dogs (mongrels). In the midst of all this excitement there is one important question that is rarely addressed. What do they mean when they call themselves breeders? Those who breed animals for consumption such as cattle, sheep and hogs will answer this question differently from those who breed purebred dogs. In this regard, some believe that the term "breeder" means nothing more than someone who mates males to females. In that environment, anyone can become a breeder.

There are no entrance exams, rules or penalties for those who produce the unexpected. Under these conditions any one of our neighbors can claim to be a breeder. But regardless of how you define the term, the real dilemma comes when the breeder comes face to face with the larger question about the skills necessary to take on such a project. Those who attempt to create a new breed usually begin with a reason for doing it. It might be a new purpose, a function or a special need. But for most, it seems to be the perceived benefit of financial gain.

Occasionally there will be others who attempt to create a new breed without cross-breeding. Their approach begins with an existing breed and a trait within a breed they admire. Typically, they will choose a color that is disqualified by the breed standard. What puzzles the long-time breeder is why these individuals call themselves “breeders” when they deliberately set out to breed dogs that have a trait that is disqualified by a breed standard. While this approach avoids cross breeding, it also requires isolating those with the disqualification. The immediate affect is the impact on a reduced gene pool and the decline in the genetic diversity of the dogs being used. Their plan usually involves enhancing the color that is not allowed in the belief that they can improve it and eventually have it recognized as a new breed. As these breedings progress, many will begin to enter these dogs in companion and performance events (obedience, agility, herding, etc.) where disqualifications are allowed in the belief that by competing in these venues they give credibility to their efforts.

STEPS TO A NEW BREED

The history of breed development is centuries old. The Chinese Crested dates back to the 1500s and the days of Columbus. The Pekingese has a history that’s more than 1000 years-old. Other breeds date back to the 1700 and 1800s. In each case, it was understood that careful selection and the need for recognition by a legitimate stud book was an important part of the process. More recently (1980s), Tina Barbara and Cinnamon Kennedy began an effort to create a new breed called the “Shiloh Shepherd”. They began by crossing the Alaskan Malamute with the German Shepherd Dog. It wasn’t long before others claimed to be breeding “Shiloh’s”. A typical problem that begins to surface is disagreement about how these offspring should be bred and who would keep the records and monitor the progress of the breedings. Without a recognized stud book and a registration system, other interested breeders and the public are left wondering what will become of these efforts.



BREED STANDARDS

The path to recognition should not be taken lightly. It requires a large population of dogs with pedigrees that can produce consistent and predictable type. To accomplish this, a written breed standard is needed that describes the traits that the judges and breeders will use to advance not only temperament and type but many of the other desirable traits. Each standard includes the major and minor faults and the disqualifications. For these reasons, those who attempt to create a new breed must craft a breed standard that fits the traits they intend to establish. Oftentimes these breeders will overlook the requirements and expectations that will be placed upon their new breed for its qualities, function and purpose. The show ring will become the primary place where breed type, temperament and conformation are evaluated. In this regard, the breed standard serves as the blueprint. It describes the special trait(s) unique to the breed. Standards usually begin with a general statement about appearance, followed by a specific description of the traits found in the ideal dog. By design, standards focus on the traits and characteristics that give each breed their distinct “breed-look”. One of its primary purposes is to feature the traits that make the breed unique, along with the qualities it must possess in order to perform the job for which it was created. Standards emphasize what is important; conversely the qualities that are of little or no importance are usually only mentioned in passing or not at all. The text of a standard must be clear and concise. Sentence structure is usually simple and straightforward. For example, verbs are used in the present tense: “is” or “are” rather than “should be”. For these reasons, any change to a breed standard must always be given careful consideration.



DISQUALIFICATION

This is a term found in many breed standards. It is the mechanism used to eliminate a trait from a breed. When such a trait occurs, breeders will not use these individuals in their breeding programs. Some will place limits on puppy registration papers or sell them on spay/neuter contracts. Historically, the rationale for using a disqualification can be divided into two broad categories. Breeds will usually disqualify a trait for either aesthetic or functional reasons. For example, the German Shepherd Dog, Doberman Pincher and the Boxer standards all disqualify the white coat, but for different reasons. The German Shepherd standard disqualifies the white coat based on three of the breed’s primary functions: herding, police and military work. Those

who herd prefer a dog that is not white because it is difficult in winter to distinguish the dog from the sheep and the snow. The police and military prefer a dark dog because it is not easily seen making the handler and dog less of a target. The standard for the Doberman Pinscher and the Boxer disqualify the white coat for aesthetic reasons. Their rationale relates to phenotype where emphasis is placed on appearance and desirability. Faults are different from disqualifications. They can be based on appearance, weight, height, color, coat texture, missing teeth etc. In the show ring, dogs with faults can be exhibited. Judges are guided by the language of the breed standard in determining how they will be penalized.



CREATING A NEW BREED

By definition, a breed can be described as a unique group of animals whose phenotype and genotype distinguish it from all others. Both are central to a breed's identity. The AKC is able to support pedigree accuracy with its DNA program that can include and exclude sires and dams with pinpoint accuracy. Generally speaking, those who attempt to create a new breed will give more attention to the secondary traits of expression, coat texture, pigment, and eye color than to structure and temperament. The latter are the prerequisites to having a sound dog and are the more difficult traits to change.

The following scenario is typical of the breeders who attempt to avoid the challenges of cross breeding. As indicated earlier, they will begin with a disqualified color in an existing breed. The challenge for these breeders is to understand the requirements of the AKC and those placed on parent clubs. Here they will find the strict requirements for breed standards, how they are developed and how they are changed. For those who intend to create a new breed using a color that is disqualified in an existing breed, they must find a way to meet several requirements. Some believe that they can request that the standard be changed to allow the disqualified color to become a variety. This approach avoids cross breeding. The problem here is that the AKC has not allowed a new variety in over 50 years. Another approach is to have the parent club change their breed standard to accommodate their request. The requirement for any change to a breed standard is that such a request must receive a two-thirds favorable vote of the membership. But regardless of which approach is taken, the process begins when the proposal is sent to the AKC by the parent club.

In order for a breed, new or old, to be recognized, the breeders must be able to demonstrate several generations of pups that resemble one phenotype and are genetically similar to their parents. This means that they can be distinguished based on their appearance and genetics. For example, breeders who choose to create a new breed must be prepared to spend upwards of 50 years of continuous breeding to create a gene pool that will produce entire litters consistent in type and genetics.

RECESSIVE GENES

In every breed there will be health problems to address. This means that the new and seasoned breeders must learn how to manage the carriers. They must give priority to the diseases most likely to cripple, blind and cause early death. Through the use of pedigree analysis, formula breeding and selection methods, most breeding problems can be addressed. For example, in the case of the German Shepherd, Doberman and Boxer breeds, the white coat is produced by simple recessives. The term "simple recessive" is taken to mean that both parents will be carriers of the recessive trait. Said another way, the mode of inheritance requires that each parent contribute one recessive white gene to their offspring. When traits are controlled by simple recessives, breeders can easily control and manage the carriers just by knowing what the ancestors and littermates have produced. In the case of the white coat it means that a sire and dam that are colored can produce white pups. A fundamental reason why color has not been an effective trait on which to create a new breed involves the genes. For example, if DNA were taken from several dogs of the same breed, the laboratory would identify all of them as being of the same breed. Color alone would not be sufficient enough to separate them into different breeds and their DNA would identify only a color variation.

There are many existing breeds that have not been recognized by the AKC. Some are referred to as "rare breeds". These are the breeds that have varying degrees of history and development. They are not the same as those which have occurred by cross breeding to produce mongrels or "pseudo" breeds. A good example of the latter is the "Labradoodle" which was nothing more than a crossbred or mongrel. The puppies produced from these breedings reflected all of the variations known to both breeds. The Labradoodle which began as a legitimate experiment to produce a hypoallergenic service dog for the blind was abandoned after it

failed to consistently produce the desired results. Those who pursue these fads and continue to cross breed only puzzle the public and leave the legitimate breeders frustrated along with the unsuspecting puppy buyers. Those who call these breedings by their "pseudo" names such as "Labradoodle" or "Cocka-Poo", etc. only give credence to the breeders who cross breed to produce mongrels.

RECOGNITION

When breeders attempt to create a new breed, one of the concerns must be recognition by a legitimate registry. Some of the popular routes that these breeders have taken were to seek an organization outside the United States which might recognize their dogs as a different or new breed. For example, the breeders of the white Doberman and white German Shepherd Dog have both looked to the Federation Cynologique International (FCI) for help. Unfortunately, there are many misunderstandings about the FCI and their role in the development of new breeds. What gives many breeders a false sense of security is their lack of understanding about FCI. This is a world organization which functions outside the United States. It serves as an umbrella for other countries to host shows. It is not a stud book and it does not approve new breeds or breed standards. Recognition of a breed by the FCI begins with a member country whose stud book and breed club intends to use their own standard when hosting an event. Rarely does the FCI hold a show of its own. While many national kennel clubs throughout the world host shows under the rules and auspices of the FCI, they pay a portion of their entry fee to FCI. For a variety of reasons, not all countries belong to the FCI. The American Kennel Club, the Kennel Club (England), Canada and a few others are not members of the FCI but have working agreements in place so that their judges can judge throughout the world. The FCI recognizes the AKC as the only stud book in United States and they have agreed not to hold shows in the United States.

Under FCI rules, the breed standards used at their shows are determined by the registry in the country of origin. For example, all FCI shows use the German standard for the German Shepherd Dog, the Japanese standard for the Akita, the French standard for the Papillon, etc. While AKC is not a member, the standard used for Boston Terriers and for American Cocker is the AKC standard and it is used whether the show is in Japan, Argentina, France or wherever.

THE FOUNDATION STOCK SERVICE (FSS)

Legitimate breeds in the United States must eventually become an AKC-recognized breed. As the world's largest and most prestigious stud book, the AKC is recognized as the authority for purebred dogs. Most of the breeds recognized by the AKC were established in some other country. But regardless of origin, when a new breed seeks recognition, the process begins by enrolling the breed in a program the AKC calls the Foundation Stock Service (FSS). The process starts when a written request is received from a breed club requesting that their breed be listed as an FSS breed. Their request must include:

1. An AKC designed questionnaire giving details of the breed, its registry, etc.
2. A sample of all registry documents: registration certificates, pedigrees, etc.
3. An official written history documenting many decades as a distinct breed.
4. An official breed standard.
5. A selection of photographs epitomizing breed type.

This information is then presented to the AKC Executive Committee for a decision to allow or deny the request. The second step of entry into the Miscellaneous Class usually takes several years. By the time a breed is ready for the Miscellaneous Class, it should have established three major milestones. (1) A national breed club with a minimum of 100 active household members located in at least 20 states in the United States. (2) A list of the current officers and members, the current breed standard and the club's constitution and by-laws. (3) A minimum of 300 to 400 dogs, with complete 3-generation pedigrees in this country.

Breed observations are then scheduled by AKC Executive Field Staff. When these criteria have been met, the results are presented to the Board of Directors of the American Kennel Club for approval into the Miscellaneous Class. Breeds usually remain in the Miscellaneous Class for one to three years, sometimes longer. At the end of the first year there is another evaluation which requires that the national breed club update information about club matters, officers, directors, etc. to the AKC. When all the criteria have been met, the updated information is presented to the Board of Directors of The American Kennel Club for the final decision which moves the breed from the Miscellaneous Class to regular breed status and competition.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Two conclusions can be drawn from this discussion. The first is that cross bred dogs should always be known for what they are - mongrels or mixed breeds. When breeders refer to them by their pseudo name i.e., "Labradoodle, or Cocka-Poo", they legitimize the efforts of the mongrel breeders and encourage them to create markets for their puppies. The second is that the history of breed de-

velopment is filled with failure and disappointment. Creating a new breed is not for the timid or those lacking in time, resources and adequate kennel space. The more than 160 AKC-recognized breeds each took decades to develop. It is folly for breeders to think they can create, in a few years, what it took others a lifetime to accomplish. For these reasons, creating a new breed should be left to those with the necessary skills, time, resources and determination.

REFERENCE:

Barber, Tina M, and Kennedy, Cinnamon, *The Shiloh Shepherd Story*, Mid Atlantic Highlands, Huntington, West Virginia, 2006.

Battaglia, C. L. - *Breeding Better Dogs*, BEI Publications, Atlanta, GA 1986

Bell, Jerold S. "Choosing Wisely", *AKC Gazette*, August 2000, Vol. 117, Number 8, p-51.

Bell, Jerold, S. "Developing Healthy Breeding programs", *Canine Health Conformance*, AKC Canine Health Foundation, Oct. 15-17, 1999. St. Louis MO.

Brackett, Lloyd, C. "Planned Breeding", *Dog World Magazine*, Chicago, Illinois, 1961.

Carlton, Bronwyn and Alger, Bill, "Bow-Wow", *AKC Family Dog*, New York, New York, March/April 2006, pg 11.

Keller, Greg, "The use of health databases and selective breeding, a guide for dog and cat breeders and owners". Orthopedic Foundation for Animals Inc, 2300 Nifong Blvd, Columbia Missouri 2003.

Willis, Malcomb, "Breeding Dogs" *Canine Health Conference*, AKC Canine health Conference, Oct. 15-17, 1999. St. Louis, MO.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carmen L. Battaglia holds a Ph.D. and Masters Degree from Florida State University. He is an author of many articles and several books, an AKC judge, researcher, well known lecturer and leader in the promotion of breeding better dogs. Go to www.breedingbetterdogs.com