

by Roger Hild

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Pure breeds, mixed breeds, new breeds, no breeds. How `bout spay, neuter, euth or cull? Over the past few days all the afore mentioned topics have been discussed in one-way or another and it is my contention that perhaps they are connected in more ways than is first apparent. The purpose of this piece is not to offend anyone but to offer some alternatives for consideration - but in expressing an alternative point of view, offence can sometimes be taken - a possibility for which I'll apologize now.

Over the past few years I've listened to many breeders lament the continued presence of "puppy mills," of the decline in good quality specimens of their chosen breed and the growing popularity of `designer cross-breeds.' All the while we (I include myself because I'm also a breeder), dig the hole we have created, deeper and deeper. Two forces against which we always run up, the AR movement and commercial breeding farms/mills understand some things far better than we do: Market forces and the emotional basis on which decisions are generally made.

When one looks at the history of pure breed dogs it's not long before discovering the purpose for which the breed was developed. The work and dedication that went into developing the breed (often one's life's work). Selective breeding produced the breeds and while we may recognize the concept, I fear we don't really appreciate the reality of selection. Selection also has to include the practice of culling.

Some have suggested education will stop the proliferation of mix breeds and puppy mills but such a position doesn't recognize the reality of market forces and opportunity. In a multitude of ways we have restricted the access to good, sound pure-bred dogs and we have sometimes foolishly decimated the gene pool. We have decided a reputable breeder only has X number of puppies per year and anyone wanting a puppy from a reputable breeder should be willing to wait for any number of years. We don't seem to realize this demand will be met and our own narrow-mindedness fuels the market; for in our society we all have the right to spend our money as we please - and we don't have to wait for years if we choose not to. We promote form over function at our `all breed beauty pageants' and in the process; we earn for our dogs the reputation of "brainless beauties." We try to protect our beloved breed with breed registries and non-breeding contracts and we see a proliferation of "with-out-paper-dogs." Some enterprising folks really capitalized on the whole thing and gave fancy names to the newest generation of mongrels - say what you will but labradoodles, schnoodles, cock-a-poos etc. are all mongrels and there is not the dedication or commitment behind them to ever develop a new breed that consistently breeds true and meets all the tests those who have gone before us have had to meet.

We have bought into the speuter (spay/neuter) myths and the only benefactors of that practice has been those performing the surgeries. Mass desexing does not prevent the unplanned pregnancies (it may stop a few unplanned breedings). It does however, perform one form of culling in that it permanently removes some potentially very good specimens permanently from the gene pool. Unwanted breedings are just as easily controlled by training and good management. If someone were dealing with a "good breeder," encouraging the new owner to keep an animal intact until it reached maturity and then assessing it for possible contributions back to the breed BEFORE SEXUALLY CULLING it makes some sense. Realize that what is happening now is very nearly the opposite of selective breeding. The future of our breeds often rests on the selection of one puppy from a litter while the rest are sold off and effectively culled - what if we selected the wrong puppy?

Meantime, while we are slowly killing off our breeds the "millers" are happily taking up the slack and filling the void (something the AR crowd hadn't completely planned for).

Anyway an alternative viewpoint - cogitate on it.

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