

An Update on Our Breeding Program & Goals

The puppies we produce are the end result of planning and experimenting in hopes of achieving specific goals. There is no set recipe for adding one bloodline to another, or combining one individual with another to create the ideal end product. As a breeder, researching bloodline crosses and studying the resulting progeny, I look for trends across a group of offspring; for traits that show up repeatedly. I am lucky in that Sherry is a prepotent male, and my girls reliably pass particular traits. Together, they are building a foundation for my future generations.

Breeders have different ideals and areas they wish to focus on. The goal for all of us is presumably, an improvement in the next generation, maybe in a particular area, or an attempt at re-producing superior traits from two parents.

My Breeding goals have developed and become more succinct over time. I still endeavor to produce the characteristics I originally listed on Our Philosophy page:

The most important characteristics I want in a dog are a steady temperament, intelligence, and trainability. I want to produce dogs with the ability to work. I want dogs with the ability to THINK and move. I want to produce dogs that make steadfast and loyal family dogs, who will be loved for their whole lives.

This is not to say I have no care for conformation, because what I have learned from my experience in horses, is that the ability for parts to function follows form... meaning, good conformation leads to good movement. So, I want a dog with conformation that will be a good foundation for the dog to be able to perform in movement....

In addition to those characteristics, the specific genetic ability I am striving to maintain, and perpetuate has come into sharper focus and become increasingly important to me. I appreciate a beautiful dog, a fluid, charismatic mover, and a dog with impressive courage and determination in protection work, as much as every other spectator in dog sport or at conformation shows. But, for me, Herding ability – what my (human) Shepherd friends irreverently term “THE Genetic” is paramount. Perhaps because for many breeders, Herding ability is not even on the list of traits to consider, I feel particularly compelled to preserve it in my dogs.

As I have worked my trained, titled adults on stock, and started their progeny with Boundary work, The Genetic has emerged as a tangible quality. The inherent ability can not be taught; it is either THERE or it is not. It can be fostered, brought along, developed, but it can not be created. This natural ability is so impressive to me, so important. The combination of this ability with some basic guidelines and commands, forms a basis for a working partnership between the dog and myself. I enjoy watching the dogs make decisions, think things through, and work independently.

I love being out in the field with a flock of contentedly grazing sheep and a happily, proudly working dog. My dogs seem to come alive when they work sheep; they smile and a joyous confidence and pride shines through.

I still believe that you can't pursue one trait so fervently that you forsake all others. But, I no longer feel apologetic about my passion for preserving Herding Ability; I do not feel compelled to narrow my focus to center on the qualities needed for the type of work/sport that is most in demand.

I also recognize that in some cases, my quest for preserving Herding ability, or for combining two well established Herding lines in a breeding pairing may result in "more dog" than some families will find comfortable. One breeding I am (Excitedly!) planning will combine a beautiful bitch with excellent, strong Herding genetic and a male with exceptional Herding ability of his own. He is a very strong male, very capable with a large flock of sheep. The male combines old Herding blood as well as old Working lines. I expect the progeny will be quite lively and talented... and also not for everyone!

We will also do some breedings that should produce a more Golden Middle dog. . I know my dogs' Herding ability comes through in their progeny. In some cases, I might breed to maintain the Herding ability and improve conformation, or to maintain a balanced and lovely character.

Our dogs have always been our family pets, and we will still produce dogs who will make excellent family companions. As always, we will recommend particular litters for particular needs.

We hope to develop more interest in Herding and to help develop HGH as a more accessible venue to achieve SV sanctioned titles in the USA. We encourage Herding enthusiasts – folks interested in actual farm work and /or in trialing – to inquire about our breedings expected to produce excellent prospects.

Breeding Untitled dogs???

I believe in the SV system of breeding titled dogs. I agree that breeding dogs should be proven in work. Our typical plan for a breeding candidate is for that animal to achieve show ratings, hip/elbow certification, title, and ultimately complete the breed survey.

However, I am also committed to training my dogs myself. The choice not to send a dog away for training and the choice to train the dog for HGH – with limited access to trials at this time – means that it is slow progress for me to title my young stock. I generally have 2 dogs in serious training at a time. I might "dabble" and start another, but I am only able to focus on 2 at a time. I do not breed a bitch in the midst of training for her title. Meanwhile, other youngsters are idle as they "wait their turn". In such cases, if the bitch has turned 2, achieved an SG show rating, has certified hips/elbows and is slated to join our breeding program, I will likely breed her untitled, and put her into training later, when I am ready for her. If I have kept the dog to this point, I am already pretty certain the dog has the capacity to do the work and earn a title.

This practice also enables me to see that a bitch can GET pregnant and what she produces, before I invest time in her training.

I did two trial breedings with untitled females/ a titled male in 2009. We had two truly excellent litters from those young girls. Amy Blauen Bergen's progeny went to their first shows and earned VP1, VP2 and at another show VP2, VP3. Charlotte's puppies were too young to show until shows had finished for the year, but they are fearless, smart, very outgoing and balanced puppies with a bright future.

When we do a breeding with an untitled dog, we always note this in our litter information – both on our website and verbally at in person interviews.

As 2009 comes to an end and I plan goals for 2010 and beyond, I am looking forward to working with my dogs, watching our youngsters develop, once again expanding my flock of sheep, and welcoming our next puppies into the world!