

## *The Stud Dog*

The stud dog's role in any breeding programme is of vital importance and is too often ignored with sad consequences for the breed. The stud dog should always be an exceptional specimen in every way and should be handled and managed accordingly from the first moment that his potential becomes obvious.

This management would not only include monitoring his health and fitness and show career, but would also include investigation into any known hereditary diseases within the breed. As far as the Bullmastiff is concerned hip and elbow dysplasia and eye disorder clearances are essential, and I recommend temperament testing as well. These tests should be done prior to any stud duties. If any of these components are found to be undesirable then the owners of bitches scheduled for potential matings should be given the option to decide if they want to incorporate such faults into their lines.

If the owner of the stud dog is unable to supply documentary proof of such testing, but is highly vocal about the qualities of his/her top stud dog, as has happened here in South Africa, then again the owners of the bitches will have to decide if they trust the stud dog owner or not. It must be remembered that whatever decision is made, the responsibility is lifelong and it will affect the well being of the breed.

The majority of responsible breeders in South Africa are now having their dogs x-rayed and graded for hip and elbow dysplasia. Very few are concentrating on the eyes, and even fewer are testing for temperament.

Breeders are advised to take their time to evaluate a stud dog, as indeed the stud owner should also do to their bitch, and to base their subsequent actions on concrete facts as opposed to just rushing off to the cheapest easiest option. This is what is referred to in dog circles as a random mating, and for all that it is worth to the breed, could just as well be the dog on the street corner.

### *The first mating*

Prior to the stud dog's first mating and as part of his upbringing, there should have been exposure to "the birds and the bees of dogdom". A dog maintained in isolation for his formative months or years and then presented to a bitch for mating may well have no idea what to do.

Assuming that this is not the case and the dog is quite willing and able to perform the task required of him, then the owner of the sire and dam should have come to an arrangement prior to the occasion as to what the required conditions for the mating are and to the amount of stud fee payable.

Normally the bitch is brought to the dog that can be utilized, from approximately eighteen months of age for a first mating. Thereafter it is advisable to allow the dog to mature, after which he can be used on a regular basis providing he is maintained correctly. Veteran studs can also be used providing they have received a sperm analysis clearance test. This would indicate their fertility level that does start to decline with age.

For an unproven stud the first fee is sometimes waived or reduced or requested only if offspring are produced. Thereafter a set arranged fee could be asked. In South Africa at present the current trend is the price of a puppy providing the litter is substantial. A point to remember is that the payment of a stud fee is actually for the services rendered by the stud dog and should not refer to conception or the amount of puppies whelped. However the arrangement can vary between the conventional and the unconventional just

so long as the two parties agree. If there is any uncertainty, then a written contract is the best arrangement.

It is the male that determines the sex of the offspring and his sperm can live in a healthy vaginal tract for approximately five to six days. The bitch determines the number of puppies conceived by the number of eggs produced and subsequently fertilised. Both parents contribute 39 chromosomes each which contain the genes which determine the outcome in respect of coat and eye colour, personality traits, shape, size and so on. These 78 chromosomes are what are referred to as the genetic blue print of a breed. Some of these genes are recessive and some are dominant.

### ***The ideal stud register***

Way back in the late 1940's, the Germans began the concept of the ideal stud register with the German Shepherd Dog in mind. Their aim was to present a "picture" of the stud dog. The system was divided into four categories, namely A for Type, B for Appearance, C for Conformation and D for Temperament. There was an appropriate scoring system and this was then entered on the dog's pedigree. At a glance the whole vision of the dog was there.<sup>4</sup>

To administer, a monumental task in itself, and to maintain such a register, absolute honesty and integrity is necessary or the concept will fail before it begins, as happened with the German effort. But dreams and fantasies are part of our lives and I dream of a register for Bullmastiffs with the following:

- Full registered name of stud dog
- Common or call name
- Sex
- KUSA registration number
- Identification tattoo or microchip
- Championship status
- Qualifications eg: APT HD 0:0 ED 0:0 Eyes clear, CBA
- Height
- Weight
- Date of birth
- Place of birth eg: Cape Town, South Africa
- Coat colour eg: Red / Brindle
- Eye colour
- Health status/ record including known problem areas eg: Gastropexy 1998  
(Indicative of a history of gastric torsion in the line)
- Record of temperament &/or testing &/or incidents e.g. CBA / DMA /APT.
- Bite eg: level
- Any known defects eg: Broken canine
- Colour photo from both front and side view
- Breeder
- Owner
- A five-generation recording of antecedents including the sire and dam with all the above -mentioned items. (This should enable a meaningful evaluation of the dog and or its line and not just be a string of names with the word Champion occasionally present in front of a name)

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<sup>4</sup> Flieg, Dr D. *The Technique of breeding better dogs*, p 31

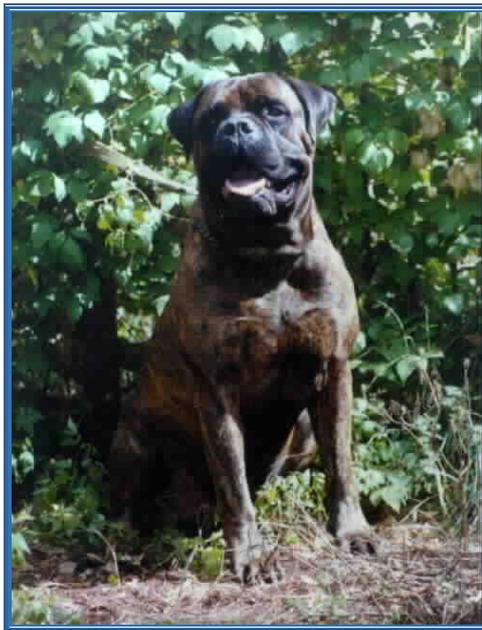
Stud duties performed eg: bitches particulars, number of matings, AI or natural mating

Number of puppies born/ survived / euthanased and quality of puppies as assessed by an external body at six weeks of age

Clearance of the offspring eg: if the dam had hip dysplasia and breeding restrictions were placed on the offspring

Line breed / in breed or outcross.

To conclude on the stud dog, all breeders should take cognisance of the fact that the top winning dog in the show ring and / or the national stud dog are not necessarily the right dog for their bitch.



BISS Ch Sondu Casca HD 0:1  
South Africa's first Top Stud Dog



Ch & Int Ch Don Amigo Pasco of  
Beautybull HD B1 B2 ED 1:1  
South Africa's present Top Stud Dog

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