

# *FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION*

*By Stephanie S. Hedgepath*

## TEMPERAMENT, PERSONALITY AND SOUNDNESS

What is the one thing that is difficult to assess in the dog show ring? The heart of the dog. I'm not talking the physical heart, but the mental "heart" - the willingness to do what it takes to get the job done. In race horses it means the drive to run and beat all others to the finish line. In a dog, it is the mindset to keep going until the dog simply cannot take another step.

The fact is that many dogs that are not very well-structured can still perform the duties for which they were developed. These dogs actually out-perform their structure due to their strong work ethic (temperament) and will continue to work until they physically break down. The well-structured dog that also has the drive to accomplish tasks set by his master will be able to work far longer than his less well put together brethren and suffer much less damage to his body. A dog that lacks correct angulation in both front and rear but is balanced in this lack of angulation, may well be exhausted at the end of the day because he had to take far more steps than a well angled dog of the same

breed. But he will live to work another day - whereas the dog that is unbalanced with an upright shoulder assembly but with a well angled hindquarter, will eventually break down in the front and no longer be able to work.

We are all aware of the results of Nobel laureate Ivan Pavlov's research program designed to identify the basic types of canine temperament in 1906. "Despite this auspicious start, the study of temperament and personality in animals did not evolve into a major area of research except, of course, in humans. Yet, pet owners and practitioners working with dogs have long recognized that temperament is important. It influences an individual's behavior and responses to the environment. Groups interested in temperament have ranged from private dog owners and dogs breeders to professional animal handlers and animal-research scientists; they have been consumed with such practical issues as matching dogs to appropriate homes and with understanding basic theoretical issues in animal behavior."<sup>1</sup>



From Pavlov to Clarence Pfaffenberger's 1963 classic, "The New Knowledge of Dog Behavior, The landmark work that established the science of puppy temperament testing and socialization". Is it heredity or environment that shapes the dog? Researchers J.P. Scott and John L. Fuller, authors of *Genetics and Social Behavior of the Dog*, bred and cross-bred dogs in their quest to understand human heredity and behavior. Their research yielded a gold mine of data that Pfaffenberger turned into practical information for dog breeders and trainers. Learn about the critical stages of puppy development, how breed differences make dogs suitable for specialized work, and how to breed and socialize temperamentally sound dogs. Reprint of a 1963 classic. Today's experts recommend "The New Knowledge of Dog Behavior." Every time I hear someone talking about dogs as being hard wired for behavior; or self-centered, food-seeking gluttons, eager to be manipulated with a tidbit or click, I get out my copy of this book and my faith in dog and man is rejuvenated."2

From these two researchers until today, the information on dog behavior has blossomed into a new industry of its own and even to "veterinarian behaviorists" who specialize in correcting the errant behavior of dogs. Just what is meant by temperament? In its most basic

sense, it is the mental (and physical) reaction to a stimulus. It is difficult to separate temperament from personality in the canine. In humans, temperament is defined as the basic, biologically inherited tendencies of an individual whereas personality is described as the result of the interaction between the temperament and the environment. In the canine, these are wrapped up into one word - temperament!

Canines have what is called a 'pack mentality' having been domesticated from the wolf. This pack order or pack hierarchy consists of the alpha dogs, the middle of the road type of dogs and the submissive dogs. This hierarchy is ingrained within each dog and cannot be changed. Understanding this pecking order is crucial to understanding the temperament of the individual dog.

From this basic pack mentality, each breed was developed for a specific function, whether it be finding birds or game, tracking man or animal, gathering and moving livestock, ridding the world of vermin, assisting man in his daily work from pulling a cart to protecting the home or business, or simply sitting in someone's lap offering love and support as only a dog can. So within the various groups you will find a wide range of differing personalities from breed to breed.

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In this day and age, very few dogs get to perform the tasks for which it was developed. Temperament should be a primary consideration when planning a breeding. We must try to produce biddable dogs that can fit into just about any situation and be reliable enough to go out into public without the owner having difficulty controlling the dog. It does not matter what the breed of dog is - it must be able to fit into modern society! As breeders, we must make sure that our pups are handled and socialized from the moment of birth. If we breed for good temperament, regardless of the breed, then our pups can go anywhere with anyone and live a long, happy life. This doesn't mean that we breed out the essence of the breed, a guard dog should be willing and able to guard and the terrier should be able to eradicate rats, but they must be educated on proper public behavior, as well. By understanding your dog's



personality as well as his energy level (is he high drive or does she want to live in the house and become a piece of furniture and loll around all day?) you will be able to recommend the appropriate amount of exercise individuals will need to maintain a balance in energy. By doing all of this, you will be able to choose the correct home for each puppy. In this day of the fabulous "Puppy Culture" way of doing things, every pup can be equipped to take their rightful place in society. It is up to the breeder to give them the best start they can in the right direction. We should also encourage them to attend Star Puppy classes and add a CGC behind the pup's name. If you want to go even further, a dog can be tested and pass the AKC Temperament Test.





I know when I started breeding Pembroke Welsh Corgis, I found that many of them were sharp in temperament with other dogs and that running them together as a pack wasn't a good idea. It seemed they ALL wanted to be alphas! Forty five years later, all of my dogs enjoy each other's company and get along very well. I did learn rather quickly that my short legged dogs were not like my German Shepherd Dogs. All the shepherds wanted to do was please me, "What can I do for you now?" kind of attitude. The Pembrokes, on the other hand, would often give me a number and indicate they would get back to me when they had completed what they were doing at the moment. Scootie Sherlock, of Caralon German Shepherds and Pembroke Welsh Corgi

fame, summed it up by saying, "Sometimes, Pemmies simply have 'other fish to fry'."

The moral of the story here is that you can cover up a bad temperament in the show ring, but should you? A judge has little recourse to take action other than dismissing a dog they cannot physically examine or disqualify the dog in a situation where the dog actually tries to attack the judge. As far as I am concerned, temperament should be the number one priority for every breeder of every breed. Because without a good temperament, how can a dog be a good pet for anyone much less a good show dog?