

TYPE

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Over heard at a specialty show: "That's what I don't like about specialty judges, they only put up type." The fact that the remark was made didn't upset me too much as over a period of time I've heard that remark made many times by the novice fancier, what prompts this article is the fact that the remark was made by a supposed breeder of Saints!

Type as it relates to purebred dogs is that conformity which makes the breed separate and distinct from other breeds. ("...The characteristic qualities distinguishing the embodiment of a standard's essentials"...AKC Complete Dog Book.) When we speak of conformation we ARE speaking of type---conformation to the standards as set forth in the Official Standard of the Saint Bernard as filed with the American Kennel Club. The Standard is not only printed so you can READ IT, but so you can SEE what the properly conformed Saint should look like---and the Standard examples show TYPE.

This article will not be concerned with the old and tired harangue of "well, isn't movement more important..." Proper movement (as seen by many to mean soundness) is consistent with proper type by consistent is of SOUND AND TYPEY stock in breeding programs and the argument of TYPE OR SOUNDNESS is not valid.

Now where does this "type" come from and how do you maintain it? It can be stated unequivocally that type comes from smooth stock. Roughts hold size and bone the best, while the smooths appear to hold type... (How to Raise and Train a St. Bernard, L.P. Buell). In discussing type in the New Complete Saint Bernard (1966)"...all of those which are of outstanding character and quality had a considerable amount of smooth blood in their immediate pedigrees. This is a very important factor in the continued breeding of the correct-type Saint Bernard and has been recognized as a primary law of breeding by the noted authorities of Switzerland and Germany for many, many years....The continued breeding of rough to rough dogs results in a gradual degeneration of type...the fact that type is lost so rapidly by continual breeding of only the rough coated dogs without any refreshment by the smooth individuals is not fully understood, but it is a proven fact...regardless of how carefully the selection of progeny is made, this loss of type does occur."

It is obvious from observation at dog shows that what many "breeders" are doing is breeding roughs to roughs for several generations and the product they are getting does not look like anything but the faulty specimens illustrated in the Standard. Most of these breeders are getting tall (leggy) silky-haired, long-nosed, fine boned animals that some what resembles a Saint Bernard, but no stretch of the imagination can they be compared to the illustrations of the Standard "typey" Saint.

And we are saturated with this kind of dog, not only as pet products, but they are appearing more and more frequently at dog shows. What is so infuriating to dedicated fanciers is the fact that these dogs are being put up by uninformed judges. It seems as though most, if not all, new judges to the breed (excluding most specialty judges) think Saint Bernard--big (tall) and long haired and that's the extent of their knowledge. On the other hand, specialty judges are persons who have raised, shown and lived with Saints over a period of years, have studied and examined the Standard, and MOST of them know what a Standard Saint Bernard should look like, Isn't this why breeders of typey Saints will go out of their way to show under a specialty judge where you will see a fine gathering of dogs, while those who always have the big, hairy kind rush all over the country to the all-rounder who always puts up the biggest dog and where you are treated to the spectacle of mediocre and poor specimens of the breed. How many times have you seen all-rounders put up perhaps a smaller, typey, probably smooth dog over a big rough? Rarely, I'm afraid. And, let's face it, we all know that a rough puppy SELLS a lot faster to a novice than a smooth puppy, doesn't it? "Breeders" who only breed roughs maintain they are doing so to produce giant, mahogany-coated dogs, but isn't it just possible they know where the money is?

We all love a big beautiful typey rough, but we don't see many of them around anymore and the only way you are ever going to see any is if good smooth stock is introduced at least every other generation in a breeding program.

It is a common fallacy that many people confuse type with the kind of dog produced by a particular kennel. You should wake up to the fact that these kennels that produce type breed to maintain the qualities set out by the Standard--the Standard sets the type, not the breeder. The breeder who produces typey dogs should be commended and not condemned because he is the one you are going to have to go to sooner or later to retain type in your dogs, and your going to have to eat crow. As far as fan clubs for various kennels are concerned, it's the buyer that seeks the breeder, not vice-versa and the buyer who obtains a tried and true product goes back for more.

Any article attempting to define type must necessarily discourse on the HEAD. In the Saint Bernard more so than in other breeds, the head is THE most striking quality of the dog. Judges who seek out good heads should not be scorned as "head-hunters" as they have justification for doing so in the Standard. If the Standard did not mean for the head to be the most important feature of the Saint Bernard, why does it devote 15 paragraphs to the head? There is one paragraph each devoted to the neck, shoulders, chest, back, tail, feet, coat, color, and height, and 5 words to the hind quarters, 1 sentence to belly, 5 words to forearm, 2 words to forelegs, and 2 sentences to hindlegs. I can see no defense to the argument that the head is not "that" important.

In closing, I reiterate that the Standard states the type of the Saint Bernatrd, and should be read literally and not embellished with personal likes and dislikes.