

IS SIZE YOUR HANG UP?

BY: CHARRI KOBELT

A giant dog is one which is larger than nature meant the canine species to be. Man's stress on size in the selective breeding program which developed and typed the Saint Bernard has resulted in the production of Giants with the glandular characteristics of giantism. These by-products of the sought after size were certainly not planned by nature, but their manifestations must be recognized, and if desirable dogs are to result, intelligent steps must be taken in the right direction.

Recognize the limits nature has placed upon the species and respect them.

Some specimens of the giant breeds exhibit short life spans, with proneness to diabetes, heart conditions, and more than average distress from arthritis. This is yet another result of pushing the size factor beyond what was naturally evolved as the canine species. These warnings do not mean that size is in itself bad. These problems can be solved by not pushing nature's formula too far.

I believe a breeder loses all prospective when his ultimate goal is for size and size alone.

Are you aware that years ago when our breed became famous for his mountain rescue work that he was a smaller dog and more capable than our large impressive dogs of today? Try to visualize some of these large impressive dogs out on a rescue mission in the mountains, I wonder who would be the one in need of being rescued?

By no means am I trying to say we should try to breed dogs like those of yesteryear, our breed has improved in many ways over the years and we should continue to improve. When you look at a fine representative of our breed you don't see only size. It takes many years of breeding to obtain the goals a breeder has in producing a dog to meet our standard. By breeding for size and accomplishing this in a few generations (and I have seen this done) you are going to lose a great deal of type and desirable qualities that are going to take more than a few generations to breed back. The average Saint of today is larger than the desired shoulder height stated in the Standard (27.56 inches in the male and 25.59 in the female) many Saint fanciers interpret this part of the Standard much different than I do. If you have read the complete Standard you will notice that every paragraph is stated in a very positive manner, "it is", "is", "are", "is not", "must not", "is desirable", "are objectionable", "is not desirable" and etc., leaving you with no room for exception, except where stated. Where the height of should is given they use the words "ought to be". Now I would interpret this as meaning, it should be, but nowhere does it say, "it is desirable", etc. So if I see an excellent representative of our breed who is shorter than he "ought to be", I would accept this dog as being within our Standard -would you?

Do you know if a dog below the desired height can be disqualified from the conformation ring? Get out your Standard A.K.C. rules and regulations and read it before you answer this question too abruptly.

A sharp eye can measure more accurately than any yard stick!!!