
ASSESSING THE SHOW POINTER

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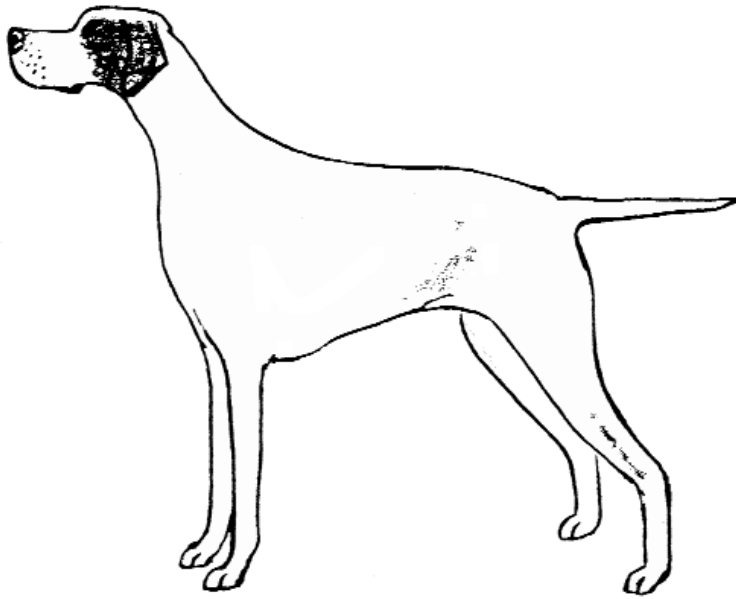
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Introduction

This paper is intended as a guide to assessing the show Pointer. It is not intended to be the only guide that can help assess a Pointer, nor is it any substitution for looking at, seeing, living with, and shooting over good Pointers.

It begins with an anatomical approach to history, followed by an interpretation of the standard and concludes with some general observations. The current American breed standard, (which is separately owned and copyrighted by the American Pointer Club, Inc.) is referenced in the Appendix. All parts need to be seen carefully and together, which of course, is exactly the same approach a

master student uses to begin to see the Pointer.



PART ONE

AN ANATOMICAL APPROACH TO HISTORY

The history of the Pointer, like many breeds, is a reasonably debatable topic. There are records of Pointers in England as far back as 1650. Some historians believe that the breed began in Spain and Portugal while others believe they started in Spain, Portugal, Eastern Europe, and the British Isles at the same time. Regardless of the location of origin, we know that Pointers and their predecessors were bred to other breeds to suit the needs of the day for hunting and to add certain qualities specific to the cover and game of the regions in which they lived.

If there is one thing we learn by reading the history of breeds it is that history is only as reliable as the people and the records on which it is based. Even in the 17th century, it wasn't always fashionable to admit that you had crossed your dog with another breed. Accordingly, we'll never know exactly where, when, and if pure Pointers evolved by reading history. But there is another way to help confirm the references to cross breedings of the past; that is, by using an *anatomical approach* to history. This simply means *looking very closely at the anatomy of the Pointers we see today to determine what went on in the past.*

Through history and anatomical evaluation we see that at least four breeds were instrumental in Pointer crosses: Greyhounds, Foxhounds, Bloodhounds, and Bull Terriers. Each of these were established breeds with unique qualities that the Pointer could use to do its job; our forefathers were trying to build a very special hunting dog.

Let's examine each cross and the way we see them manifest themselves in today's Pointers. Remember, there is good and bad in every cross.

GREYHOUNDS

Greyhounds were a popular breed used in England for coursing hare. As early as 1650, back when it was acceptable for Pointers to chase both fur and feather, sportsmen used Pointers to locate the hare and the Greyhound to chase and capture the hare. In the early seventeen-hundreds, the introduction of the flintlock gun changed things. Now they needed a dog with more

speed and agility to course a field, and the nose and concentration to find and point long enough for the birds to be flushed and shot. How convenient that the Greyhound was still in the kennel!

Many popular Pointer lines today show signs of these Greyhound crosses. The qualities of the greyhound were primarily introduced into Pointer blood to give the Pointer speed and agility. Today, we still see the associated long arched necks, strong underlines, graceful body lines, smooth shoulders, and extra elegance the Greyhound gave to the Pointer. Feet and coat texture can also show Greyhound influences. However, we also can see overly rounded croups, broken toplines, too strong of an arch over the loin, narrow or pointed muzzles, and an occasional Greyhound tail all of which are undesirable in the Pointer.

The most prevalent Greyhound fault seen in some very good Pointers today is what is best referred to informally as a “tilted pelvis.” This fault is often the cause, even in dogs with enough turn of stifle and width of thigh, of a Pointer not having enough dog behind the set of their tail. These dogs have the correct angulation but the whole assembly is glued on at an angle more common to bad greyhounds than good Pointers. In motion, these dogs simply cannot extend their hindquarters behind themselves far enough to appear balanced. It also seems to be a complex fault that is difficult to breed out.

The concentration and mental focus of a Greyhound can be seen in some Pointer temperaments as can the aloofness. When the Greyhound cross shows its most apparent negative qualities in one dog, we see a Pointer with an adequately deep but overly narrow lung cavity, too narrow a front, too pronounced a break in the topline, and a tilted pelvis. But when the cross offers its best qualities, we have an elegant athlete with the neck of a drake, strong feet with resilient pasterns, a short sleek coat, and the overall beauty of symmetrical parts that smoothly blend together in a package of aristocracy and athleticism.

BLOODHOUNDS

The Bloodhound has been around a long time. While there are reports of dogs with uncanny scenting ability as far back as the third century AD, many authorities believe the Bloodhound existed as a breed before the Christian Era. Obviously, Bloodhounds were crossed in for their scenting ability. Along with this ability came some specific physical and mental qualities. The Bloodhound’s underline is the opposite of the Greyhounds, that is, they don’t have much of one; it’s straight and has skirting. Pointers with round thick feet, straight underlines, and the excess tuck-up skin commonly referred to as “skirting” show classic Bloodhound traits. The worst examples have houndy heads, long ears, and a plodding rather than agile movement.

Yes, there is breed type in movement. Pointers with an abundance of scenthound blood move with their heads hung low and forward like a Bloodhound rather than high and proud like a dog in search of upland game birds. These dogs may even bark more, as opposed to the less vociferous Greyhound cross, and sometimes may even employ the classic scenthound baying sounds. If you arrive late at night on a first time visit to a Pointer breeder’s kennel and are awakened by baying in the morning, don’t bother venturing down to the dogs after breakfast for they will most

likely look as they sound. Scenthounds are also a bit more challenging to train for duties other than those for which they were bred. All is not bad, however, from this royal hound. In addition to superior olfactory senses, the Bloodhound offers a high degree of overall soundness, substance, and hardiness. Scenthounds are not only easier keepers than sighthounds, they are among the easiest keepers of all.

FOXHOUNDS

The Foxhound cross was in vogue up to the late 1800's and beyond. Advocates of such a cross were seeking the hardiness of the scenthound with more moderate looks than the Bloodhound. Some Foxhound characteristics are similar to Bloodhound characteristics; both are hardy, sound creatures with good noses and instincts. However, they are a far different breed, bred for a far different task, than a Pointer. While it may be easiest to look for negative scenthound characteristics in a Pointer's head, there are many apparent features inside and behind the head as well. For example, Foxhound characteristics include a lack of proper tuck-up and an overall different body shape. Foxhounds were also generous enough to donate their straighter shoulder, heavier and rounder bone and longer coat. Another telltale sign of too much Foxhound blood is the higher curved tail carriage with feathering on the tail.

The heads, of course, are very different as well with a Foxhound head having less sculpting, less definition, rounder, lower-set ears with too much ear fold, thicker ear leather and skin, and, of course, the absence of even a hint of a dish to help catch the upland scent. In a nutshell, the Foxhound is designed to hunt with his head down to catch the scent of game left on the ground and the Pointer is designed to hunt with his head up to catch the scent up field.

On the positive side of the Foxhound cross is general sturdiness, large lung capacity, and the deep ribs that hold their length well into the loin. And again, Foxhounds are easy keepers. By reading Pointer history and by looking at Pointers in America and England today, it is safe to assume that the Foxhound cross was one of the most prevalent, especially with American stock.

BULL TERRIER

The Bull Terrier cross was probably the least popular of the four major crosses. The intention was to breed the tenacity back in that may have been diluted by the hounds. The Bull Terrier's tenacity, intelligence, and outgoing personality is second to none. They also offer trainability, however, most of the physical characteristics do not compliment the modern Pointer. While these characteristics are not often seen in American show Pointers, some American field trial Pointers do exhibit the slanted eye, overt lack of stop and skull plane differentiation, and most obvious, the wide front. These traits can also be seen in a rare few of today's British field trial lines.

TRAIT TABLE

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
GREYHOUND	short sleek coats graceful body lines elegance speed agility long arched necks strong underline	overly rounded croup tilted pelvis excessive loin arch long curled tail overly narrow front narrow or pointed muzzle
BLOODHOUND	scenting ability easy keepers general soundness	straight underline tuck-up skirting long rounded ears plodding movement houndy heads
FOXHOUND	scenting ability easy keepers general soundness strong rib spring endurance	round bone plain heads long round ears straight underline tuck-up skirting rope shape tail high tail carriage stiff movement
BULL TERRIER	tenacity alertness	wide fronts barrel chest slanted eyes

SIGHTHOUND

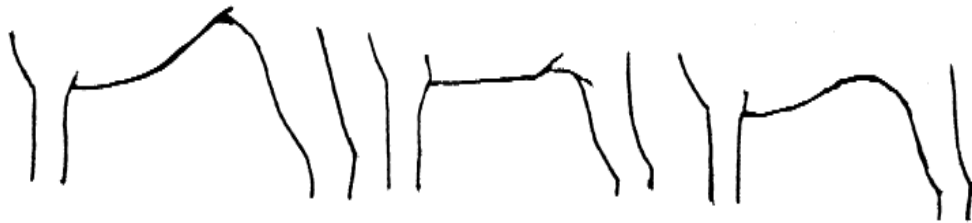
SCENTHOUND

POINTER

TAIL



UNDERLINE



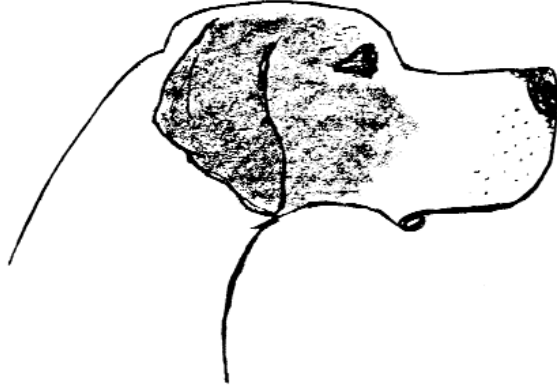
EARS



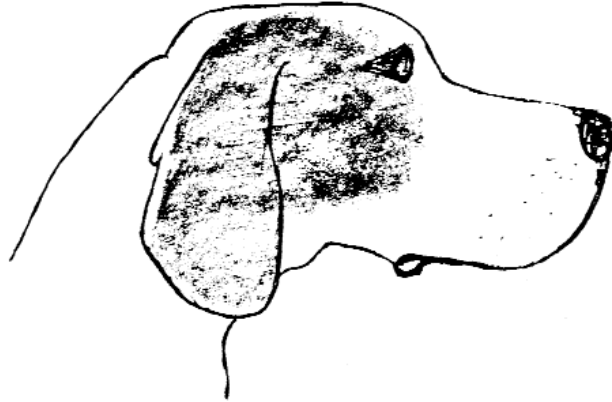
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HEAD

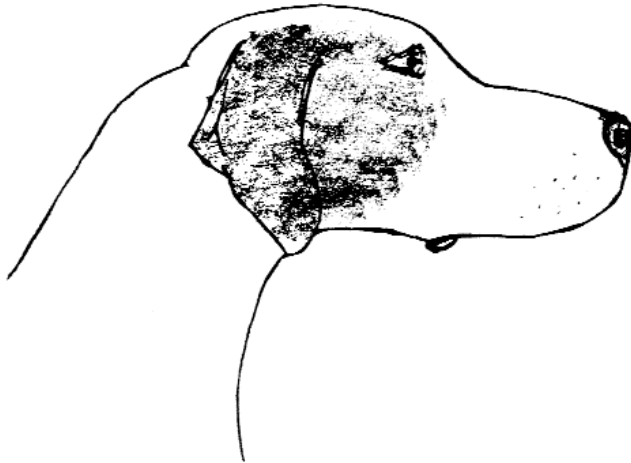
POINTER



SCENTHOUND



SIGHTHOUND



MC

Summary

It is interesting that while these crosses were mostly done over a hundred years ago, we can still see the results today. While it may not seem to matter as much for the future as to where and when the breed was developed, it does matter what breeds were used and what qualities were inherited when it comes to breeding. While it is more apparent in some individual dogs than others, every major line of Pointers in the world shows a tendency toward one of these crosses. Each cross offers good and bad making no Pointer better or worse for the effort *if and when* the best traits come in moderation. It is the extreme cases that become the inferior Pointers.

As is true in many purebred animals, Pointer breeders have always tended to breed within their general families; this very well could be the reason that the emphasis of these traits is still perpetuated and in some cases magnified. When separate breeds, or even separate breed types, are crossed the first generation rarely is blessed with only the positive combination of good traits. The drag of the race combined with the bad humor of the genetics takes care of that for us. Anyone who has bred a show Pointer to a field trial Pointer hoping to get beautiful breed type that hunts like an Elhew Pointer has found that out the hard way. Therefore, when breeders do attempt these crosses, they often abandon the results prematurely instead of working through the requisite number of generations of selection to attain their goal. This is particularly true in cultures, like ours, that are programmed to seek instant gratification.

Perhaps the future will see more Pointer families blend the best of all the best qualities together. A tall task? Of course. A long-term commitment? Absolutely. It was, though, probably the intention of our forefathers' experiments in the first place.

PART TWO

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE POINTER STANDARD

Introduction

The current breed standard for the Pointer is a clear and concise description of an aristocratic gundog. But if it so clear and concise, why is there such a type variance in the breed? The answer is simple: as is true with any standard, there is room for interpretation by the reader be they breeder or judge. The standard is merely a guide that serves to help us form a mental visualization of the breed it describes. It should be used in conjunction with living and moving examples, breeding experience, artwork and sculpture depicting the breed, a study of other breeds and even other mammalian species, and studies of the Pointer at work in the field. All of this takes time to assimilate in the student's mind. It is an ongoing process that, in the best of students, will continue for a lifetime. The mind may never grant us a perfect picture, but with time and study, the focus of the picture will continually sharpen.

The following is an interpretation of the standard. It is my interpretation and not the only interpretation. It is a functional interpretation in that it describes a hunter, and it is a comparative interpretation in that it pays special attention to the section of the standard that describes the undesirability of hound and terrier traits. The reason the standard mentions the undesirability of hound and terrier traits is both important and simple: Pointers with hound and terrier traits not only look like hounds and terriers, but they also may hunt like hounds and terriers. Anyone who quickly dismisses that particular mention in the standard may want to spend a hungry day hunting quail with a Foxhound or Bull Terrier. Overall though, this interpretation is meant to expand the words of our standard as an attempt to help the reader form that ever important mental picture of the Pointer.

The Head

General

The head of the Pointer is the hallmark of the breed. It is one of the most important distinguishing elements that sets the Pointer apart from its other breed cousins. But more important, there is as much functional value in the head as there is aesthetic value. In other words, I would take exception to those who say Pointers don't hunt on their heads.

To house all of its many parts, the Pointer head has extensive chiseling. For a sculptor to create the Pointer head, he would begin with a brick of clay and add an almost infinite number of smoothly blended surfaces to create the intense look and usefulness of a worker. The skull planes (that is, the top plane of the backskull and the top plane of the muzzle when viewed from the side) are slightly converging (on dished heads) or parallel. Many examples of the classic dished face can be seen in sporting art.. A true dished face is *not* simply a turned up nose. It is an impression caused by the muzzle being lower at the stop than at the tip of the nose. In theory, this is not a simple case of aesthetics; the elevated nose lets the dog work upland scents while keeping his eyes focused straight up field. A down-faced Pointer would be looking at the clouds if he were to use his nose into the wind; more likely though, a down-faced Pointer would possess other hound characteristics and would hunt like a hound with his nose cast to the ground. Parallel skull planes are also permissible according to the breed standard. When accompanied by enough stop, a furrow between the eyes, the proper ears, nose, and eyes, this configuration can also portray the look of a working, active, alert, Pointer.

Just as it is important that the Pointer's body pieces flow together smoothly, the same is true with the Pointer head. The head is a relatively small area filled with many important functional pieces and is best described in its blended and proportional sections: the backskull, the muzzle, and the sensory pieces (nose, eyes, and ears).

Backskull

The backskull would be the most elementary of head parts if it didn't house the brain, eyes, and ears. But it does. It also sets the tone for the rest of the head. If the backskull is short and fat, so goes the muzzle. If it is too lean, so goes the muzzle. The backskull must be in balance with the muzzle in both scope and width and length. It is of medium width approximately as wide as the length of the muzzle *resulting in an impression of length rather than width*. The stop is pronounced and cheeks cleanly chiseled. This is no place for a Boxer or Rottweiler backskull. This is a bird dog that needs sufficient length to carry a bird in its mouth.

Muzzle

The length of the muzzle should dictate the total length of the head and should be in proportion to the overall length and size of the dog; since the muzzle is used for carrying birds as large as pheasants and grouse, it must not be too short, even on the shortest of short-backed dogs. A short-muzzled Pointer, which unfortunately is seen more and more today, is better suited to carry sparrows. Also, a case can be made that Pointers with short muzzles and wide backskulls, even in properly dished-faced dogs, tend to have more bite problems. The muzzle is the same length as the backskull. It should be square rather than pointed and sufficient for housing a jaw ample

enough to carry game birds. There must be enough lip to give the Pointer a soft mouth so he doesn't damage retrieved game but not so much as to interfere. The classic finish to a Pointer head is a lip that when viewed in profile fills the end of the muzzle but returns and curves cleanly into the junction of the jaw. The Pointer's bite is even or scissored. A crooked, overshot, or undershot bite is undesirable in any breed that has to carry game and it also makes tasks like severing an umbilical cord and breaking a birth sack more difficult for brood bitches.

Nose

The Pointer's nose is the first junction between the world of bird scent and the brain. The nostrils must be large enough to take in as much scent as possible; small or restricted nostrils are highly undesirable in any upland bird dog. In the best of hunters, the nostrils show a tendency to flare, or spread open, when introduced to the wind. Even in the most hopeless conditions, the true Pointer nose is busy twitching and flaring in search of the scent of game.

Eyes

The eyes of a Pointer are the windows to the dog's true character. They are rounded, but not round, in shape and show no signs of drooping or looseness. Saggy Pointer eyes collect foreign objects, such as pollens and dust, when the head is held high into the wind. The eye should be as dark as the dog's particular pigment allows. The standard allows for a lighter eye on the less pigmented Pointer. For instance, a light lemon and white Pointer will not have as dark an eye as a black and white and must not be penalized. But a static description alone isn't all there is to the eye. In a Pointer with true character, the eyes are alert and show signs of an intelligent, eager, and clever worker.

Ears

The Pointer ear is another distinguishing mark of the breed. Don't be surprised to find that a Pointer with long, thick, rounded ears will often have a series of undesirable scent hound traits to accompany his ear leather; these traits tend to come in a package. The proper Pointer ear is short, thin, somewhat pointed, has very little fold, and is never rounded. How short should they be? The standard is clear: they reach just below the lower jaw when hanging naturally. That is *very* short. They are set on at eye level. Of course, when being used alertly, they will appear to sit much higher on the head. The ear leather should be thin enough to make the veins that circulate blood to them apparent. In observing the breed, it may be interesting to note the subtle differences in ear thickness between the different Pointer colors.

The Tail

William Arkwright wrote, "while the head is the hallmark of the breed, for the certificate of blue blood apply at the other end." Indeed, the use of the tail as an indicator of pedigree cannot be underestimated. The only problem is that the standard is not necessarily clear about the tail's exact shape and length. The best guide, therefore, is that a Pointer tail is unique to the Pointer and should never possess hound qualities. Perhaps the best interpretation of Arkwright's reference is that Pointers without the proper tail have more than their share of hound cross heritage.

The tail is an excellent indicator of intensity, physical balance, character, breed type, and pedigree. A tail should never be rope-shaped, fat and non-tapering, or carried with curl over the back because those are hound traits. Two terms related to Pointer tails that are *not* in the breed standard but are commonly referred to in many writings are *bee sting* and *pump handle*. The term *bee sting* connotes a short, straight tail that tapers to a point like the stinger of a bee. The term *pump handle* is a bit more complex. It refers to a tail that starts out straight, turns slightly and gently into the shape of well's pump handle, then tapers to a point. The standard does not actually use the word "straight" to describe the tail but it does say "carried without curl." Therefore, a pump handle must not be as exaggerated as to become a tail that curves upward over the back.

The standard calls for a tail with length no greater than the hock. Some may argue that to be a slight understatement for most properly tapered tails are at least several inches shy of the hock. While it is sometimes suggested that a Pointer tail cannot be too short (to distinguish it from a hound tail) a docked tail must be penalized. A tail so short to appear grossly out of balance with the rest of the vertebrae should also be faulted.

Again, a static description of the tail is not enough. The tail must also be viewed while the dog is moving. The standard states clearly that the tail must move from "side to side rhythmically with the pace" (let's assume they meant "gait" since we don't want a gundog to "pace"). It is interesting to note that a Pointer with a fat or rope shaped tail often will not exhibit the desirable side to side action on the move. A pointer tail comes off the back naturally as an extension of the spine. Since the croup falls slightly to the base of the tail, too flat of a croup or too high of a tail set is as incorrect as one set too low. It should not be carried more than 20 degrees above the level of the back. A tail that stands straight up, or straight out without action, or a tail that is carried curled over the back, shows an overabundance of outcrossed blood. It is important to note that tail action is an integral part of Pointer balance and rhythm in movement. I for one am tired of hearing about Pointers with perfect movement when they exhibit incorrect tail action: tail action is *intentionally* included in the *movement* portion of the standard as is head carriage.

The Neck

From the tip of the Pointer's nose, the neck is a continuance of the graceful series of curves that form the Pointer's outline. The neck not only serves to support the head, it is also the junction for the shoulders and is a connected part of the vertebrae that ends in the tapered tip of the tail. It must be long enough to allow the dog to pick up birds from the ground without contorting his front legs like a giraffe drinking from a stream. While this may seem to support the opinion that a Pointer's neck can never be too long, it must be in proportion with the rest of the vertebrae. A short-necked, long-backed dog is as unbalanced as a long-necked, short-backed dog; both combinations can be viewed in outline or side-gait.

The important arch of the neck allows the Pointer to bend to retrieve birds and is essential for the correct proud head carriage when moving. This arch and carriage keeps the Pointer working forward and quickly upland into the wind rather than working flat-necked with nose to the ground like a scenthound.

The Shoulders

The Pointer's shoulders are instrumental for efficient locomotion and endurance. When viewed from the top they are smooth and oblique; that is, they curve with the shape of the body without interrupting the transition from the neck into the body. If they are too close together on top, the dog will be too narrow in chest and too narrow in rib. If they meet too far apart, they are often lumpy, do not blend properly into the body, and may result in a wide but shallow chest and inefficient front action.

From the side, the shoulder blade and lower arm are the same length to form an ideal angle of 90 degrees. If either is shorter than the other, improper movement results. While perhaps a lot to ask for in any dog, the 90 degree angle allows the dog to reach properly with his front assembly while in motion. Straight terrier-like shoulders deny the extension and reach a bird dog needs to cover ground. Similarly, a short lower arm results in hackneyed gait and wasted motion. A dog with hackney or otherwise inefficient front action simply cannot endure in the field and will not do. Remember that as in horses, the majority of the Pointer's mass is supported by its front; that alone makes shoulders important.

The Body

The body of the Pointer houses the heart and lungs that form the collaborative engine of this noble hunter. Its basic skeletal elements are the vertebrae and the rib cage. As elemental as it may seem, they are the pieces that give the Pointer its basic outline and shape. Accordingly, the body shape contributes as much to correct breed type as the head and tail.

The topline of the Pointer is shaped by the spine. It is not perfectly flat or straight because it is an extension of the string of vertebrae that starts at the neck and ends at the tip of the tail. The topline should be mostly level though, never exaggerated or overly sloped and should have only a slight rise from the croup to the top of the shoulders. It starts smoothly as the arched neck curves back over the shoulders, is fairly flat over the body cavity that supports the ribs, arches slightly to give strength over the loins, then falls off slightly at the croup into the tail. Entirely flat croups may look fashionable to the novice eye, but they are incorrect and contribute to inefficient locomotion and carriage.

The strongest topline has the most subtle curves from head to tail. Any exaggeration, such as a sag over the body cavity, too much arch over the loin, or a short steep croup, destroy the outline and weaken the balance and efficiency of this hard working hunter. While a steeply sloped topline may also seem pleasing to the novice eye, it is a sign of imbalance caused by straight shoulders, overturned stifles, or a short steep croup. Short steep croups prevent proper extension of the Pointer's hindquarters and destroy the portrayal of strength in the outline. The same is true for a similar fault, the tilted pelvis. This fault is often the cause, even in dogs with enough turn of stifle and width of thigh, of a Pointer not having enough dog behind the set of their tail.

In viewing the rib shape of a Pointer consider their function as a cavity for the lungs. They must provide enough space in which the lungs can properly expand and contract without being so wide as to diminish efficiency and speed. Another important element of the rib assembly is length of the last ribs, that is, the ribs closest to the loin. If the back ribs are too long the body may have a straight underline. If they are too short, the underline may be exaggerated and the lung area will be lessened. Don't forget to view the Pointer body from the top as well as from the side.

The underline is another of the body's indicators for Pointer type. The proper underline, with sufficient tuckup, contributes to the graceful series of curves that defines the ideal Pointer. It is not uncommon to find associated scenthound traits on exhibits with straight underlines. (These exhibits may also have a 'skirt' or excess of skin in the area where the tuckup should be.) Conversely, exhibits with an exaggerated tuckup often have narrow fronts and exaggerated sighthound toplines. While the tuckup must be apparent, it must also be in proportion to the dog as a whole.

Feet and Legs

The legs and feet of the Pointer support the athletic body of a hunter. The bone is oval, never rounded, and is of a dimension in proportion to the overall substance of the dog. Bone that is too fine is too fragile for endurance. Bone that is too thick is too heavy for speed and agility. As with any of other parts of the Pointer, the shape of the legs and feet are indicators of heritage. Large round bone with large round feet and thick pads are scenthound traits. Thin bone and exaggerated hare feet are indicative of a preponderance of sighthound heritage.

The Pointer's front legs are straight, not turned in or out and have sloping resilient pasterns. Proper pasterns cushion the impact transmitted from the foot into the legs when running. Short straight terrier-like pasterns carry the shock into the leg causing a weakened action and increasing the possibility of injury. Pasterns with too much slope cause a broken-down action that creates an inordinate redistribution of stress. The Pointer's rear legs are parallel when viewed from the rear and have short straight hocks to anchor the power of well-made hindquarters.

Front

When viewed head-on, the breadth of a Pointer's front falls somewhere between a substantial scenthound and a streamlined sighthound; to hunt upland game, they need to be faster than a scenthound but more thorough than a sighthound. When viewed from the side, the forechest should reach just to the point of the elbow. A chest deeper than this, or an exaggerated forechest, is an encumbrance to a sporting dog. A shallow chest that does not reach the elbows, or an inverted or pinched front, also leaves locomotion and lung capacity at a weakened disadvantage.

Hindquarters

The hindquarters propel the Pointer through terrain ranging from open grasses to heavy underbrush. Without a powerful push, the lungs and heart are as useless as a speed boat without a motor. Part of the power from the hindquarters comes from its balance with the rest of the dog. In perfect examples, the angulation behind matches a perfect 90 degree shoulder. But in cases where the shoulder is not a perfect 90 degrees, it is better for the rear angles to match than to not match; sporting dogs derive a great deal of strength from balance and harmony of parts. It is not only a proper turn of stifle that makes good rear quarters. The hocks are short, strong, and parallel and there must be ample muscle in the thigh when viewed from both the rear and the side. The entire assembly must be hung from a strong croup and not stuck under the dog's body. A tucked-under hindquarter, or tilted pelvis, is only advantageous to racers (sighthounds) which have more arch over the loin to support such a configuration for sprinting. These dogs may have the correct angulation but the whole assembly is glued on at an angle more common to bad greyhounds than good pointers. They simply do not have enough dog behind their tail set. In motion, these dogs cannot extend their hindquarters behind themselves far enough to appear balanced while standing or moving. It also seems to be a complex fault that is difficult to breed out. A Pointer runs with his nose to the wind and tail cracking; this requires, among other things, an extended rear assembly.

Movement

Movement is the best test of basic construction and conformation. Only a properly made Pointer with a correct arch of neck, shoulder assembly, body shape and running gear can have the proportion and balance to move like a Pointer with reach and drive, a slashing tail, and head held high to the scent. A poorly made dog will move restricted like a bad terrier, hackneyed like a gaited horse, or weakly and flailing; these are easily observable examples of poor movement. A poorly made dog can also fool the casual observer with apparently sound action accompanied by the undesirable hung or extended neck and motionless tail which is atypical of the breed. One test is to visualize a Pointer from the side behind a back-lighted bed sheet. If the moving silhouette you see is unmistakably a Pointer, you're on the right track.

A Pointer that moves true coming and going, a Pointer that never puts a foot down wrong, a Pointer that is never cow hocked or bowlegged, still has improper movement if he moves like a sound Fox Terrier, Bloodhound, Whippet, or any breed other than a Pointer. As is true with any sporting dog, the importance of sound and typical movement in a Pointer should never be underestimated; it is as important an element of Pointer type as any other. It is my opinion that Pointer gait is best assessed from the side but I guess you'll also have to have at least one look down and back. Those who over-emphasize down and back over side gait probably have the wrong picture in mind. However, don't forget to view the Pointer's front action when moving *away from you*. It's something the best horsemen do and it can be very revealing.

Coat and Color

As with all pieces of the Pointer puzzle, the coat is yet another breed indicator in offering protection from the specific elements of upland bird hunting. A coat that is too thick and coarse exhibits scenthound qualities. A coat that is too thin and too sleek exhibits Greyhound qualities. Both of these extremes would leave the Pointer with improper protection. There should be no sign of feathering on any part of the Pointer and the tail should never show any sign of bushiness as would be seen in the Foxhound. The standard states that a good Pointer cannot be a bad color. That could be interpreted as accepting purple with red spots. It could also suggest that color should be ignored while judging Pointers. However, as described in the standard, Pointers come in four basic colors: liver and white, black and white, orange and white, and lemon and white. Solids in each of these colors are also observable and allowable. Occasionally, a tri-colored Pointer may also be seen. The breed standard does not mention tri-colored as acceptable, but since it does say a good Pointer cannot be a bad color, you can make your own decision as to their appropriateness. It is my lukewarm opinion that while not mentioned in the standard, tri-colored markings are a hound trait and should be penalized no more or less severely than houndy ears or a houndy underline. In the larger scheme of Pointer things, we probably have bigger things to worry about anyway.

The shade of color, amount of patches and ticking, and placement of markings vary tremendously and bring no bearing on the quality of a Pointer. Since markings and color can be deceiving, it is best to imagine each dog as if were painted solid gray. If the markings on one side of the dog are unflattering or misleading, try the other side. We must never penalize lighter pigment in lemons and livers, and we must be very careful not to toss out a poorly marked Pointer because there is *no such thing*. It's just that in our egalitarian society, some are marked more attractively than others.

While black and liver marked Pointers are easily defined, there is occasionally confusion regarding the differences between orange and lemon marked Pointers. The script of the AKC breed video resolves this issue by saying that most breeders use nose color (black nose for orange and liver nose for lemon) and not the shade of orange or lemon patches as the determining factor; the reason for this concurrence is that the nose color on Pointers with these coat shades (and NOT the coat shade) genetically determine what colors these dogs can and can not reproduce. To further confuse the issue, some orange and whites will get *winter nose* where the nose pigment lightens to a liver color in cold weather; a true orange, however, will always show black pigment on the skin of the body. The only thing that matters when judging the Pointer, regarding nose color, is that the lighter shades may have lighter or flesh colored noses. In short, don't be color blind. These are gun dogs.

General

A good Pointer, naturally, may be used for bench, field, companionship or any other constructive endeavor an owner wishes. He can be comfortable both in the bramble or on the sofa. Like any dog, though, he is a dog that needs to live harmoniously with its caretaker and should be assessed

as such. A overly shy pointer, one who is jumpy and unsure, or a hyperactive Pointer will not make a good companion. Let not the beauty take a back seat to instinct and temperament. A Pointer who doesn't appear to have a brain worthy of his task, or a Pointer without common sense and trainability, is of little worth regardless of his conformation or field ability.

While the terms "staying power" and "dash" may not be among those we often use today, they are certainly indicative of what our forefathers had in mind when developing the Pointer. Both refer not only to the physical design of the Pointer but also to the essence of the breed. This is foremost a specialist that can hunt eagerly all day long. Their intensity on point is unparalleled and they should show it in the definition of their muscle and the sparkle in their eye. These are explosive athletes with clean outlines and a clever character that make them easily discernible from any other breed in either daylight or silhouette.

PART THREE

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

Observations on Learning to See

The late poet William Carlos Williams wrote a well-celebrated short poem called *The Red Wheelbarrow*. Here it is in its entirety:

So much depends upon
the red wheelbarrow
glazed with rainwater
beside the white chickens.

I learned this poem in undergraduate school from Professor Dunn who argued that it should have read “so much depends upon *seeing*’the red wheelbarrow.” It was a beautiful argument with no solution, but the discussion taught us that a subject’s existence and the ability to see it are fundamentally different. Somehow, that poem eventually reminds me of those 3-D paintings you have to stare at just the right way to actually see the real image. The point is that something can be there, but you need to learn how to see it.

Observations on Learning to See the Pointer

It has been my observation that there are three phases to learning to actually see the show Pointer. Like anything else in life, some students go through all three phases and some never get through Phase One. Some go through quickly and some take a lifetime. All phases are necessary to live through, like some strange right of passage, if a student is to become a master student. Regardless, this is just a theory, and maybe not even a very sound one at that, but its intention is to serve as a tool for self examination of the reader’s own progress. Unfortunately, we all think we’re in Phase Three which is why some of us will be good judges and some won’t. It’s also why we all think we know more than our colleagues to the point where some of us even write about Pointers for others to read!

Phase One

Anyone with a reasonable eye for a balance can make it through Phase One. The problem is that

this becomes the phase where most people remain forever. In this phase, the student learns to see a pretty dog. There are no major construction faults in their favorite Pointers, nothing ugly or foreboding, they are well marked and attractive. This stage can be called *appreciating the generic dog*. The good student can quickly apply this skill to any breed or even any mammal at the zoo. Unfortunately, the best of these students can judge a class of dogs and not make a total fool of themselves in the eyes of other Phase One observers. Someday, however, the decision will come down to two well made animals, one a well made Pointer and one a well made hound in Pointer clothes, and those who know will be watching. These students know little of the specific qualities that define a Pointer. They may have an appreciation for balance, basic construction, and beauty but they know nothing about Pointer type. They haven't yet learned to see the things that make a Pointer a Pointer. At the end of this phase, they may be learning about type, they just can't see it yet.

Phase Two

This is a dangerous phase and one that many breeders get stuck in for the long term. Phase Two is about breed type, period. The Phase Two student becomes ravenous about knowledge such as ear thickness. They talk for hours about the veins that are apparent in the ears of good ones. They know about Pointer heads and tails, perhaps the two easiest to see among type indicators for the new student, and use the terms *dish face* and *bee-sting tail* often and everywhere. It must be understood, however, that to learn about, understand, and actually see the finer points, the student focuses so much on them that the rest of the dog gets blurred. "What front? What hindquarter? So what if he can't walk, look at those flared nostrils!" he's heard to exclaim at ringside.

The danger with this phase is two-fold. First, while it's absolutely necessary to learn type to become a true breed expert, it's not as easy a task as it may seem. And second, because you soon realize that you know something that others don't, you assume you're an expert. Yes, this is the *type* phase and it is the one that begins to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Phase Three

The great dog man Frank Sabella does a lecture on "Seeing the Whole Dog" that should be required for anyone wanting to breed, judge, or maybe even own a show Pointer even though his dog reference is mainly Poodles. *Seeing the whole dog*, the ability to see balance, structure, movement, and type at the same time is the final phase. Beyond that is a lifetime of trying to adjust the focus, something the best students do as long as they are on the planet.

Anyone who thinks this phase is easy to learn is probably stuck in Phase One thinking they are in Phase Three. It takes looking, and actually seeing, many dogs, good and bad, to arrive in Phase Three. In the beginning, the student may occasionally relapse back to Phase One or two. This can happen when out of practice or because they are spending too much time with dogs that themselves stuck in one phase or another. Actually, the dogs aren't stuck in a phase but they may represent one. A Phase One dog may be a sound, flashy, balanced dog with an attractive but atypical body shape, plain head, and incorrect tail. Students who hang around these dogs too often may find themselves defending them while dismissing type as being "too English" or some

such nonsense. Conversely, hang around typey Pointers with no legs and faulty construction and you start saying things like “mongrels are sound, but *this* is a Pointer” or similar drivel. Seeing typey dogs with proper construction, which by the way is an integral part of type, is the best medicine. The problem is that there are so few to see.

Observations on Color

We’ve already learned that a good Pointer can’t be bad color. Why even discuss it then? Good question, but we do all the time. The reason is that it’s important to better breeding. Without understanding color and the qualities associated with each color, we don’t completely understand the Pointer. Before I proceed, however, I must say that most of what follows is anecdotal, much of it includes generalizations, and that it is as unscientific as possible. But I believe it and so do others.

If you go back through old Westminster catalogs or American Pointer Club National Specialty catalogs, you’ll find only two of the four colors, liver and lemon, represented in virtually all entries prior to 1980. There’s a reason for this. Lemon is a recessive of liver. Therefore, when you breed liver to lemon you only get liver or lemon - no oranges, no blacks. Since lemon is recessive you mostly get liver, which is what just about every dog in the American ring was in the years before the early eighties.

In every other nation on the planet this was not the case; all four colors were equally represented. In the April 1972 *AKC American Kennel Gazette*, the Pointer breed column reported that “Francis Lupke took herself a flying trip to London to attend the Crafts Show” and that she “was impressed by the fact that there were many black and whites.” At the time this was indeed a rarity for the states. The columnist Beryl Hirschberger later remarks that “Crookrise Kennels had the greatest number of dogs being shown ... very likely accounting for the many of the black and whites.”

In 1978, a Crookrise dog was imported to America who happened to be a true orange and white. By orange and white, I refer not only to the coat markings, but much more importantly to his jet black nose, eye rims, and skin pigment, all of which gave him the genetic ability to produce black and white. His name was Ch. Rossenarra Amontillado of Crookrise and he was actually bred by Tom and Susan Brophy of Rossenarra Pointers in Kilkenny, Ireland and imported by me through Cicely Robershaw of Crookrise. Myles as we called him, was to become a sire and a sire of sires whose record speaks for itself. I suppose it’s all right to say so since I wasn’t his breeder and can’t take any credit. More important to this context, however, is that he was first bred to one of the sports all-time top producers, Ch. Truewithem A Taste of Triumph, (owned by Marjorie Martorella) who happened to be liver and white. We were all surprised to learn that orange dominant to liver dominant produces black when the puppies came out mostly black and white. This litter actually caused the *Inheritance of Coat Color in Pointers* booklet which I first published in 1979. Two in the litter became Best in Show winners and America was suddenly seeing all four colors of Pointer in the grouping.

Myles, produced almost thirty champions in three countries and three Best in Show winners in America alone from only seven litters. His sons, many of them black and white, ruled the top ten stud dogs for years after his death as did his grandsons. There may have been a few blacks or black-nosed oranges in America before him but very few would come close to having the impact he had on the breed. There were some good Toberdonny dogs brought over, some good Cumbrian dogs, (the Cumbrian dogs of England, that is, before the kennel name was transferred to America), and later some good Pipeaway dogs. On the west coast, a black and white Ch. Crookrise Enoch had a big impact. Even today, many of America's top winners can be traced to Enoch Myles or his grandfather, Ch. Crookrise Flint. Of course, the majority of those top American winners were and are now black and white or black-nosed oranges.

So, that's where the colors came from in America, but what does it mean? It is my opinion that you must have balance of all four colors in the gene pool to make good pointers. If you don't, you gather too many of the attributes associated with each color. Here comes my color generalizations, a list that will be certain to get someone's hackles up:

Liver tends towards the most houndy but soundest. Lemon, the recessive and close cousin of liver is similar. Orange tends towards less sound, especially with fronts, but clearly has the most type and elegance. Black, which you can get from liver to orange, tends towards the middle. Now everyone who reads this has already thought of exceptions to these generalizations because they now exist. However, the early eighties taught us the basics because we had yet to blend the colors together to any degree. Today, the generalizations still stand. If you don't believe it, try breeding liver to liver for a few generations and see if you don't lose head and tails. Breed orange to orange to orange for four generations and see if you don't improve heads and loose fronts.

As the generations begin to mix more color in this country the obviousness of these traits will probably continue to diminish somewhat but we need to know about the foundation if we're going to build a good house. If this makes me sound like an advocate of mixing all four colors it is because I am. It's worked in other countries for a very long time. However, let me also be the first to say that the limited gene pool and overall quality of Pointers in America is such that if the best dog for your bitch is the same color, do not hesitate to use him. Just don't do it for more than several generations without being prepared for the consequences. Well then, somebody finally wrote about what some of us have been whispering for years. There you have it.

Observations on Breeders

Why is the percentage of good Pointers in America rather small since we have the transportation and science available to breed better dogs? Simple, we don't have any big kennels. In the field, Pointers have for over sixty years enjoyed being the best upland bird dogs in the nation. The reason is that Bob Wehle has been breeding the Elhew strain of field trial Pointers for that long. He breeds hundreds of puppies each year, has a waiting list to buy them, and keeps only the very best for breeding. He is clearly a master breeder, one of only a few among all breeders. As Elhew pups, if they point wrong once, if they bark, or if they don't have the perfect tail, they are out of the breeding program. Ruthless selection, big numbers, incredible talent and experience, a

remarkable eye for livestock, and no excuses have made the Elhew family one that breeds true year after year. While some may come close, Bob Wehle has no peers in the world of show Pointers.

Why are there great Elkhounds? Pat Craig Trotter. Great Springers? Julia Gasow. Great Giant Schnauzers? Sylvia Hammerstrom. While we too have some excellent show breeders, show Pointers today have no single, long term, large scale master breeder operation. That certainly does not mean great Pointers will not be created because we do have some excellent breeders. It just means it will take more time and that there will be fewer great Pointers.

Look at any catalog from the forties or fifties. By the way, Pointer classes were often divided by weight back then - over and under fifty pounds. You will notice that if there were, say, thirty Pointers entered, they were all owned by one or maybe two owners. Today, there may be as many as sixty owners and co-owners represented among the thirty exhibits. American demographics and economies have changed the makeup of a dog show entry in a profound way. It used to be a kennel or two brought all its stock to be evaluated. Today, everybody brings half of a dog and competes against each other. There are plenty of families, but hardly any real long-term families of dogs. Big difference.

Afterward

The Pointer is a Pointer because of what he is and because of what he is not. He is not a hound, not a terrier, and not a German Shorthair. He is a Pointer, a wonderful working dog, intuitive and instinctive, and while sometimes suspicious of those who don't like him or his master, a true and devoted companion to those who do. Let us celebrate their virtues and not dwell on their faults. After all, that is precisely the courtesy they extend to us.

APPENDIX

OFFICIAL STANDARD FOR THE POINTER Approved November 11,1975

GENERAL APPEARANCE - The Pointer is bred primarily for sport afield; he should unmistakably look and act the part. The ideal specimen gives the immediate impression of compact power and agile grace; the head noble, proudly carried; the expression intelligent and alert; the muscular body bespeaking both staying power and dash. Here is an animal whose every movement shows him to be a wide-awake, hard-driving hunting dog possessing stamina, courage, and the desire to go. And in his expression are the loyalty and devotion of a true friend of man.

TEMPERAMENT - The Pointer's even temperament and alert good sense make him a congenial companion both in the field and in the home. He should be dignified and should never show timidity toward man or dog.

HEAD - The skull of medium width, approximately as wide as the length of the muzzle, resulting in an impression of length rather than width. Slight furrow between the eyes, cheeks cleanly chiseled. There should be a pronounced stop. From this point forward the muzzle is of good length, with the nasal bone so formed that the nose is slightly higher at the tip than the muzzle at the stop. Parallel planes of the skull and muzzle are equally acceptable. The muzzle should be deep without pendulous flaws. Jaws ending square and level, should bite evenly or as scissors. Nostrils well developed and wide open. **Ears** - Set on at eye level. When hanging naturally, they should reach just below the lower jaw, close to the head, with little or no folding. They should be somewhat pointed at the tip - never round - and soft and thin in leather. **Eyes** - Of ample size, rounded and intense. The eye color should be dark in contrast with the color of the markings, the darker the better.

NECK - Long, dry, muscular and slightly arched, springing cleanly from the shoulders.

SHOULDERS - Long, thin, and sloping. The top of blades close together.

FRONT - Elbows well let down, directly under the withers and truly parallel so as to work just clear of the body. Forelegs straight and with oval bone. Knee joint never to knuckle over. Pasterns of moderate length, perceptibly finer in bone than the leg, and slightly slanting. Chest, deep rather than wide, must not hinder free action of forelegs. The breastbone bold, without being unduly prominent. The ribs well sprung, descending as low as the elbow-point.

BACK - Strong and solid with only a slight rise from croup to top of shoulders. Loin of moderate length, powerful and slightly arched. Croup falling only slightly to base of tail. Tuck-up should be apparent, but not exaggerated.

TAIL - Heavier at the root, tapering to a fine point. Length no greater than to hock. A tail longer than this or docked must be penalized. Carried without curl, and not more than 20 degrees above the line of the back; never carried between the legs.

HINDQUARTERS - Muscular and powerful with great propelling leverage. Thighs long and well developed. Stifles well bent. The hocks clean; the legs straight as viewed from behind. Decided angulation is the mark of power and endurance.

FEET - Oval, with long, closely-set, arched toes, well-padded, and deep. Catfoot is a fault. Dewclaws on the forelegs may be removed.

COAT - Short, dense, smooth with a sheen.

COLOR - Liver, lemon, black, orange; either in combination with white or solid-colored. A good Pointer cannot be a bad color. In the darker colors, the nose should be black or brown; in the lighter shades it may be lighter or flesh-colored.

GAIT - Smooth, frictionless, with a powerful hindquarters' drive. The head should be carried high, the nostrils wide, the tail moving from side to side rhythmically with the pace, giving the impression of a well-balanced, strongly-built hunting dog capable of top speed combined with great stamina. Hackney gait must be faulted.

BALANCE AND SIZE - Balance and over-all symmetry are more important in the Pointer than size. A smooth, balanced dog is to be more desired than a dog with strongly contrasting good points and faults. Hound or terrier characteristics are most undesirable. Because a sporting dog must have both endurance and power, great variations in size are undesirable, the desirable height and weight being within the following limits:

- Dogs: Height 25-26 inches
- Weight 55-75 pounds
- Bitches: Height 23-26 inches
- Weight 45-65 pounds
