

From: Craney Hill Kennel

We received this interesting email regarding our recent Podcast and obtained permission to share it. It goes to show that we are all dealing with some similar issues we need to pay attention to in an effort to protect our spaniels. We have left the writer anonymous as a courtesy.

Dear Mr Agnew

I hope you don't mind me contacting you. I listened to your comments on the Hunting Dog podcast and agree with much of what you said. I am one of a rare and increasingly small group of people in the UK who actually rough shoot over our dogs, expecting them to hunt hard all day irrespective of scent but equally don't expect the almost frantic hunting style exhibited in some UK trial dogs which seems to be promoted by some (fortunately not all) of our trial judges, running very hard and fast but covering a beat of about 10 yards maximum. I have nothing against the J Regs (The Kennel Club Trial Rules) as if read these specify exactly what I want in a shooting dog but it is the interpretation by some of exactly what hunting and style means, to me it is a dog actively seeking game not necessarily running at breakneck speed for 10 minutes over a narrow strip that won't find you much game if hunting wild birds.

I heard recently of some younger trial competitors actually laughing at one old school trial handler (who I knew personally and always loved a hard hunting dog and had won the championship at least once) who let his dog hunt in a trial rather than having it running around his feet as they thought it was out of control !!

I believe we are reaching a point where a dog's ability to find game with their nose may be ousted by a desire not to miss game with their feet due to the practice of rearing large numbers of pheasants and the different way they behave to wild game. A number of our dogs appear in trials not to give any indication of knowing the game was present for which they are credited as flushing and so the emphasis is going away from game finding and into short term pace and an ability to handle well on retrieves, you don't get credited for a dog positively indicating it knew the game was there but will be put out for missing it. There is a belief by some who trial that if a dog is good enough it will be trialled rather than spend its life hunting quietly for its owner and anyone who argues otherwise is merely not good enough to do what they do. As you said the best dog in the country probably never ran in a trial. That does not mean that there are not some very good dogs running in trials or that many of those could be good hunting dogs if allowed to hunt but ultimately good hunting may no longer being selected for in the breeding by some people, merely a furious and frenetic running style which I believe

can lead to temperament issues with some pups not merely being not good enough to run in trials but not even able to be the lowest grade of gundog.

Many thanks for the podcast I found it very interesting and we have nothing comparable over here as hunting anything is very contentious, as is gun ownership and eating something you have shot yourself is at best mildly eccentric or at worst the behaviour of a potential serial killer!!

Thanks for reading this.

Kind regards