

AKC Gazette Column - by Grace Cartwright

About the AKC Breed Columns:

The Breed columns are a time-honored feature of the AKC Gazette. Each columnist is appointed by a breed's national parent club, which preserves the breed's standard and helps to educate breeders, judges, and the public about the breed's history, function, and possible health issues. A national parent club is comprised dedicated breeders and fanciers, and it represents many years of collective experience in the breed. Columnists are asked to write about topics of interest to the fancy in general as well as those of specific interest to judges and devotees of the breed.

Australian Terrier Column May 2012 Issue

Why won't you sell me a breeding pair of Aussies?

A "gentleman" got irate with me when I told him that my pet puppies are sold with a spay/neuter contract. He informed me he wanted a pair of Australian Terriers to breed pets for his friends and family. He said he wants everyone to have an Aussie "just like my Tucker." When asked if he understood the time and expense it took to be a responsible breeder he said "not really." The following information is what I shared with him:

A responsible breeder will strive to obtain the best specimens of their breed. They verify their choices by showing them in AKC conformation shows to obtain their Champion titles. In these shows the judges will look at the dog's structure, movement and type to decide if the dog meets the breed standard. In order to earn its title a dog must win a total of 15 points. Two shows, where they win points, must be "3 to 5 point majors." In order to win a major it is necessary to travel to shows where there are enough dogs of the breed being shown (in Virginia it takes a minimum of 4 dogs or 5 bitches to make a 3 point major). Thus the owner incurs the expense of entry fees and travel to at least three shows, but realistically many more.

Once the breeder has obtained a title for their prospective breeding dog or bitch they pay to have health tests performed and registered. For the Aussie the minimum tests, as recommended by the Australian Terrier Club of America, are: CERF for eyes, OFA luxating patella, and OFA thyroid. The cost doubles if the breeder owns both the prospective stud and dam. Most breeders also get a general health screening done and test for Brucellosis.

Pedigrees of the prospective dog and bitch are examined to try to determine that their conformation characteristics, and those of their ancestors, are compatible. The breeder also spends many hours of study trying to decipher what recessive genes may be hiding in the background ready to combine in the wrong way.

If the breeder only owns the prospective bitch, or decides that her stud isn't compatible, then a stud fee must be paid. Most times the breeder incurs round trip shipping costs sending the prospective dam to her mate. If frozen or fresh chilled semen is used, additional costs include testing the bitch for proper breeding timing and insemination costs.

Hopefully the puppies are born healthy and without veterinary assistance. If not, the breeder incurs the cost of a C-section or vet bills caring for sick puppies. Then there is the cost of food, puppy shots, worm medicine and vet visits to have the tails docked and the puppies' health checked. The breeder keeps the puppies at least 12 weeks to allow them to get the socialization skills they can only get with their mother and littermates. A responsible breeder is willing to keep their puppies until they are significantly older, gives a health guarantee, and is willing to take one back for any reason.

Placing a puppy in the right home isn't easy. For every 10 calls from prospective new owners, a breeder MAY sell one of their puppies. Breeding dogs isn't easy nor a money maker (it will probably cost you).

But, it is a labor of love if done right!

