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# Irish Setters in the Field

A strain of red dogs, distinct from the bench variety, can be produced for hunting by selective crossbreeding

By Horace Lytle

THIS is a subject on which I may exercise a fraternal prerogative and speak frankly about Irish setters as field dogs. I was an Irish setter man myself some years ago. I always had other breeds, but my first field-trial win was with an Irish setter and this associated me with the breed. There probably were many who didn't know I had any other dogs. So, as one Irish setter man to another, I shall speak somewhat crisply.

In the field trials at Sauk Center, Minnesota, about 1884 an Irish setter named Friend was the winner. She was a bitch owned by Fowler Stoddard of Dayton, Ohio. Dr. Bruette once wrote of an Irish setter that outran, outranged and "out-birded" the famous Cowley's Rodfield's Pride in a field trial on the prairies—and Pride still rates as one of the great chicken dogs of all time. Then, be it remembered, it was Joe, Jr., that defeated the great Gladstone in a match race of three days. Joe, Jr., was the son of Elcho, an imported Irish setter.

Coming to more recent days—25 to 30 years ago—we had my own bitch Smada Byrd, McKerry's Pat, and Modoc Bedelia. Between them, these three cooled the pointers and English setters a good many times. But the good ones were becoming fewer and fewer. I shipped Smada Byrd to Oklahoma to be bred to McKerry's Pat; but she didn't catch. There wasn't another living Irish sire worthy of her. At least none with a record to prove it. The breed's popularity as show dogs is what proved their undoing.

Only recently I was invited to judge an exclusive Irish setter field trial in another state. I accepted—both for old-times' sake and to bring myself up to date on the breed. With but two possible exceptions, the performances were of the sorriest sort. The breed, from the standpoint of hunting excellence, seems to have slipped farther and farther since my active days with it. I found that the

## SPORTING DOGS

conflict of the shows is still what's doing the damage. This fact is incontrovertible. One man in the gallery owned several but had no entry in the trial I was judging. When I asked him why, he told me that his best dog was entered in a show the next week and he couldn't afford to let him get a burr in his tail or damage his feathering!

After the trial, the secretary came to me with a question: "Mr. Lytle, is it worth while trying to go on as we are? One reason we asked you to judge for us was because we wanted to ask you this question firsthand.

"Are you sure you want me to tell you what I really think?" I asked him. "I'd rather not; for if I do, I'll speak honestly."

He asked for it—and was so manifestly sincere that I gave it to him straight from the shoulder. This was the gist of what I told him. Irish setters were once red and white. All of the white has been bred out of them—and, along with it has been lost too much of the breed's "heart for the hunt." There's no use at all to try to keep going on now on a basis of show-and-field. The sacrifice has been too great. The breed has gone too far over the hill and is now too close to the bottom as a hunter. There are not enough good ones to provide any basis for breeding. As field dogs the breed is doomed—unless a few bold, determined men get together and divorce themselves from show dogs and develop field specialists. I told him what I would do

## Old Shooting Dog Yarns

By Frederick Reiter



HONE'S Yearbook tells about a shooting dog which taught a young pointer quite a lesson in the field. The young one was taken

along to learn his business from the old experienced fellow. But he didn't show too much interest in his future profession.

Soon the old dog found some birds in the middle of the field. As he pointed them steadily, the pup stopped cavorting around and approached the spot. Seeing the old one stand so stiff and motionless, the pup ran up to him playfully, barking and trying to invite him on a good run. To the pup's surprise, however, the old dog turned around, seized him roughly by the neck and gave him a good shaking that sent him away howling. Then, to complete the lesson, the old fellow immediately steadied himself and continued on his point, having scarcely moved one yard during the whole incident.



about it if I were 30 years younger. I believe there is *only one thing that can be done*.

The best possible Irish bitches from Ollie H. Neimeyer of Ohio or F. J. Leferdink of Nebraska must be obtained. I believe these two have the best red dogs in America that have been used constantly for hunting. Breed these bitches to the best sons of such an English setter as Mississippi Zev, National Champion of 1946. Register the offspring as crossbred setters in the Field Dog Stud Book. Thereafter, breed back offspring to purebred Irish setters—but the dogs and bitches in the meantime should have seen as much hunting as can be given them. Then, when the English setter mating does not appear in a four-generation pedigree, the offspring resulting therefrom again will be—and can be so registered—purebred Irish setters. Yet that potent “Zev influence” will be in there, and should linger on beneficially for a long time. Even then, the dogs resulting from such matings should be kept to hunting—and far, far away from the effete influence of the shows.

Will anybody do it? I wonder. If they don't the breed's a goner as a hunting dog.

## Kennel Notes

**HANDLING AND TRAINING AIDS**—Many gadgets are being developed as aids in the care, correction and control of dogs.

One which seems to me to have special merit is the anti-bark muzzle made by Warner's, Baldwinsville, New York. Those who know how to keep their dogs from barking may get along without this aid. However, there are some things that certain dogs simply refuse to learn. For such of these as bark annoyingly in the kennel this contrivance is excellent. Its construction discourages barking, while it does not interfere with the dog's ability to drink water, as an anti-biting muzzle will.

The price is \$1.00 postpaid; 50c more for dogs over 60 pounds.

The same firm offers a dog tether. Drive this in the ground and you can fasten a dog wherever desired. It is especially useful for a man who must work alone in training his pointing dogs. It works like this: The dog points; drive tether in the ground and snap lead to it; step in to flush the birds; the dog is held from breaking. Thus you keep him steady to wing and shot. The tether sells for \$1.00.

Another new tethering device has been brought out by Progressive Enterprises, 1001 North Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles 27, California. A recoil spring, to which the leash is attached, absorbs and reduces shock when the dog lunges. The spring revolves around a dome, thus preventing entangling of the leash. The dome surmounts a metal plate which is flush to the ground when the metal rod supporting it is driven in.

A device for similar purpose has just been announced by the Bridgeport Chain and Manufacturing Company, Bridgeport, Connecticut. Their tether screws into the ground. They call it a Picket Pin and claim it will hold a cow, horse, or goat.

A few firms offer boots for dogs with sore feet or when working where sand briers prevail. One such firm is The Blackley Company, Box 466, Hearne, Texas. Signal bells, for use on grouse or woodcock dogs in heavy cover, are a most valuable accessory and available at \$1.75 from F. E. Woodruff, Sidney, New York.

Northwest Dog Supply Company, Box 1139, Butte, Montana, offers at \$5 a control harness that should discourage a dog inclined to chase automobiles. *Horace Lytle.*

★ MARYLAND, in 1730, passed the first law preventing the hunting of deer by fire-lighting.

SPORTS AFIELD—January 1950



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