

DOG TIPS

By Henry P. Davis

High Tails on Irish Setters

Indicative of widespread interest in the matter, this department has, in very recent months, been receiving a goodly amount of mail concerning how to breed more loftiness into the pointing attitude of Irish setters, with particular emphasis on tail carriage, both in action and on point.

These correspondents are enthusiastic about the field qualities of the red dog but they admit he is lacking in pointing loftiness, and often stands his game with lowered tail and only a fair degree of intensity. "If we could only get our dogs to point with a high flag and burning intensity we would have all that could be desired in gun dogs."

Who Started It, Anyway? W. E. Le-Grande, Douglassville, Pa., writes in part: "Who started this high-tailed fad anyway? It seems to me that most of the champion field trial setters and pointers of the early days pointed with the tail straight out or slightly below the horizontal. This was considered correct in those days but now dogs that do not point with tails at least at a 45-degree angle have little chance in a championship trial. Regardless of what I think about this fad, it is with us."

"I don't know how the English setter and pointer fanciers bred high tails into their dogs, but I would very much like to duplicate the feat with Irish setters. I realize this would probably be a long-time experiment but if it is not an impossibility I'd like to try to do it. What approach to the problem would you recommend? For my foundation stock I have a bitch that has the following qualities: a great nose, great love for hunting, better-than-average range but not enough for field trials, high head, tail straight out on point but intense, small size (about 45 pounds), one of the best possible pedigrees."

"Some time ago J. Horace Lytle wrote an article suggesting breeding Irish setter bitches to high-tailed English setter sires that passed along this quality to their get, then breed the progeny back to purebred Irish setters for four generations. The *Field Dog Stud Book* informs me I can register such puppies as cross-bred setters and four generations later register them as Irish setters provided I mate to all purebred Irish setters in the meantime. Do you think this plan might be successful? Do you have any other suggestions?"

Let's Look at the Record. Mr. Le-Grande poses an extremely complex problem. It has been widely discussed, particularly in recent years, but comparatively little has been written on the subject. Before shoving off into its deep water, perhaps it would be well to "take



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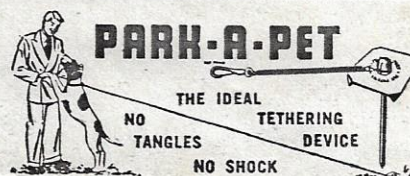
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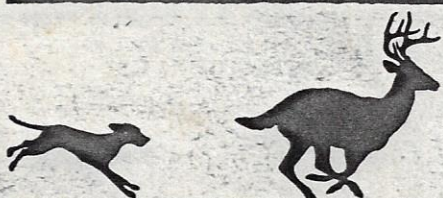
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a look at the record." I do not believe the Irish setter, as a breed, ever characteristically pointed with the high tail of the English setter and the pointer. This applies even to the early days.

Major J. M. Taylor's book *Field Trial Record of Dogs in America (1874 to 1907)* contains a good many illustrations, mostly of pointers and setters. The Irish setters Berkley (1877) and Edna H (1891) are shown in apparently characteristic poses. Both are standing with lowered tails. The early English setters and pointers pictured show decidedly more intensity, with tails level with or above the back. Ten years later the little English setter bitch Peach Blossom came into field trial prominence and caused much comment by her spectacular attitudes on point. She stood her game with tail carried over her back in a saberlike curve. Some criticized it, others liked it.

But it was not long before loftiness in action and on point became a much-to-be-desired trait. Personally I like loftiness... when it is coupled with intensity. To me intensity is the keynote of stylish bird-dog pointing posture. I'd much prefer to see a low-stationed dog crouching with intensity, eagerness written in every muscular line, than to see one standing with head and tail high but with his muscles relaxed and appearing to be looking at a far-off horizon.

How to Go About It. But back to the big question of how to breed the characteristic of high tail carriage into the Irish setter. I took this problem right to the desk of a friend who I consider the greatest authority on dog breeding in this or any other country. For years a prominent practicing veterinarian, but now devoting all his energies to research, this man has a background in genetics study second to none, in my opinion.

This authority says he thinks it is possible to put a high tail on a strain of Irish setters by several approaches, only one of which he terms strictly "regular." By that he means breeding strictly within the breed itself. This would entail finding high-tailed Irish setters with the well-developed hunting instinct and breeding and inbreeding within that strain, eliminating all but a very few dogs. This would be expensive, require many years and, because we have so few Irishmen today with the tail carriage so desired by hunters, a most difficult task.

A Second Method. It might be done by crossing, backcrossing and inbreeding with other breeds. This entails either the potential loss of sanction or eligibility of registration, or dishonesty and faking of papers, a course certainly not to be recommended. However, if one is willing to let the strain go unregistered until the dogs, by their sterling performance and adherence to type for enough generations, force registry associations to accept them as being as purebred as many other dogs they register, especially the new breeds, it is suggested that one start with an Irish setter that is as nearly perfect in all but tail carriage as can be found.

Breed this dog to an especially high-tailed English setter, preferably white and deep orange in color. Depending on the color of the English setter, you may expect black or reddish or even chocolate puppies of a solid color with no more than a small white spot on the chest and

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SPORTS AFIELD—August 1951

perhaps with white toes. Should the cross produce some white puppies you can pretty well guess that somebody before you tried the same thing and the telltale evidence is coming to light. It is said that some Irish setters carry white recessively because dozens of generations ago Irish setters came white and red as well as solid red. Maybe so. But maybe also hunters long ago were trying to improve the hunting quality of their beautiful red dogs by using an English setter cross.

Next, cross a pair of these half-breed solid-colored puppies. Each one carries germinal determiners for high tail and for the Irish setter red. By mating brother and sister you give these qualities a chance to double up and produce a red pup with a high tail. You may not get this in your first litter . . . but according to my friend it has been done.

Or This Alternative. Better still, make two Irish setter—high-tailed English setter crosses, and breed a pup from each litter together. This will avoid inbreeding which tends to reduce the size slightly and brings to light undesirable characteristics. So you'll still be achieving the same results but it will be a little more expensive.

Breed one of the crossbred pups to the Irish parent or another Irish setter. Many pups will have the Irish setter red but you stand a small chance of recovering the high tail, yet there will be a tendency in that direction if you use the crossbred pup that has the highest tail carriage. According to one authority (not the one I consulted), crosses of low-tailed setters with hounds with high tail carriage will result in low tails in the first offspring—but the tail carriage will be higher than that of the setter.

A third method is crossing a pointer, preferably black and white in color, to an Irish setter. Liver behaves in inheritance like black but has a factor which inhibits full expression of the black. It is an altogether different color from Irish setter red and should not be used. The result of such a mating, as is well known, is a dropper or short-haired dog. If you use a pure black and white, all the pups will be solid black, or with very little white. Cross a pair of these pups and you stand a chance of getting what you are after, but more chance of getting a dog that looks like a short-eared red-bone hound. Your chances of recombining the deep red, the high tail and the long hair are considerably smaller, mathematically, than combining the red color and high tail.

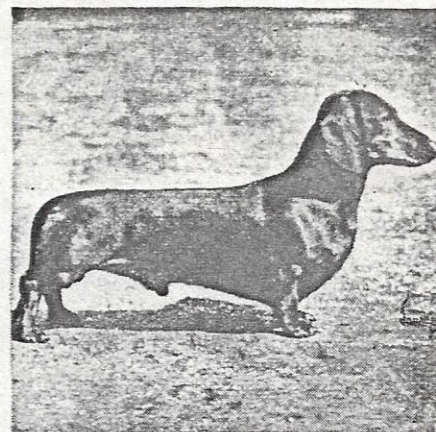
Have You a High-Tailed Irishman?

There are other ways, according to my authority, but those above are the most practical and the shortest cuts to developing a high-tailed red dog of predominantly Irish setter blood that might eventually be recognized officially as a

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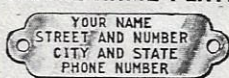
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purebred Irish setter. It has been a long time since I have seen a really high-tailed Irish setter. Surely there must be some somewhere among the thousands owned by devoted fanciers. Perhaps this article will serve to bring them to light and through their use Mr. LeGrande may be able to carry out his breeding program within the breed itself.

Ben Curtis's Quickfire was a most attractive dog in action but I don't know whether he was used at stud to any considerable extent. I never saw Horace Lytle's Smada Byrd on point but did see her in a workout and she had the splendid qualities of fire and dash. Maybe some of her blood is still around. And Rufus McTybe O'Cloisters, the greatest Irish setter of his time, is still available.

There are at least two carefully planned Irish setter-English setter crossbreeding programs now under way. The results will be interesting if they are ever made public.

Arctic Adventure

(Continued from page 49)

Thus goes the food cycle of the prairie or inland Eskimos. There is a trick to catch ptarmigan which helps out the family budget.

Scattered here and there are low patches of willows a few square yards in extent. Ptarmigan feed on the willow buds. Into these thickets they flee in flocks of hundreds when falcons and snowy owls pursue them. The people set dozens of small snares made of braided caribou sinew about the edges of these thickets. Now a falcon rarely is so obliging as to scare the ptarmigan at the right time, so the people have to think up an additional device. The birds aren't afraid of the people, and if they do fly from them it wouldn't be into the thicket. So the people take a piece of thick black hide about the size of a dinner plate and sail this over a flock of ptarmigan, at the same time whistling like a falcon. The ptarmigan, seeing this dark disk rushing at them, think only of a falcon and fly to cover in the willows, where in their confusion many become entangled in the waiting snares.

The first igloo in which Connie and I lived in winter was made out of our ordinary eight-foot by ten-foot wall tent. We had started out the winter living in an old abandoned arctic coast trading post, a rambling structure built by a San Francisco trading company years ago in the days of the whalers. But fuel was too scarce there to fire our stoves. Finally we realized we could exist there no longer. So it was that we were forced at the beginning of the arctic night to evacuate our house. The occasional Eskimos who wandered by to get small items from their "store" told us that it is much warmer living in an igloo-tent in winter. Doubtful of this, but driven by necessity, we decided to give it a working test. The Eskimos said there was a patch of willows growing inland about 100 miles away where fuel could be obtained. As it was too far to bring the fuel to us, there was nothing to do but go to the fuel to live. "How can we know where to camp? How can we learn to build our own igloo?" we asked.

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