

The Value of Both Form and Function

LYNN WORTH SMITH, *Vizsla Club of America*

Form and Function

This is the middle of 2010, and the Vizsla Club of America is celebrating its 50th year of recognition by the American Kennel Club. We are planning special events and acknowledgements at both our National Specialty and our National Field Championships.

In looking back over the past 50 years, the VCA is pleased and proud of its many accomplishments as the guardian of this special and ancient breed. The road to the present has been, as roads always are, bumpy, hilly, and sometimes difficult to climb – but the view from the top is one we are proud of.

In the late 1960's, a Breed Improvement Committee (BIC) was established and came forward with the requirement that all Vizslas to be bred – or advertised in our national newsletter – must be OFA certified as free of hip dysplasia. This enabled the breed to become one of the top breeds in the elimination and control of hip dysplasia.

In the 1970's, the VCA began to hold their National Specialty and National Field Championships together across the country. This encouraged show people and field people to communicate and be together. In the second half of the 1970's, some Vizslas started appearing at field trials that didn't conform to the breed standard. It was partially through the combined national event that this problem was brought to the attention of the VCA membership. (As combined events are still desirable, the number of entries and competitions offered has grown and, in order to make the management easier, 2010 will be our first year since the 1970's that field and show events will be separately administered.)

The VCA's first effort was to adopt a resolution which stated: "The Officers and Board of Directors of The Vizsla Club of America, in cognizance of their respective responsibilities to protect the breed and foster its development, do hereby condemn crossbreeding of purebred Vizslas and falsification of registration documents. All persons following the fancy of Vizslas are enjoined to subscribe to this ethic in the best interest of the breed."

The VCA's second effort was to ask the American Kennel Club to allow them to prevent dogs that were out-of-standard from competing in national field events. Initially, this request was turned down, but in 1991, the AKC agreed to support an additional requirement for entry into the VCA's national field championship stakes. It states: "All Vizslas entered must be free of any disqualifying faults as stated in the Vizsla standard recognized by the American Kennel Club." This procedure, commonly referred to as "qualifying on the line," was approved by a vote of the entire VCA membership and requires the services of a licensed AKC show judge, who is on the field trial grounds prior to the running of the stakes, to examine all competitors – not with an eye for whether the dog is of show quality, but simply that it has no disqualifying faults. If the dog is over 2 years of age, a permanent qualifying certificate is issued and it does not have to be examined again. A dog that has obtained an AKC show championship is automatically qualified.



The idea of qualifying on the line is not without its opponents. There are many people who believe if a show standard is to be imposed on a performance dog, then a performance standard should also be required of a show dog. The VCA has approached AKC about requiring all Champions entered into our national specialty

Best of Breed to have, at the very least, a Junior Hunter title. This request has been denied.

The VCA now requires all dogs entered in any of our national events to have

an AKC DNA number. This requirement has not, in the least, lessened the number of entries.

Certainly the major mandate of any national breed club is the protection and preservation of their breed. In order to achieve this end, it is often the unpleasant task of these clubs to take controversial positions and withstand attacks from certain factions within the club. Most individuals shy away from this type of controversy because the sport of dogs is a hobby in the mainstream and no one likes to have conflict in all areas of their lives. But, avoidance of conflict is next to impossible given the competitive nature of the world of canines.

A little courage can often accomplish miracles. Our National Field Champions are dogs that the Vizsla community everywhere can be proud of. And – we are moving toward a Dual Champion that could become a Best in Show – and, maybe, a Best in Show dog will someday make a field judge sit up in the saddle and say "Wow!!". 🐾