



Beagles, Rabbits, a Look at the Past, Securing the Future and...

Finding the Perfect "Hunting Beagle" for You

Finding the perfect dog for you is actually possible. Difficult yes, but still very possible. But first thing is first, you must determine what kind of hound do you really enjoy and truly want. There is a vast amount of styles and types of hounds out there and all types of houndsman that will swear that their choice of hound is the best type of hound. There are different bloodlines that are and have been for years specifically bred for the characteristics and traits that are best to run the cottontail, swamper, hare, jackrabbit and even the fox {red & grey}. Because each have different environments, circumstances, terrain, conditions and the game all have different running styles, this is a must.

So, it should not shock anybody, if you live in the South and you purchase a beagle from Canada that for years have been specifically bred to possess the characteristics and traits to run hare or fox in bitter 10 degrees to sub 0 weather on a grueling 3 to 5 hour run through 2-5 feet of snow through wooded and rocky dry ice conditions, when you bring them home to run in extreme heat on cottontail that makes a sharp turn every 30 feet scampering through snake filled dry dusty thick brush before in goes in a hole.... You might have a problem. Now some may attempt to say ***"a dog is a dog and a rabbit is a rabbit, and any good dog should run any rabbit"***. But this could not be further from the truth.

And then we have what I will refer to as ***"tweeners"***. Where we have attempted to reach the pinnacle of ***"both worlds"*** by breeding the two different extreme styles of dogs together in hopes to capture the best traits of both dog cultures and wrap it all up into one superdog. Don't get me wrong, some great dogs evolved from some of the most ***"oddest"*** crosses, but the percentages of culls compared to success stories is unreal, and people like you end up with many of these dogs via experimental crosses and end up with the forced upon task of convincing yourself to be content with what you have. As of now in pedigrees, all champions are in "red". But wouldn't it be nice if the champions were color coded so the readers were able to determine from which Beagle Field Trial Format they were all from?

In this article I will cover why breeders from different parts of the US & Canada breed the way they do and why a superdog in Canada may be a "dud" in the dry hot sands of Texas, and why a superdog from Florida may be a "dud" in the icy bitterness relentless runs in Canada. I want to cover the different characteristics and traits that make a dog more valuable to you, where you live, hunt and under the conditions and circumstances that you are hunting in the most, where you need a dog to be its best naturally and instinctively.

When you take any creature out of its element that it has evolved, bred or prepared for, you set that animal up for failure and yourself up for dissatisfaction. What I will not do is state that one particular dog, breed or bloodline is better or worse than another, because it all depends on your circumstances and expectations.

Let's first begin with some of the things we look for in dogs. Remember, we are taking into consideration that cottontail, swampers, jacks and hare all have a variety of styles and terrains that dogs must adapt to in order to pursue them. Breeders from a variety of Different bloodlines each had an agenda for a particular game, terrain and under different running conditions. But every hound should have some things in common. Let's just ***"skim"*** through the surface of some of the basics. See if you recognize some of these traits or lack of traits in your hounds.

"Hunt" is the ability to recognize rabbit alluring cover and eagerness to explore it, to find and jump a rabbit. ***"Search"*** is the instinct to ***"roam"*** until they find a line, usually to find a check or the line of a Hare or Jack. ***"Patience & Desire"*** is settling down in the midst of bad conditions or a hard check and sometimes in the middle of a pack that is scattered and in chaos, and maintaining a willingness to stay with any problem encountered as long as there is a possibility of achieving success. A ***"determined"*** hound is a ***"hard-headed"*** hound and has a purpose in mind and will overcome, through sheer perseverance, many obstacles that often frustrate less determined running mates. Determination is desire in its most intense form. ***"Quitting"*** is a very serious fault and dogs that do this should be eliminated from your pack and kennel, with no exceptions or excuses. Quitting indicates lack of desire to hunt and succeed. From refusing to run, to such lesser forms as waiting for another dog to jump the rabbit before it joins the pack, walking the paths with the gun hunter and loafing or watching other hounds in difficult situations or hard checks.

"Nose & Line" is all about the nose keeping control of the trail while making the best possible forward progress, adjusting speed to correspond to conditions and circumstances. No hound can be too fast, provided the trail is clearly and accurately followed. A beagle pursuing from point "A" to point "B" as fast as possible with the least amount of mistakes is exactly what we are after. ***"Backtracking"*** is the fault of following the trail in the wrong direction and indicates lack of mental ability to determine direction of game travel. ***"Pottering"*** is the inability to make forward progress on the trail. Hesitating, second guessing, bowing up at the back and making a "project" out of a simple line or lack of intent to make progress is a "potterer". ***"Swinging"*** is casting out from the last point of contact, without first making an attempt to regain scent near the loss. It is a gambling action, which is sometimes necessary depending on the game that you are pursuing, being cottontail, swampers, jacks or hare. ***"Skirting"*** is purposely leaving the trail in an attempt to gain a lead or avoid hazardous cover, thick brush or hard work. It is cutting out and around trailing mates in an attempt to intercept the trail ahead to get to the game first. Hounds that do this sometimes "anticipate" the direction of the trail and have a knack for working "smarter" not "harder", and can look really good at times, or really foolish at other times. Again, desiring this quality depends on the circumstances of hunting conditions and the type of game that you are pursuing, being cottontail, swampers, jacks or hare and there is a "limit" to this skill before it quickly becomes a fault. ***"Running hit or miss"*** is attempting to make progress without maintaining continuous contact with the trail, or gambling to hit the trail ahead. Some dogs do this when all they are is "packed". This is a situation where soloing can dramatically help a dog. ***"Rocketing"*** or bounding off is rushing ahead when contact with scent is made, without properly determining direction of game travel. Over-zealous pups will sometimes do this but as they get older and get more experience in the field they should "wise-up" and settle down.

"Mouth" Proper use of voice is proclaiming all finds and acknowledging all forward progress by barking, yet keeping silent when "not" in contact with scent that can be progressed. ***"Babbling or Cold Trailing"*** is excessive or unnecessary barking. The babbler often barks on the same trail over and over, or in attempting to regain the trail at losses. The scent is appealing to them when other dogs are not attracted to it. It has to do with the way a dog acts and reacts to a scent through "reasoning" and makes the instinctive choice to be excited by it or not. ***"Tightness of mouth"*** is a failure to bark when making progress. This will often be shown by the hound tightening up when pressured, or sometimes because of lack of pressure. Sometimes it takes a dog, to bring out the dog, that is in the dog. Also, some people solo too much when the dog is too young. You can always ***"solo"***. However, you cannot always pack. This starts with pups during socialization. Hypothetically, take a litter of 6 pups and keep 5 in one pen and isolate 1 pup in another pen. You then feed the ***"5 pups"*** using one big pan. You feed the ***"1 pup"*** in his own bowl to himself. If you were to do this for 2 weeks straight, and then put all 6 pups together again and attempt to feed all six pups using just one big pan, that sixth pup that was isolated will not attempt to scramble, compete or fight for his share. He will do without and look elsewhere for his food. When you start a pup and then solo him ***"too much"*** at an early age it is going against the very nature of how hounds work, hunt and learn to pursue game. Hounds are ***"pack oriented"*** animals. Hounds literally feed off one another in the learning process of pursuing game. If you are training 4 young hounds together, as one learns or discovers an attribute the others will follow suit and as they all learn and discover new and different attributes they will all feed and learn from each other. Soloing a young dog "too much" actually does more harm than good. You are limiting his learning process at a vital time of his learning and discovering process. After a dog has been running for a period of time, only then is the proper time for soloing to ***"perfect"*** the qualities independently that he has learned on his own and from his pack mates. I have always been a ***"promoter"*** of soloing a hound, but only the right way. The wrong way can provoke your dog to being tight mouthed, abandoning a pack, not willing to pack at all or quitting at the first check and going off to find his own rabbit.

"Independence" is a hound that ***"knows what he knows"***, and he can refrain from becoming upset or influenced by the actions of faulty hounds. Following, or watching other hounds, is indication of lack of sufficient independence. Ignoring other hounds completely and refusing to pack-up with running mates is indication of too much independence. ***"Lack of independence"*** is a common fault that is shown when a dog watches other hounds and allows them to determine the course of action. I call these dogs ***"me-too-ers"***. They are just along for the ride making a lot of noise, appearing to look real busy but not accomplishing anything. If you don't pay close attention, these dogs will appear to be dogs with a lot of hunt, but they simply lack results.

"Intelligence" is that quality which influences a hound to apply its talents and traits that it has been blessed with through its genetic makeup. The intelligent hound learns from experience and from that experience is less likely to repeat mistakes. He makes the most out of what he is and he has the ability to compensate for the areas that he has faults in. ***Intelligence or "brains" is the most over-looked, unappreciated and under-pursued quality in beagling today.*** Years ago Yellow Creek beagles were sold as drug dogs and used in airports, schools and drug busts across the country. They were very "trainable" dogs that could be taught to shake a hand, roll over, sit, play dead and sniff out multiple types of drugs through brick walls, luggage, steel lockers and under different circumstances and surroundings. That intelligence came in handy in a field while pursuing a rabbit. How a dog is "wired" between the ears means everything. The intelligence of a dog controls to what degree of that dog's talents, traits and characteristics will arise to the fullest potential or be hampered by ignorance. The "reasoning" and decision making process of a dog depends on breeding for "intelligence" added to their natural instincts.

Now let's look at the pursuing of game. First let's acknowledge the differences in terrain and conditions. Some are very interesting. There are some old "wise tales" that I would like to share with you about good conditions and bad conditions.

Good scenting conditions

- When the ground is wet
- When the air is colder than the ground
- When snow or frost is forecasted and coming upon you
- When the smoke from a chimney stays low and does not rise
- When the hunted animal is running upwind

Bad scenting conditions

- When the ground is dry and/or sand mixed
- When the weather is stormy/unsettled
- When the air is warmer than the ground
- When the frost is coming out of the ground opposed to falling from the sky
- When there is a strong wind
- When there is heavy rain
- In fog when the scent lingers and spreads slowly and mixes with the scents of the surroundings

Then there are the different types of game. Though there are many things that are similar, there are also many things very different. Hounds will react to these differences. For example, a hare will react to being chased in much the same way as a fox, using flocks of sheep, horses, herds of cows, manure etc ... to ruin or disguise his the scent. Other means of avoiding being caught are a sharp right angled leap to the side (some up to 12 feet) which may be followed by “clapping” a quick flattening of the body to the ground, doubling back on its tracks and then another sharp right angled leap to the side. Because the runs are sometimes so long and wide, it may also be aided by the intervention of a fox or deer, which is very tempting for the hounds. Depending on the type of hare, they can weigh from 5- 8lbs and is therefore much faster than a beagle, but the superior stamina of the hounds bred to run hare will eventually, wear down the hare. As the hare tires the scent weakens beagles can sense this, and the older and/or experienced hounds will push up to the front of the pack for the kill. Despite this, runs of five miles and over may be experienced, the hunting of one hare may be as short as twenty minutes or as long as 3 and a half hours and over. A well hunted, tired hare will “then” begin to twist and turn. Because of the speed of the pack, they may disappear from view and may not be found for an hour or more as you slowly but surely hear them coming back from a distance. A hare is not usually “jumped” as much as a cottontail is, but is usually “striked” by a hound searching wider for a line rather than a hound searching close, slower and methodical for a setting cottontail rabbit that will at times allow you to step on him before he runs. Also, hares don’t often dive into a hole as a cottontail will do.

This is just a “brief” rundown of a hare along with a few comparisons to the cottontail. I am choosing these specific examples because I realize that the “bulk” of the readers are cottontail hunters, but make no mistake, cottontails also have their “getaway” strategies that give some beagles absolute fits. But the plot even thickens more, because not only is there hare, cottontail, jacks and swampers, but there are several different types of each that are hunted across the United States, Canada and Mexico. These rabbits and hares pursued, widely range in all different sizes, terrain, running conditions, running styles and yes to a degree, even different scents. Let’s look at a few.



There is the:

- Antelope Jackrabbit in Southern Arizona and Northwest Mexico
- Snowshoe Hare found all over North America
- Arctic Hare in Northern Canada and Newfoundland
- Black-Tailed Jackrabbit in the Central and West US, Northern Mexico and California
- White-Sided Jackrabbit in Mexico and Southern New Mexico
- White-Tailed Jackrabbit throughout the Western US

These are just the Jacks and Hares, now let’s take a look at the cottontails and Swampers:

- Eastern Cottontail in Southwest US, Southern Canada, Eastern Mexico and Central America {most common}
- Marsh Rabbit in the US
- Mexican Cottontail in the US and Mexico
- Mountain Cottontail in the US
- New England Cottontail in the US
- Swamp Rabbit in swamps of Southern US



All of these rabbits are different in their actions and reactions and how they react when they are pursued by beagles. You cannot paint with a wide brush of how a dog should run “a rabbit”, simply because there is such a variety. More to the point, breeders of the dogs that many are buying, are usually breeding for the specific characteristics and traits that are best to pursue the game that the breeder himself hunts the most. If you ever get dogs and they are from reputable breeders but they have some traits that “you just don’t get”, it may not be because the breeder has lost his mind, it may be that the dog’s line has traits that have for years been solidified for the purpose of running certain game in certain conditions and you are attempting to run him “out of his element”.

Many attempt to cross beagles from different strains that were specifically bred with different agendas in mind from their particular breeders. As stated above, some rabbits do not run more than 40 feet without a “zig and zag”, through thick thorny brush over dry dusty conditions. Certain types of hares sometimes run like a fox on a 5 mile hike through rigorous tough terrains. Swampers take routes through thick forests and sometimes swim from bank to bank while crossing creeks through the woods and the dogs often are gathering scattered scent from leaf to leaf while running through 3-4 inches of water. Jacks take wide circles over rock, sand and other rigorous terrain. Many of these rabbits and hare hop 1-2 feet at a time while others can leap up to 10-15 feet. Therefore the thinking of breeding different strains together is with the “hope” that they should “mesh” well together because after all, a beagle is a beagle, right? Needless to say, this can lead to many problems.

Extreme differences in strains such as a Traditional Brace Beagle with a Hare Hound {an extreme example}, usually will not produce “true to type” of the sire or the dam. When beagles have been bred for years to develop certain characteristics and traits they literally take on a “breed” of their own within the same breed. Crossing some of these strains together after they have been established and the traits have been solidified in total opposite directions is almost the equivalence of breeding to a different breed of dog altogether. For some Beagle Strains, the only thing they have in common is having the appearance of a Beagle. Simply because the directions of the characteristics and traits have been line bred in different directions for years. The outcome is usually not good and it takes many unnecessary generations of breeding and culling to accomplish what you want, if you ever do. I know it sounds like a good plan, and creating a dog that possesses the best of all the dogs in the pedigree from both {very different} sides is what many are after, but what you usually get are offspring that are average across the board, but “great” at nothing. And this is referring to the best of the best out of these crosses. Has it ever worked? Yes! Are the odds in your favor? Not even close!

Whenever you take any animal out of its natural element that it has evolved into or has been strategically bred for, you usually are going to have problems. But man has been doing this for years with all kinds of species, attempting to be a “creator” opposed to just simply enjoying the creation and making steps to secure and perfect what we already have.

Now this really doesn’t pertain to “beagling” but I find it very interesting and there some valid overall points to be observed of the concept.

Have you ever heard of a “Liger”? Ligers are crossbreeds between a male lion and a female Tiger. Ligers are the world’s largest cats. But if you reverse the breeding and breed a male Tiger to a female lion, they are called “Tigons”, they on the other hand, are prone towards dwarfism and are usually smaller than either of their parents.



Or how about a “Zorse”, it is the result of crossbreeding donkey with a zebra. The Zony is the result of

Or how about a “Cama”, it is a hybrid between a camel huge difference in sizes of the animals which disallow tails of a camel but the cloven hooves of a llama. Also



lion and a female Tiger. Ligers are the world’s largest cats. But are called “Tigons”, they on the other hand, are prone towards

a horse and a zebra. A zonkey is the result of crossbreeding a crossbreeding a pony to a zebra.

and a llama. They are born via artificial insemination due to the natural breeding. A Cama usually has the short ears and long most noticeably is the absence of the hump.

And finally how about the **grolar/pizzly** hybrid, it Although the two bears are genetically similar, 16 April 2006, a hybrid bear was shot dead by Jim Canada. It was the first time a hybrid was found in pizzlies have only been found in zoos because the mostly fail to survive in the wild, but some do



is the product of a grizzly bear and a polar bear. they tend to avoid each other in the wild. During Martell, a hunter from the United States, in the wild where previous records of grolars or hybrid’s natural instincts are “torn” and they rarely survive.

wolves have led to hybrid offspring, and red be descendants of coyote/wolf hybrids. Also, the are at a lower number, they’ll interbreed with

In Ontario, breedings between coyotes and wolves, considered a distinct species, may in fact same thing happens among wild cats. Where lynx bobcats. This happens in the lower 48 states of the US.

What does all this have to do with breeding beagles? Absolutely nothing! I just thought this stuff was unbelievably interesting. But seriously, there are lessons that can be learned from the very concept of these hybrids. Now many of you reading this is thinking something like, “this would more pertain to breeding a beagle to a poodle or a dog to a wolf”, right? But not necessarily, it is the concept that I want you to grasp.

I am going to repeat what I said earlier in this article, when beagles have been bred for years to develop certain characteristics and traits they literally take on a “breed” of their own within the same breed. Crossing some of these strains together after they have been established and the traits have been solidified in total opposite directions is almost the equivalence of breeding to a different breed of dog altogether. For some Beagle Strains, the only thing they have in common is having the appearance of a Beagle. Simply because the directions of the characteristics and traits have been line bred in different directions for years.

I believe that everybody deserves to own that “once in a life time” stellar and out of this world hunting beagle. The kind that you will talk about to your friends, grandchildren and all those that you come in contact with, 20 years after the dog has been long gone. But the reality is, many will never experience this simply because of the methods being used to achieve this. Many “settle” for mediocrity hoping the “once in a life time” dog will come along “someday”, and many of you allow others to dictate your standards. Yes,



you read it right and I said it! You allow others to dictate your standards and then make excuses for the dogs and yourself for choosing such a hound, when in your heart of hearts, you know better!

One of the biggest issues at hand is the standards that are pushed and excepted to what the “right” and “proper” way a rabbit of any kind should be run by “any” dog. For the most part who sets these standards? Field Trials. I know... hold your breath, most reading this is saying to yourself “*I set the standards of my dogs*”, but for the exception for a select few, this is not true. Much like when you go to the grocery store and pick out the products that you choose to purchase and bring home. But who sets the standards of quality upon the items that you get to select from? The particular store with the final seal of approval from the government.

Field Trials at one time was for gun hunters to come together to compete against one another to value who had the most complete over all hunting beagle. It was also an opportunity to find and be introduced to stud dogs that could complete your female and “better” your stock and your hunting experience. However, beagle field trials have went through many stages. A few of those stages almost destroyed the “hunting” beagle single handedly. Trials began for the purpose of hounds being brought together to mimic a hunt. Therefore the required qualities in order to “win” were the very same qualities that a gun hunter wanted his dogs to display, except in a trial these “qualities” were expected to be at a level of “perfection”, which was what field trials were all about and should always be. But then in the “beagle world” trialing became larger than gun hunting itself among those participating and then everything changed, {as far as registered dogs were concerned}. Money “the root of all evil” came into play and all the rules, priorities and standards changed, and so did the dogs.

Trialing took on an identity of its own and had a set of rules and standards of its own and many of the beaglers involved followed suit. As years went by and after all the dust settled, the watered down and incomplete standards that it took to win a field trial were not the same standards that gun hunters needed or desired to have in a field while gun hunting. As a matter of fact, it was absolutely awful and embarrassing.

Think I’m being “distasteful”, judgmental or too “forward”? You bet! Now set back and get ready for intoxication by “truth”. Educate and stand up for yourself to prevent history from repeating itself.

Some are thinking “*the field trial formats will never change and the true “gun dog” is plentiful and nothing will change that*”. But I can envision people like Willet Randall, L.M. Watson, Elmer Gray and many others assuming the same thing.

The truth is, it became all about a popularity contest and achieving field champion status on paper. Having the pedigree with the most “red ink” brought big bucks, but the criteria to get that championship status “red ink” was compromised to accommodate the weaknesses that were in the dogs, because in reality, the actual quality of the dog was very poor and useless for gun hunting.

It started when those that were “in charge” at the time proclaimed that the “building boom” that followed World War II introduced hazards to Beagles while they were running in a field trial. They claimed the rabbit would take the dogs across new roads or highways. Most clubs voted to fence their land in order to be able to have sanctioned hunts that people would actually attend. They claimed it was for the good and safety of the hounds. I find this odd simply because here we are in 2011 and most trials held today are “free range” in the open and wild. But their decision, of course, also enclosed the rabbits, which then developed running traits quite unlike their “wild” cousins outside the enclosures. After a while, some clubs used wild rabbits but many clubs used farm raised rabbits.

In order to get hounds that could effectively trail the “enclosure” rabbit and farmed raised rabbits without running them all down, breeders in the trial circuit bred for a slower working dog. It didn’t take long to weed out the characteristics and traits of the true to type “hunting beagle” and it was replaced by an appreciation of the “style” in which the field trial Beagle tracked a rabbit with a slow trot and sometimes a walk. Many dogs would not even sight chase a rabbit, they were more concerned with the rabbit’s “line” than the actual rabbit.

This type of beagle absolutely took over the beagle field trial world. The facts are, **90 percent of all AKC beagle clubs which totaled over four hundred clubs holding AKC licensed trials in the 1980’s were running Brace events.** At these trials the hounds whose “style” most impressed the judges at the time were given the ribbons. Through selective breeding, the Beagles used at field trials and run in Braces became very slow tracking beagles. However, this was the main flaw, “tracking beagle”. I say this because that is all they could do. That is all they were bred to do for many years. The way they were “scored” in a trial did not include if a dog would hunt, jump or many other traits and characteristics of a “gun hunting” beagle. And they “totally” changed the method of scoring in a trial event, compared to the forefathers who established this great sport. Take a look at this old score card from a field trial in 1919. Notice what was required for a dog to score points and win a trial. It took the traits and the characteristics of a true “gun dog” to win. I believe we could use this same score card today.

I will acknowledge the fact that these men did build a dynasty, and in the history books many field champions will be noted. They indeed created a breed within a breed and a beagle with its own distinct identity. Many also gained greatly financially. However, they did not “create” a new format, instead they took over, changed and manipulated an already established entity and almost destroyed the true “hunting beagle” in the process.

But, do you remember the 90 percent of all beagle clubs which totaled over four hundred clubs holding AKC licensed trials in the 1980s that were running Brace events that I spoke of earlier? Thank God for the other 10 percent and the rabbit hunter! The average rabbit hunter and those that belonged to hunt clubs are by far still the most numerous of all who take wild game in the United States, even today.

They found that the slower tracking field trial beagle without a desire to hunt or jump a rabbit, was totally worthless as a hunting dog. **But by the early 1970s**, the desire for a real gundog, or “hunting beagle” was burning in the hearts of gun hunters who also desired to field trial. This movement gathered momentum, and it demanded breeding programs that would bring back the traits and characteristics that the original gundogs that started field trialing in the very beginning.

Also the circumstances of the northern clubs that ran their hounds in Large Packs on hares were very different. They were a part of that 10 percent and they continued to be committed to producing hunting beagles and believed that their trials showed the Beagle to be “true to type” as a gundog. Also, there were the Canadian beaglers and trialers that kept the “true to type” gundogs in mass numbers with stellar breeding programs.

The promoters of the “gundog” or “hunting Beagle” however, chose to use a running standard that was already in the AKC Rules. This was the “Small Pack” in which hounds are run on rabbits in packs of from three to seven hounds. To make a “statement” that proved beyond a doubt that they were competing with “hunting Beagles,” they added to the rules that additional testing of their hounds would be “gun shyness” and “hunt”, which would be a part of what became known as the “**Small Pack Option**”.

Also a short time later in the same era, in 1986 Everett Morgan of Kentucky put into works the formation of field trials for “gun hunters” which included field trials for registered and non-registered beagles and soon after established the **ARHA**, which now offers such formats as **Little Pack, Progressive Pack, Big Pack and Gun Dog**. Also in the same era the **UKC {who has been registering dogs since 1898}** began a Hunting Beagle program that now offers two excellent formats being **Hunting Beagle events and Performance Pack events**. Both organizations promoting the “hunting beagle”.

By the end of 2001, 46 percent of all AKC Beagle clubs were conducting licensed and sanctioned trials in this same manner of the Small Pack Option, trials formatted for the “gun dog”. **Today that number in the AKC has risen to 68 percent.**

So in reality, from that day November 4, 1890 in Hyannis, Massachusetts where the first ever sanctioned beagle field trial took place, until the era of the end of World War II, gundogs were gundogs, in the field being shot over while gun hunting, or in the field being judged at a trial. They still carried those traits and characteristics. Then there was a moment in beagle history of clouded judgment that lasted until some pioneers that were not satisfied, that yearned for the true “hunting beagle”, went against the grain and used great wisdom in preserving and protecting the hunting beagle that you and I now have the privilege to enjoy. If it were not for a handful of dedicated houndsman across the US, those Large Pack on Hare beaglers and the Canadian beaglers, who knows where beagling would be today.

My agenda in writing this article is to provoke some thoughts:

- Know what a true gundog really is, his traits and characteristics
- Be selective, judgmental and cull vigorously and harshly
- Above all, do not settle
- Keep in mind the circumstances, terrain and game that you are pursuing
- Try not to take a dog out of his element and expect too much
- If it is not broke, don’t fix it. Many have been blessed with some great dogs that derived through the wisdom of some dedicated breeders. I know to some this thing called “beagling” is just to pass some excess time and you may take the “seriousness” of it lightly. But some great houndsman gave their blood, sweat and tears for their beagles and breeding programs, and dedicated their heart and soul towards it. Honor that by being good stewards of the “hunting beagle” and preserve the characteristics and traits that make this gundog so special. Many of these pioneers have passed away in the last few years, who will take their place?

I know a portion of this article is borderline “controversial”. But that’s ok, I am not worried about that. I have “thick skin” and don’t lose any sleep when people disagree with me or take cheap shots towards me because of my opinions, beliefs or stating the truth. I am not advocating you to make “ripples” or start “trouble”, but I implore you to be involved. Participate in club meetings, write and share your opinions to your particular field trial advisory boards and board of directors. Remain aware of the “rule changes” throughout the different field trial formats and make sure they are promoting and “bettering” the hunting beagle and not having ulterior motives for the format itself.

CARD FOR FIELD QUALITIES						
NAME OF DOG	Judges shall credit dogs with maximum, as per standard, if warranted, or fractional parts thereof according to their judgment of merit.					
	In competition with					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Natural and eager disposition to hunt	5					
Running action, which should be free, easy and without apparent labor	5					
Obedience when not trailing started game, hunting likely covers thoroughly and speedily	10					
Trailing and starting game	10					
Taking trail first after game is started, other than by dog, chances being equal	5					
Speediest work in carrying trail ..	10					
Truest work in carrying trail ...	15					
Marking game under cover	5					
Best ranging at a loss	5					
Best hound voice	10					
Best endurance	10					
Other creditable work not specially credited	10					
Field trial	Total	Average				
Bench show score	Grand average					
<i>We hereby certify that we have carefully scored the Beagle</i>						
<i>and award</i>						
<i>points according to above standard.</i>						
.....						
Judge of Field Trials.						
<i>The Beagle</i>						
<i>having been awarded</i>						
<i>points for field trial form, the said Beagle is hereby awarded</i>						
<i>a grand average of</i>						
<i>points for combined merit and</i>						
<i>.....prize in</i>						
<i>class</i>						
<i>Stakes</i>						
<i>at National Beagle Club's sixth annual field trial held at</i>						
<i>.....,</i>						
<i>1896.</i>						
Chairman Field Trial Committee.						

Field Trial Score Card
1919

I believe all beaglers (especially the younger and/or newer) need and deserve to know where we came from, in order to get a grip on where to lead us. The legendary "Ole Timers" are just about gone, there are still a few but it is time for some younger "houndsman" with a purpose and a specific agenda to commit to securing the "hunting beagle". For some it is just passing some time away, for others it is a passionate hobby, but for a few it is a way of life.

But on the "lighter flipside" when it comes down to it, the only person that your dog needs to please is the person feeding him and no matter how "perfect" that you "know" that your dog is, there is always going to be somebody that is going to criticize.

An avid duck hunter was in the market for a new bird dog. His search ended when he found a dog that could actually walk on water to retrieve a duck. Shocked by his find, he was sure none of his friends would ever believe him. He decided to try to break the news to a friend of his, Tom the complainer (referred to as doubting Thomas by his hunting buddies), who refused to be impressed with anything. This, surely, would impress him. He invited him to hunt with him and his new stellar "once in a life time dog". As they waited by the shore, a flock of ducks flew by. They fired, and a duck fell. The dog responded and jumped into the water. The dog, however, did not sink but instead walked across the water to retrieve the bird, never getting more than his paws wet. This continued all day long; each time a duck fell, the dog walked across the surface of the water to retrieve it. The complainer "Tom" watched carefully, saw everything, but did not say a single word. On the drive home the hunter asked his friend, "Did you notice anything unusual about my new dog?" "I sure did," responded the "doubting Thomas". "He can't swim!"

Again, I believe that you deserve to own that "once in a life time" stellar and out of this world hunting beagle. The kind that you will talk about to your friends, grandchildren and all those that you come in contact with, 20 years after the dog has been long gone. Pursue it, preserve it and secure it because there is nothing like it once you truly have it!

God Bless & Take Care, Jim Lane – Laneline Hunting Beagles