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Handling Aggressive Tendencies in Springers

By Joan M. Beck

Introduction

Whenever someone mentions “aggression” in the same sentence as “Springer” you can just feel the collective fancy tense up. Everyone knows that the next comment out of the speaker’s mouth will have something to do with “Springer rage”. Although rage syndrome is actually quite rare, we in Springerdom realize that various forms of aggressive behaviors have inadvertently been incorporated into the breed over the last decade or so. Before anyone takes offense at this statement, let me continue by stating that there are still many more wonderful tolerant Springers in the world than aggressive Springers. It is the unfortunate fact that aggressiveness exists at all in this wonderful breed that is a concern. As ambassadors and perceived experts on the breed, Springer breeders and owners sometimes find themselves in the position to give advice in order to help someone with a Springer who is testing his boundaries. The following is the first of several articles designed to provide the most up to date information on aggression and behavior problems, as well as some proven tips and techniques for behavior modification. A list of reference materials can be found at the end of the article.

Discussion

Aggressive tendencies in Springers can occur for a number of reasons including fear-related aggression, territorial behaviors, resource guarding, leash aggression, dominance related aggression and just simple ignorance and lack of leadership from the owners. In many cases, aggressive actions on the part of a dog is a signal that the humans in the house are not living up to their pack leadership responsibilities. Any dog can become aggressive given the right circumstances. Unfortunately we have seen the threshold for aggressive behavior drop in Springers over the last decade.

Springers, with their high intelligence and somewhat softer personalities, can actually manifest several forms of aggression at the same time, which can make treating an aggressive Springer more difficult. According to Lyn Johnson, DVM, one of the unique features of aggressive Springers is the lack of warning before an aggressive incident. This unique aspect of Springer aggression may be the root of the misnamed “Rage Syndrome”. Some Springers seem to lack impulse control and can over react to perceived threats by skipping the normal canine warning signals of growling, body tensing and lip curls. Springers can go straight from the “glazed look” (a very intense stare and dilated pupils) to a full-blown attack. The current thinking is that some dogs, especially those that show early onset dominance aggression, lack the ability to produce adequate amounts of Serotonin in the brain. Serotonin is one the brain chemicals that has a calming affect on an individual. Without adequate amounts of Serotonin, a perceived threat sets off the “flight or fight” response of the sympathetic nervous system and results in a massive adrenaline release into the dog’s body. This adrenaline overload is the likely reason that these dogs seem to attack without warning or reason. Until the adrenaline is broken down in the dog’s system, they seem not to be able to process any information by sight or sound that would calm the aggressive behavior. This is why it is important to work with a trained behaviorist and a veterinarian when dealing with a dominant aggressive dog. In roughly fifty percent of cases, the use of one of a new class of drugs called Serotonin reuptake inhibitors can make behavior modification techniques more successful by boosting the circulating levels of Serotonin in the brain thus allowing the dog to focus and be less reactive to stressful situations. Believe it or not, Prozac is the drug used most successfully with dominant aggressive dogs. Clomicalm, another in the same class of drugs, has been shown to help with the

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Members have been asking for a good list of Springer related websites, so here is a start from Joan's list of favorites:

ONLINE CHAT GROUPS

Yahoo Groups Home Page - <http://groups.yahoo.com>
Aggressive Behavior in Dogs - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/agbeh>
AKC Judging2 - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AKCjudging2/?yguid=59105406>
ESS-L2 - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ESS-L2/?yguid=59105406>
ESSgroup - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ESSgroup/?yguid=59105406>
Hunt-R-ESS - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Hunt-R-ESS/?yguid=59105406>
K9 Judge-mental - http://groups.yahoo.com/group/K9judge_mental/?yguid=59105406
ObediESS - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ObediESS/?yguid=59105406>
Showdogs-L homepage - <http://myezhost.com/showdogs/>

DOG SHOW SUPERINTENDENTS

Jack Onofrio Dog Shows - <http://www.onofrio.com/>
Roy Jones Dog Shows - <http://www.royjonesdogshows.com/>

ONLINE ESS PEDIGREE DATABASE

Online ESS Pedigree database - <http://www.ariel-ess.com/essfaq/pedigree>

GROOMING AND VETERINARY PRODUCT CATALOGS

Lambriar vet supplies - <http://www.lambriarvet.com/products.htm>
Groomer's Mall - http://www.groomersmall.com/coat_kings.htm
Pet Care RX - <http://www.petcarerx.com>
PetEdge Grooming supplies - <http://www.petedge.com>
KV Vet Supply - <http://www.kvvet.com>
Drs. Foster & Smith - <http://www.drsfostersmith.com/>
Groomer Choice pet products - <http://www.groomerschoice.com/main.html>
Revival Animal Health - <http://www.revivalanimal.com>

CLUBS

American Kennel club - <http://www.akc.org>
ESSFTA (Parent club) - <http://essfta.org>
WESSA Website - <http://my.execpc.com/~wessa/>
Westminster Kennel Club - <http://www.westminsterkennelclub.org>

JOURNALS, MAGAZINES AND SHOW INFORMATION

Infodog Show results etc. - <http://www.infodog.com>
Dog Show Terminology - <http://www.showdogs.org/NipissingKC/glossary.htm>
Canine Chronicle on line - <http://www.caninechronicle.com>
Springer Showcase - <http://www.springershowcase.com>

MEDICAL, HEALTH, NUTRITION, BEHAVIOR

Vetinfo.com - <http://www.vetinfo.com/dogindex.html>
Dog food comparison page - <http://home.hawaii.rr.com/wolfepack/food.html>
Pet Education by Foster & Smith - <http://www.peteducation.com:80/index.cfm?cls=2>
Important Diseases of Dogs - <http://www.ahsc.arizona.edu/uac/iacuc/dogs/diseases.shtml>
Dog Anatomy - <http://www.ccc.govt.nz/animals/DogAnatomy.asp>
Encyclopedia of CanineVet. Info. - <http://www.vetinfo.com/dencyclopedia/deindex.html>
OFA - <http://www.offa.org/>
Canine Eye Registration CERF - <http://www.vet.purdue.edu/~yshen/cerf.html>
Solving dog behavior problems - <http://www.wonderpuppy.net/canwehelp/dbaggression.htm>
Canine Epilepsy - <http://www.canine-epilepsy.com/Resources.html>
Canine Health Foundation links - <http://www.akcchf.org/links.htm>

GENERAL INTEREST

Top Fifty ESS websites - <http://topspringer.hypermart.net/topsites/topsites.html>
List of Springer books - <http://www.wolfenkennel.com/animalbooks/springerspaniel.html>
Springer Links site - <http://www.yourpurebredpuppy.com/links/englishspringerspaniels.html>
Pets Welcome list of hotels - <http://www.petswelcome.com/>
Springer Rescue (National) - <http://www.springerrescue.org/>
Crate Training your ESS - <http://my.execpc.com/~crzyless/cratetrain.html>

Handling Aggressive Tendencies in Springers *(continued)*

treatment of separation anxiety in dogs, but has failed to reduce aggressive displays when used in dominance aggression.

The Development of Aggression in Springers

So the next question that comes to mind is what has caused aggressive tendencies to develop in some members this beautiful elegant breed? Some people speculate that seizures are causing the most severe cases. Others claim to be able to link most aggression back to a few common ancestors. The likely answer is the problem evolved over time. Unfortunately, dominance aggression is found more often in show lines of dogs. As suggested in an article written by Lyn Johnson, DVM for the ESSFTA website, "It makes sense, when you think about it, as a successful show dog must be confident and assertive to deal with all the stresses of the show ring". "We've selected for this personality. Show people instinctively handle these dogs, maintaining leadership without squelching that spark that catches the judge's eye. Trouble occurs when offspring from these lines go into homes with owners who don't know how to handle these assertive personalities". "Assertive personalities exist along a continuum". What probably happened with English Springer Spaniels is extreme, yet beautiful; individuals were retained in breeding programs, resulting in even more extreme offspring. Over time, dominant aggressive tendencies developed in the breed.

On the other end of the spectrum, beautiful, but psychologically timid animals have been successfully campaigned, then introduced into the breeding population because of their sound structure and preferred markings. The fearful nature of these dogs has gone on to produce dogs with aggression at the other end of the spectrum. These are the fear-aggressive animals that react when anything strange enters their world. When denied a means of escape from a threat, these animals use aggression as a means of self-protection. So we have a continuum from fear aggression to normal behavior to dominant aggression in the breed.

Aggressiveness can happen in any breed and any bloodline if breeders are not educated and acutely aware of the problem. Once the problem was recognized in Springers, it is commendable that

most Springer breeders worked hard to become educated on the issue and to eliminate aggressive individuals from the breeding population.

Management Techniques

The easiest way to handle aggressive tendencies is not to let them develop in the first place. Most aggression develops in the absence of good leadership and too much permissiveness on the part of the human in the pack. The following guidelines can eliminate a lot of potential problems before they happen.

- 1) **Rule Number One: Leaders eat first.** Whether it is a bite of cracker or a few nibbles of cereal, humans always eat before dogs. Make sure the dog sees you eat, but don't tease the dog as you do so, this could be construed as unfair, and leaders should always be fair. In a pack situation it is vital that the leader survives, so they always eat first. Eating first reinforces your position as leader.
- 2) **Teach bite inhibition at an early age.** Noted behaviorist, Ian Dunbar, suggests the following; Offer a treat to you dog or begin playing with a favorite toy. Invariably the dog will end up nipping you or catching your hand with its teeth. When this happens you get to play-act a bit. Yip "ouch, ouch, ouch", hold your hand, look wounded and turn away from your dog in dramatic gesture. After a few moments go back to playing with the dog, saying "Be gentle". Every time the dog's teeth touch your skin, repeat the drama, until it dawns on the dog that human skin is very delicate and needs to be treated gently. When the dog plays or takes a treat gently be sure to praise generously. Repeat this exercise daily until the dog is reliably gentle.
- 3) **Start obedience training early.** The brains of puppies are most receptive to obedience training between eight and thirteen weeks of age. In a wild setting, this is the age when a puppy must learn survival techniques in order to survive. This is also the age when the puppy's instinctive willingness to please is the strongest. During this time a puppy will strive to do what you want as part of the bonding process. Springer puppies have been know to master the fundamentals of sit, down, stand and stay before they are thirteen weeks old. Yet because they have not yet completed their inoculations for Distemper and Parvo etc., most puppies are not allowed into training centers until after this critical time period has passed. Teaching the fundamentals at home can be a great answer. Learn some basic training

techniques from an experienced dog person before you bring your puppy home. Early structure and training are time consuming but key elements in helping a dog mature without aggressive tendencies. For those people who are raising conformation dogs and don't want to teach the command "sit", simply choose another behavior to teach. Early training accomplishes three things. It teaches your dog that words have meaning and they need to listen. It shows them that humans are the leader of their pack, and lastly it prevents bad habits from forming in the absence of structured training. As the old saying goes, "either you will train your puppy or your puppy will train you".

4) As soon as your puppy has received its basic inoculations, you should enroll your dog in a puppy socialization class. These classes are designed to teach dogs how to socialize with other dogs as well as give owners important information on everything from training to nail trimming. Dog's that are not taught how to be social from an early age are the most likely candidates to become dog aggressive. Canine communication is carried out with a subtle and precise body language. Dog's that are allowed to socialize with other dogs on a regular basis learn to polish their communication skills and tend to remain social and friendly.

5) Make sure your dog gets adequate exercise every day. Especially in young Springers, pent up energy can translate into aggressive or destructive behavior. Behaviorists have a saying. "A tired dog is a good Dog".

6) From an early age, get your dog accustomed to you handling every part of his body. Make this a pleasurable experience and part of grooming and it shouldn't be a chore. Teach your dog to allow you to place your hands in its mouth by using the flavored dog toothpastes on a finger toothbrush. They love the flavors of the toothpaste and seem to think your giving them a strange sort of treat. Praise your dog when he allows handling. Teach him at an early age that voluntarily rolling over and exposing his tummy to you can result in pleasurable belly rub. This teaches the dog to trust you and that becoming vulnerable in your presence is safe. Never force your dog onto his back using the "Alpha roll" technique. This can have horrible consequences and can make an aggressive dog more violent.

7) It may seem strange, but it is a good thing for a puppy to understand that you have the right to gently discipline him if he misbehaves. A dog that is never disciplined grows up thinking he is the boss.

Then, as an adolescent, when he is disciplined for chewing a shoe, he will react in an aggressive manner.

8) Please do not react to your dog's aggression with aggression of your own. This will only make the situation worse. Using physical force or punishment on a strong willed puppy or dog will only make him more resistant to training. Since all living things need love and affection, the key to developing a service attitude in a strong willed dog is to make it clear that the only way he can get any attention is to cooperate with training. Reinforce cooperation with praise and a treat. Discourage resistance to training with disdain and ignoring any attempts on the puppy's part to gain attention, favor or petting.

9) 12 to 18 months is a fairly typical age for Springers to begin acting out (if they are going to). This is the age where the dog's intellectual maturity and a natural desire to control their own environment begins to overtake the instinct for servitude that is programmed into puppies as a survival mechanism. One of the best things you can do to reinforce the dog's instinct and desire to trust and serve you is to do more obedience training using desirable treats as rewards (like hot dog pieces or liver sausage) and genuine praise when warranted. Try not to use the word "No" as a correction. It can be construed as harsh and angry in tone. Instead try using guttural sounds like "uh ah" and looking away when the dog fails to perform properly.

10) Human inconsistency and double standards are a major source of problems in many breeds of dogs. Dogs cannot mentally handle such dichotomies as: sometimes you can be on the sofa, but not when we are expecting company and I just vacuumed. Or, you can jump up on me as a cute little puppy, but not when you get bigger. Or most importantly, when you make a mistake I will shake, hit, yell or forcefully roll you into a submissive position, and then five minutes later, I expect you to love and respect me. Inconsistencies in training are the number one reason dogs become frustrated, growl, bite and are euthanised. The good news is that almost all of these problems are avoidable with positive reinforcement training techniques. The magic formula for preventing this undesired behavior is to establish an atmosphere of clear communication and reliability right from the start.

11) Because Springer puppies are so adorable, and smart, there is a strong tendency for owners to "humanize" their puppies, allowing them to become

surrogate children, or human comforters. You might say that Springers have become a victim of their own beauty, and when a dog is given a privilege such as a sleeping on the sofa or bed, they often take it as a right and will defend their perceived rights. Some dogs equate elevation with power. If you are having problems with aggression, then furniture and beds need to remain the domain of humans. If you want to spend some time holding and petting your puppy (a pleasurable time for both of you) first require your dog perform some basic obedience exercise like sit or shake hands. This way, the dog understands that everything pleasurable comes with the price of a serving attitude. A few weeks of training should instill a willingness to please into even a strong willed puppy's personality. Carry this practice through out the dog's life to maintain his attitude of respect and servitude.

12) A dog with aggressive tendencies should never be allowed to sit on your lap, place it's paws on your body, lean on you, stare at you or demand to be petted by placing its head under your hand. Boy Springers are especially notorious for looking adorable (sucking up) and asking for attention. This behavior is hard to resist in a puppy, but can lead to terrible problems down the road.

Conclusions

Many people have seen near miracle changes in behavior from little more than some simple rule changes around the house. Asking for behaviors to earn things, (sometimes known as, nothing in life is

free NILIF), not rewarding pushy, rude, demanding behavior with attention, moving the food bowl out of the kitchen, picking up the bowl between feedings, feeding the dog in its crate, frequently changing the location where the dog sleeps to prevent territory guarding etc. Some changes in attitude have been nothing short of amazing, and all as a result of clarifying the dog/human the relationship.

When attempting to fix matters once aggression has occurred, you need to be patient. Reprogramming aggression problems can take months, although you should start to see results within a few weeks. As you begin the reprogramming efforts, be prepared for the behavior to get worse before it gets better. Typically a week of resistance and increased bad behavior can be expected before positive changes are noted. Be kind, firm and consistent and you should see results. Above all, be careful and don't take risks with your dog if he has shown a willingness to bite. Obtain the assistance of a vet and a veterinary behaviorist if problems have been allowed to advance. "In order to change our dog's behavior we must be willing to change our own". (Behaviorist, Mary Swinyer, San Mateo, CA).

Next issue:

"Handling leash aggression"

Followed by:

"Managing aggression in a multi-dog home".

References:

Springer "Rage" – The Non-Existent Syndrome, by Stephen C. Rafe. <http://starfire.safsoft.net>

Don't Shoot the Dog: The New Art of Teaching and Training, by Karen Pryor

On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals by Turid Rugaas

Leader of the Pack-How to take control of Your Relationship with your Dog by Nancy Baer & Steve Duno

Good Owners, Great Dogs by Brian Kilcommons

Culture Clash by Jean Donaldson

Dogs are from Neptune by Jean Donaldson

How to Teach a New Dog Old Tricks by Dr. Ian Dunbar

CLICKER TRAINING FOR DOGS by Karen Pryor

Dog Behavior: An Owner's Guide to a Happy Healthy Pet by Dr. Ian Dunbar

The Toolbox for Remodeling Your Problem Dog by, Terry Ryan

The Dog Whisperer: A Compassionate, Nonviolent Approach to Dog Training by Paul Owens

Jelly Bean vs. Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde by C.W. Meisterfeld

Psychological Dog Training Behavior Conditioning with Respect & Trust by C.W. Meisterfeld

So-called "Rage Syndrome" by Lyn Johnson DVM, <http://www.essfta.org>

Classical and Counter Conditioning, by Barbara D. Brill List Owner, Agbeh group

Dogs Learn By Associations by Barbara D. Brill List Owner, Agbeh group

TCVESSA Club Member Results



Reminder: Please be sure you get any results you wish published in the newsletter to B.A. Breese by the 15th of the month you wish them published.

Cedarwood's Animation Annie "Annie", owned by Jack & Brenda Filipek & Pat Welch:
11/30/02 – Minneapolis K.C. – **WB**
****American Championship Finished****

Cedarwood's Diamond Jewels "Niko", owned by Nancy Munch & Pat Welch:
12/14/02 – Skokie Valley K.C. – **WD, BOW**
****American Championship Finished****

Cedarwood's Laser Beam "Laser", owned by Jean Dockendorf & Pat Welch:
11/30/02 – Minneapolis K.C. – **1st 9-12 mo.**
12/1/02 – Minneapolis K.C. – **WD, 2 pts.**
12/7/02 – Granite City K.C., St. Cloud – **WD, 2 pts.**
12/8/02 – Granite City K.C., St. Cloud – **WD, BOW 1 pt.**
1/4/03 – Land-O-Lakes K.C., St. Paul – **WD, 2 pts.**

Cedarwood's Oops-A-Daisy "Daisy", owned by Jack & Brenda Filipek & Pat Welch:
11/22/02 – Nebraska K.C. – **WB, BOW, BOB**
11/23/02 – Council Bluffs K.C. – **WB, BOS**

Cedarwood's Southern Exposure "Jackson", owned by Jack & Brenda Filipek & Pat Welch:
11/24/02 – Nebraska K.C. – **WD**

A/C Ch. Cedarwood's Storm Chaser "Chase", owned by Pat & Wayne Welch:
11/28 & 29 – Caledon Kennel Assoc. Toronto – **BOB**
****New Canadian Champion****

A/C Ch. Cymbeline's Anticipation "Karlie", owned by Karen Larson & Barb Ciresi:
1/5/03 – Land-O-Lakes K.C., St. Paul – **BOS**

Cymbeline's Music Box Dancer "Dancer", owned by Barb Ciresi:
1/5/03 – Land-O-Lakes K.C., St. Paul – **WD, BOW**

Ch. Eldamar's Vinehill MacKenzie CDX CGC AX

AXJ OACV OJCV OGCV TDI "MacKenzie", owned by B.A. Breese:
12/1/02 – SPDTC., Agility Trial – **6th Masters leg, 2nd Masters Jumpers leg**
1/5/03 – Land-O-Lakes Agility Trial – **7th Masters leg**

Ch. Eldamar's Wil-Orior Checkmate "Chester", owned by Julie Roberts & Gina Paulucei:
1/4/03 – Land-O-Lakes K.C. St. Paul – **BOB**

C Ch. Fox Hollow Made to Last NA OAJ "Grace", owned by Ann Sunderman:
12/1/02 – SPDTC., Agility Trial – **2nd Open Std. Leg**
1/4/02 – Land-O-Lakes K.C., St. Paul – **WB, BOW, BOS – Major!**

Fox Hollow Ms. Tiny Bubbles OA NAJ ONGC NJC NTC WVN CGC TDI "Katie", owned by Jill Shirley & Ann Sunderman:
11/23/02 – TCOTC Agility Trial – **2nd Ex. Std. Leg, 4th**
11/30/02 – SPDTC Agility Trial – **3rd leg Open JWW, 2nd**
****Open Jumpers with Weaves Title Earned****
12/1/02 – SPDTC Agility Trial – **1st leg Ex. JWW, 1st**
1/3/03 – Land-O-Lakes Agility – **3rd leg Ex. Std.**
****Excellent Standard Title Earned****
1/5/03 – Land-O-Lakes Agility – **2nd plc. Ex. Std.**

Ch. Ramblewood Kryptonite MX AXJ CGC NJP NAP NGC OAC OJC "Spinner", owned by Ann Sunderman:
11/23/02 – TCOTC Agility Trial – **1st leg Open JWW Pre., 2nd**
11/24/02 – TCOTC Agility Trial - **2nd leg Open JWW Pre., 2nd**
11/29/02 – SPDTC Agility Trial – **3rd leg Open Pre., 1st**
****Open Standard Preferred Title Earned****
11/30/02 – SPDTC Agility Trial – **1st leg Ex. Pre., 2nd**
12/1/02 – SPDTC Agility Trial – **2nd leg Ex. Pre., 1st; 3rd leg Open JWW Pre., 1st**
****Open JWW Preferred Title Earned****
12/7/02 – Granite City K.C., St. Paul – **2nd leg CD**
12/8/02 – Granite City K.C., St. Paul – **3rd leg CD**
****Companion Dog Title Earned****

Kadrian's Black Jack, "Maverick", owned by Carl Walin & Katherine Walin:
3/30/2002 - Sioux Valley K.C. - **WD, BOW 1 pt.**
4/7/2002 - Salina Kennel Club, TX - **WD, BOW 1 pt.**
5/12/2002 - Cambridge MN K.C. - **WD 1 pt.**
6/7/2002 – TCVESSA Specialty - **WD 3 pts.**
6/15/2002 - Fort Dodge K.C. – **WD, BOW 2 pts.**
8/25/2002 - St. Croix Valley K.C. - **WD BOW 2 pts.**

10/13/2002 - Mason City K.C. - **WD BOW 3 pts.**

****American Championship Finished****

Kadrian's Jackpot "Jackie", owned by Carl Walin and Katherine Walin:

1/5/2002 - Land O'Lakes K.C. - **WB, BOW, BOS 3 pts.**

1/6/2002 - Land O'Lakes K.C. - **WB, BOS 3 pts.**

7/11/2002 - Austin K.C., TX - **WB, BOW 3 pts.**

7/21/2002 - Lake Erie ESSA - **WB, BOW 3 pts.**

****American Championship Finished****

8/3/2002 - Beaver County K.C. - **BOS**

8/25/2002 - St. Croix Valley K.C. - **BOS**

9/14/2002 - Rochester MN K.C. - **BOS**

10/26/2002 - Sioux Empire K.C. - **BOB**

10/27/2002 - Sioux Empire K.C. - **BOS**

Kadrian Wild Card Solitaire "Solitaire", owned by Carl Walin and Mike Redmond:

7/27/2002 - Waukesha K.C. - **WD 1 pt.**

7/28/2002 - Waukesha K.C. - **WD, BOW 1 pt.**

9/14/2002 - Rochester MN K.C. - **WD, BOW 1 pt.**

Wil-Orion's Promise Come True "Quincy", owned by Alice Musburger:

11/31/02 - Minneapolis K.C. - **WD, BOW**

1/5/03 - Land-O-Lakes K.C., St. Paul - **WD**

TCVESSA New Member Profile: Jean Dockendorf



Jean will be starting a new job as Product Manager for Crest Health Care in January after just completed a year of unemployment. Prior to that, she was Marketing Communications Manager for an international, industrial valve manufacturer.

She lives with one Springer dog named Cedarwood's Laser Beam (Laser) and one cat named Angel who they adopted from the humane society. Jean's involvement with Springers goes back 20 years.

When asked why a Springer, Jean responded: "In the early '80s, my brother-in-law at the time had a beautiful black & white bitch named Chase. Because he was a foot-loose and fancy-free bachelor at the time, Chase stayed with me for a couple years. I grew very, very attached. When he was preparing to get married and settle down, I knew he was going to want her back, so I asked if I could have her bred. We talked to Gary and Julie Sorenson who agreed Chase would be a good match for their dog Ch. Achates Sportin' Life. From that litter, four puppies were born in 1986: three males and one female."

"The first one of the litter I named Uno, partly because of his birth order and also because he was the one who had one black hind leg. He was the one I kept. Uno and I spent the next 14-1/2 years together, and formed a very deep bond. He went everywhere with me. Together, we earned his CD degree in 1988, his CDX in 1991, and his UD in 1995 - just prior to his 9th birthday (you can see we weren't on the fast track, but we were persistent!!)."

After Uno passed away in 2001, Jean went to the TCVESSA specialty show in June, and that's where she met Pat Welch and Brenda and Jack Filipek.

"They were all so nice, and understood when tears welled up in my eyes when I started to talk about Uno. Then I met D.J., Jett, Mimi, and Annie. I thought they were such beautiful dogs with gorgeous faces and expressions. I gave Pat a call to talk about getting a

puppy later that fall. I initially told her I wanted an obedience dog, but when I saw the litter, I fell in love with Laser.”

“Pat had him in mind for a show home, and I confessed that I had always wanted to try the conformation ring but didn't know how to begin. After Pat interviewed and drilled me with her standard 200+ questions, she agreed to sell me Laser, in addition to mentoring me on all the elements of grooming and showing a conformation dog. I've been very fortunate to find Pat who has patiently coached me through the first year. I've also been thankful for all the help I've received from so many people including Jack, Brenda, Maggie and my instructors at both Animal Inn and Granite City Kennel Club. I've also received so much support and help from all the other people with Springers at the shows. I would really like to thank everyone for being so nice to a newcomer.”

Best thing about your Springer: “Is their loyalty. I just love the way they follow you around the house and yard. I also like the way they want to sleep on your feet when you sit down, so that you can't move without them knowing about it (Laser even tries to sleep on my feet when I'm standing in the kitchen cooking!)”

Worst thing about your Springer: “After 14-1/2 years with Uno, I think I had selective memory about how much work puppies are – and how much mischief they get in! Laser is a very energetic puppy. A few treasured (but not valuable) Christmas ornaments didn't make it through this year. After spending a year with a puppy, I really appreciate those good old dogs who know the routine of the house and aren't trying to put everything in their mouths!!”

Greatest Accomplishment with Springers: “Earning a U.D. degree with Uno and learning how to show Laser in Conformation.” Jean seems to have learned really well as she is burning up the conformation ring!!

Future involvement with Springers: “In addition to doing conformation, Laser is also learning obedience. He does all the CD exercises pretty well, and now he's starting to do work with dumbbells and learning his utility hand signals. When he matures a little bit, we'll start showing in novice. He also started agility last fall and he really enjoys it. Ultimately, our goal is to get titles in all three disciplines – conformation, obedience and agility. And, I'd like to have him get his UD before the age of 9!”

Funniest thing one of your Springers has done: “I can't think of anything hysterically funny, but I know how handy it was to have a dog that knew hand signals when

he got old and deaf. If someone would stop over at our house, and Uno was out in the yard, we had to get his attention before we could give him the signal to come. So, we'd have to jump up and down waving our hands above our heads until Uno looked up at us. I'm sure we looked absolutely ridiculous, but once he saw us, then we could give him the signal to come. People who didn't know what we were doing would give us the strangest looks!”

Most embarrassing moment you have had with your Springer: “We made the mistake to trying to take Uno to the fireworks one year. As we were wandering around the park looking for a place to sit, the first fireworks were launched, making a big boom. We didn't realize Uno was going to be that afraid, but he was so startled that he jumped right into the lap of a lady sitting on a lawn chair. The lady looked so shocked and surprised to see this good size dog cower right in her lap! Needless to say, I had to apologize profusely, gather up my dog and head for home.”



The English National Championship: A Feast for Springer Scholars

by Francie Nelson

At the July 2002 meeting of the ESSFTA (national parent club) board, it was decided that the club's "Bea Brown Fund" would be tapped to support a special request from the ESSC, Britain's Springer parent club. The English club didn't have sufficient funds to realize its dream – a comprehensive video about Springers in England, the breed's history and its great and interesting people – on the 100th anniversary of the recognition of English Springer Spaniels in their country of origin. The video would feature the November Championship Show as one of several highlights, and proceeds from video sales would benefit the club's newly established Health Fund.

The opportunity to make another return to England was just too great to resist. Off I went to the Championship Show, held in Coventry on November 24.

The English are more casual about show preparation and presentation than we are, but it's an easy adjustment for this American because it's very apparent that the English are focused on the dogs and the breed standard and not the "trappings" of advanced preparation for competition. In England, Springers are not generic show dogs. When you look at the dogs, you are seeing more correct elements of true type, albeit in a less fancy package. Size is not uniform, as it is here. The dogs are taller (their standard states that Springers are "highest on leg and raciest in build of all British land spaniels"). English Springers are, for the most part, more substantially built than our show dogs. They have ample bone, deep bodies and well-sprung ribs, and fantastic running gear – strong pasterns and beautifully shaped feet with very thick pads.

English dogs have faults, of course. The faults, interestingly, are structural shortcomings, not type flaws. Unlike many of our dogs, the English dogs are clearly recognizable as English Springer Spaniels and it's not just because most have ticking. Their heads are typey. And their gait is typey. Their standard retains the description of our breed's unique way of going. Many with short tenure in Springers in the US have never seen this, so of course would not be expected to recognize, reward, or reproduce it. "Gait/movement is strictly his own. Forelegs swing straight forward from shoulder, throwing feet well forward in an EASY, FREE MANNER (my emphasis). Hocks driving well under body, following in line with forelegs. AT SLOW MOVEMENT MAY HAVE A PACING STRIDE TYPICAL OF THIS BREED (my emphasis)."

No, I'm not suggesting that we turn our dogs into pacers. What I do suggest is this: buy the English video when it becomes available, and study the difference in side gait between "their" dogs and "our" dogs. It's quite an education. If you never have the opportunity to put your hands on dogs that remain truly breed typical in this way, at least study it on film and think about whether or not this type trait is something that you are willing to sacrifice. The English dogs encourage us to become better breed scholars, and they give us a lot to think about.

With huge thanks to my hosts, Pam and Chris Wadsworth and to my new friends Lesley Bloomfield and Yvonne Billows for a splendid specialty, all that remains to say is this – "I can't wait to go back." Crufts 2004, here I come.

Visit the English parent club website for pictures and show results at: www.englishspringer.org



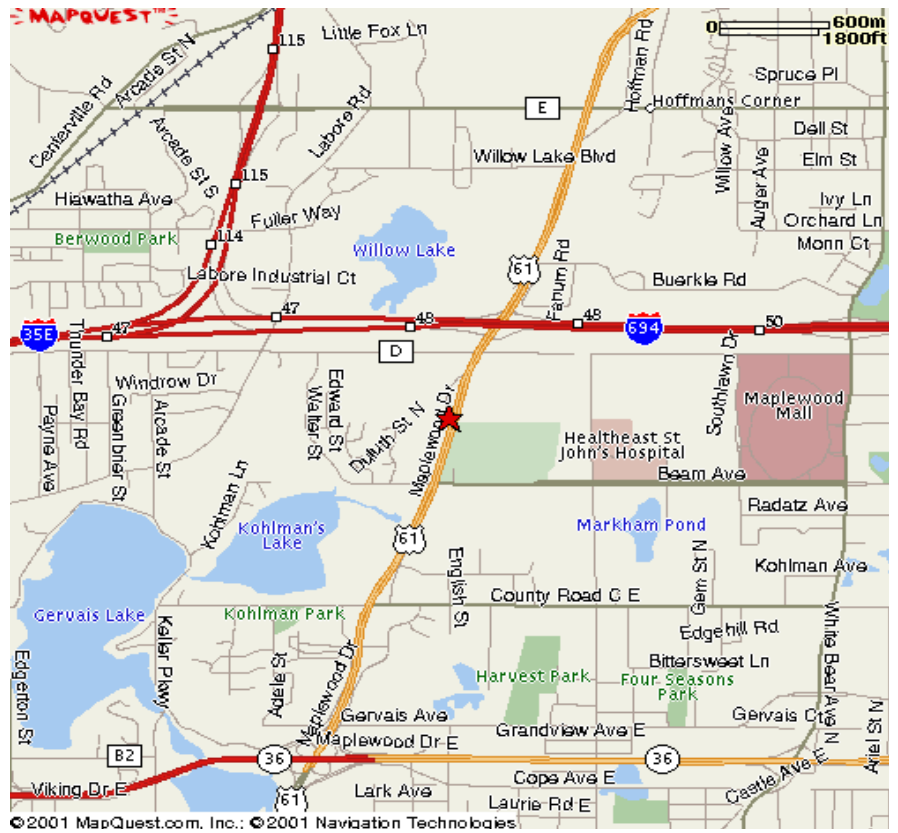
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Hope to see you there!



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