

Borzoi

Selecting a Stud Dog

Searching for a stud dog is one of the hardest parts of a long-term breeding program. Every serious breeder at some point will have to integrate new blood into their lines to either correct faults, improve health, or incorporate better temperaments. Due to expense, local regulations, or money,

today's breeders often cannot maintain a limitless number of dogs in their breeding program.

One solution is to find a partner who can help with exchanging puppies or co-breeding—or even housing males, when restrictions either limit numbers of intact males or breeding bitches.

When you are forced to look outside your own kennel in choosing a male, there are two strategies to consider if you want to strengthen your current type: focusing on genotype, or on phenotype.

Focusing on genotype means looking at genetic similarities, while focusing on phenotype entails consideration of the physical traits of the dog and bitch regardless of pedigree. It is important to consider how pre potent a potential dog may be for passing down breed characteristics. Things you can assess include looking at how similar the dog is to his siblings; whether he resembles his parents and/or grandparents; and, if he has any get, whether they look like their sire— or even better, their grandsire.

Several things that have proven reliable are to consider the grandparents of the dog and how similar they were in the traits you value. Also, consider a line bred male when outcrossing to improve the chances that the breeding will have an impact on your next generation.

If your lines are not genetically related to begin with, using an outcrossed male opens up your breeding program to too much diversity to produce any consistency.

Another approach is to never breed a young dog to a young bitch. If you breed a younger bitch to an older dog, or vice versa, it will allow for at least half the potential pedigree to already have offspring or be proven clear of any late-onset health issues. All dogs have faults, and deciding which faults you can live with versus those you cannot will help eliminate certain dogs, while often not rule out other dogs who have very desirable traits.

I am always amazed at how many people breed to the recent winner rather than look at the sire and siblings to see if there is consistency. Another surprise is that just as many people breed to the convenient male rather than the male who is the best complement to their bitch. With all the advances in breeding technologies and so many restrictions on shipping live animals, the options to use a male located at further distances can still prove to be a valid choice.

So many sighthound breeds are already dealing with a limited gene pool, and each of our choices will affect the future generations down the road by both the dogs we use and those we don't. There are many breeds where parts of the breed's foundation stock have essentially been lost just because of the syndrome of breeding to the popular stud dog. If you chose to outcross, consider breeding to a line bred male, especially if your bitch is not line bred. If you already have a strong pedigree and are breeding for

a specific trait, make sure that trait is evident not only in the male but also in the grandsire, granddam, and siblings. Selecting a stud dog is always a hard choice, but considering some of the ideas above can make your outcome less risky and prove more rewarding for the serious breeder. —

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