

Kaye Ladd



Kaye Ladd bred and showed Standard Smooth Dachshunds for over 25 years. Her kennel name, 'Laddland', is well known, not only in the U.S. and Canada but worldwide. Between 1991 and 2007 a Laddland dog or bitch was Best of Variety Smooth at the Dachshund Club of America National Specialty show nine times and went on to win Best of Breed at five of these shows. It is a phenomenal record that is not likely to be surpassed. Kaye shared the following thoughts on her approach to breeding just prior to her untimely passing in 2007.

A breeder's constant challenge is to try to breed the best we can and to improve our breeds. If you aren't trying to breed better dogs, then you shouldn't be breeding. Even finishing a championship title isn't the sole criterion for breeding a dog. I have finished many dogs that I never bred from for conformation or health reasons.

When people take the most ordinary bitches and proclaim, they are just going to go ahead and breed them to any convenient dog that is available, I'll bet these are usually breedings that should not be done. But many of these people are uneducated about breeding and expect these breedings to deliver champions of quality.

There are many quotes from judge and breeder Richard Beauchamp, of which I am fond. 'It takes 100 good bitches to maintain a breed, and there are three good dogs.' But even this is a trick. Let's consider choosing the 100 good bitches; of course, the experienced breeder would expect they are champions and/or at least dogs with only minimal faults. The show masses, however, often consider finishing a dog the only thing needed to make it a breeding prospect as well. Again, some dogs that finish championships should then be placed as pets instead of being bred. I often say that every Dachshund deserves to be loved; very few deserve to be duplicated.

Learning the Basics of Structure

I was the editor of the Dachshund Club of America Illustrated Standard, and anyone can apply the principles that were used in its development. Find a basic outline of our breed in profile, then determine the angulation of the front and rear called for in your

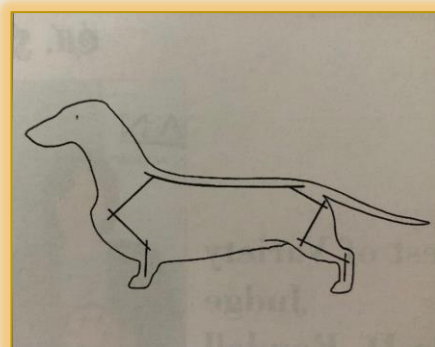
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breed standard. With Dachshunds, all angles are right angles, or 90 degrees. I sketched these right angles and put them inside an outline drawing of the Dachshund. Then I reproduced this illustration on clear acetate. We then made the angles in several sizes and put all these sizes on clear acetate. Anyone can use this method for evaluating photos of dogs. Take a show picture (which of course must be in profile) of the dog you want to evaluate and place it under your clear acetate 'angle evaluation' sheet. Now you can see exactly how the prospect is angled in both the forequarter and hindquarter. You'll see immediately if the dog is for example, straight angled, has a front set too far forward, is simply unbalanced, or perhaps has a weak rear that doesn't match its front.

In Dachshunds, the amount of forechest is key, as the angulation of the front creates forechest. You can gauge the amount of forechest from the overall outline as well as how the dog's front angles match the evaluation sheet you've created. If a Dachshund doesn't have a definitive amount of forechest, no responsible breeder should be thinking of duplicating this specimen.

Perfection isn't key here; balance is. I don't breed dogs with major front problems, but I will breed one with a slightly questionable rear. Each breeder will set their own limits but aim high. A few less breeding animals of questionable quality won't hurt a breed. The Dachshund Club of America, Inc. sells the Dachshund Evaluation kit. The Basset Hound Club of America has worked with us to develop their own.



Any other breed can develop their own kit with a little work. It is a most beneficial tool in selecting and breeding the right dogs. Only when a dog passes the angle test with a good reading do I consider it as a breeding prospect. Next you must breed it to a dog that is at least as good or better quality. This is the beginning of your new future path. I believe it takes six generations to set type. You must breed like this consistently, or at least until you can't find a dog as good as one superb specimen you have been able to achieve. By following the guidelines religiously over time, you will set your own type. Results will become quite predictable. No, you will not achieve perfection, but you can get very close. You can raise your own norm, perhaps even dramatically.

Breeding and the Power of Three

With my first bitch, I found a stud dog in my area that had a dog in his pedigree which was also in hers, and that prompted my first breeding, and my quick establishment of that 'look' as part of the type I would breed. Breeding based on phenotype means breeding dogs with

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physical characteristics or characteristics which compensate for those lacking in the partner. It is a basic philosophy which should be applied to each coupling even as a support premises.

As a breeder, I always felt there should be more information available on breeding theories, but I never found what I was looking for. Therefore, I began to develop my own theories based on my breeding experiences. I started comparing pedigrees, looking for repetition of individual dogs and families of dogs. I look for three strong families in the pedigree of the dog I choose to breed to and I'm happiest if I'm duplicating two of them in the dam's pedigree. Sometimes, one of these family lines has what I call a shadow line. A shadow line exists when one dog is duplicated three or more places in the pedigree. This shadow parent may influence the pedigree in a dominant manner if that name appears several places in the pedigree. This may have a positive effect or a questionable effect.

I also frequently utilize what I refer to as a stem line. This is a family line which is strong in breeding characteristics (that is, known for producing certain qualities, but is not duplicated in the proposed pedigree. Stem lines must be of a similar type to your primary lines, or you can't expect them to affect your result. They must be a family line that you basically admire and one that you have bred with before and with which you've had positive results. A stem line provides the vigor of an outcross with the control of a primary line. If a bloodline does not fulfill all of these things, it is merely an outcross and is, therefore unpredictable. Bloodlines I use regularly as a stem line in Smooth Dachshunds are AppleHill, Villanol and Georgia Dachs. I have a long history of combining these bloodlines with Laddland and it solidifies the expected results.

The more family lines a breeding has in common, the more you can predict the type of the dog you're going to produce. However, if you go too far in this line-breeding vein and only breed within your set bloodlines, you are more likely to come up with both health and temperament problems. You can overdo a good thing. As you plan a breeding, go over the positives and negatives of your three primary families. If you have mixed them before, you have additional guidelines on what you can expect in each litter. Review your list of dominant and recessive characteristics. Go over in your mind what you've produced in the past.

If in doing these exercises you come up with too many problems you don't want to face, don't do the breeding. However, always be careful that you don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. After all, no breeding is without some possibility of a problem.

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If you're working with three bloodlines and sets of characteristics, you are less likely to encounter problems. Three lines will provide enough variety to foster good health. If two or all three of your family lines are of a similar type, you're tying in type as well. Once you've found a pedigree that you like and feel has delivered successful results, try it again and again. If I like the results of one breeding, I will immediately attempt to figure out other breedings that will repeat the same bloodlines and influences.

Your Breeding Team – Three Plus

We all reach a point after we become involved in breeding and showing dogs when we become too competitive. We start losing our perspective and become kennel blind. People at this stage start believing their dogs are the best. Forget trying to improve your breeding – you are there. I was just falling into this trap when two very wise Dachshund ladies, Phyllis Rosinsky and Irene Hammond, gave me some brilliant advice. Essentially, they said to me, 'Your dogs are of a certain type; therefore, you should like dogs of X-kennel and Y-kennel since they have similar type dogs.' The two presented this theory with such calm that I was forced to really think about it for a minute.

Actually, I really did like the dogs I had seen from the first kennel they named. But regarding the other kennel I didn't really see a similarity because that line included dogs that did not move freely. Yes, we had a similar 'look', but I wouldn't want to risk losing the free, effortless movement of my dogs by breeding to a dog that only looked a bit like my dogs.

On a practical basis my thinking led me next to an actual breeding, which I should have been thinking about all along. Which dogs from the kennel X would I consider equal to my bitches for breeding? And what other kennels would I want to select from for future breeding? This was the beginning of a constant ongoing search for stud dogs and competitive kennels that I would want to 'adopt' into my breeding plan and network of friends. Annually, this was one of my most urgent searches at our National Specialty. In horses we have 'stablemates', people who keep horses with the same trainer and who we see regularly while working with our horses and being instructed by the trainer. At horse shows, we would all race to the ring to cheer and support our stablemates' performances. Why don't more people do that within their own breed of dogs? People seem to be able to develop friendships with others who own entirely different breeds and they appear at ringside to cheer them on. Why are they less inclined to do it within their own breed? Why is competition the first thing most people think of within their own breed?

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Well, some time ago I just began to support dogs I liked. I'd appear to cheer on any dog or kennel I liked. I clapped so much at specialties that I've had swollen blood vessels in my hands. And as I did this, I started to develop a team of friends and supporters. Anyone who breeds to your stud dogs is a likely prospect to become a member of your 'breeding team.' Their resulting puppies should be more than merely of interest to you, since they may be prospects for your own breeding program. Frequently our own stud dogs are just a bit too close to breed to our own bitches therefore, I frequently breed to sons of bitches who were sent to my stud dogs.

I help anyone who has my bloodlines plan future breedings. I offer my suggestions regularly to my friends, although I don't necessarily expect that they follow them. My role is advisory. I also don't say 'I told you so.' Once you establish this kind of arrangement with people, they will openly solicit your opinion and you can request theirs. It is a full circle of communication that benefits everyone involved. And when you're talking about breeding dogs, you need every bit of support and communication you can get.

*Kaye Ladd
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