

WHY RUN VIZSLAS IN AMERICAN FIELD TRIALS?

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Promoting the Vizsla as a High Class Bird Dog

Over the years I've been asked this question many times by people who only run or campaign their Field Trial Vizslas in other types of trials. I understand the dilemma for some people and their concerns, but here are some valid reasons to test the mettle. The Vizsla was originally registered solely in the Field Dog Stud Book, maintained by the American Field Publishing Company. From 1954 until 1960, when the breed was accepted by the AKC, all field trials for Vizslas were conducted under the American Field umbrella.

Once the breed was accepted by the AKC, the Vizsla took on a whole new life in the US. Now they could be shown in dog shows, perform in obedience events and their astounding good looks made them quite popular among pet owners. However, the Vizsla still competed in field trials on a regular basis in their new AKC home. The difference was that the competition was not the same as it had been in the American Field. As we all know once you reduce the competition it makes it easier for dogs that would not have won previously to become winners in a new but less demanding arena. This is not to say that there weren't plenty of good competitive Vizslas in the breed. Dogs like Ripp Barat that had won in American Field were still quite the rave in AKC trials. Over the years the breed has continued to produce some excellent field dogs, but there are also dogs in the breed today with less hunting instincts than was once present in the overall population.

By continuing to compete in the more demanding venues one is able to better evaluate the best of the best within any breed. You may hear that the Pointer is the king of bird dogs in the US and it is true. They win more field trials than any other single breed. They win the National Championship in Grand Junction just about every year. However, this was not always the case. There was a time when the English and Irish Setter dominated the field trials in America. So how did this change? It changed by the fact that the Pointer breeders had a singleness of purpose that the other breeds didn't have. As the Setter fanciers spread their objectives over a wider menu of good looks, longer hair, different head shape, richer colors as well as hunting instincts they went into decline as field dogs. The Pointer breeders on the other hand, took the route of breeding for more stamina, more style, more class, better noses and stronger desire. After four or five generations of traveling different forks in the road the Pointer had gained the upper hand.

So how does this help to answer the question of "Why should I run in American Field Trials?" Here's how and why:

1. By competing in trials against breeds that are considered the best, one gains a perspective on what is needed in his own dogs. This helps to prevent kennel blindness. If you see what your dogs need in order to

win, you will be far more selective in your breeding program or when selecting a pup.

2. As you select the best of the best from your breed you automatically encourage improvement and discourage complacency. If you know either the sire or dam you are considering for breeding stock isn't capable of beating the best you are going to look elsewhere.

3. As the product of better breeding begins to perform and win against the breeds considered to be the best, not only does your attitude change, but so it does in the minds of those you're competing against.

4. As these better Vizslas begin to win more often, you attract others to your breed who have the same desires as yourself.

5. As you attract more bird dog fanciers they in turn only breed the best to the best and you begin to see more improvement yet.

6. Over time the breed improvement benefits from this continued momentum.

This can only happen in an arena of purists. As long as there is a diversion of interest there will be a dilution of quality. If you are trying to have a do everything dog, you may very well wind up with a do nothing dog. By running in American Field trials you are competing in a world of bird dog purists. They don't give a hoot about which dog won last weekends best in show. They aren't interested in hearing that your dog can catch a Frisbee and jump over a stick. While they may be polite about it, they are thinking why do those people care about that? If you love the bird dog in your Vizsla, then you owe it to yourself and your dog to go up against the best. Find out how you stack up. You may be surprised, just as many Vizsla owners have been, when you bring home the blue. You may be disappointed at first. One thing you will know is what you've got and what it's going to take to win. If you have the desire and the dedication you can have an impact on the trials you run in, the people you compete against and the breed you love.

If you would like to learn more about running in American Field trials, instead of taking someone else's word for it, go to their website (www.americanfield.com) or subscribe to their weekly magazine. You will see that there are trials all over the country and probably some near you on nice grounds. Go to some, run a dog or two and meet the people. You will find a world of people completely dedicated to bird dogs, their preservation and improvement. You may take a little ribbing because you don't have a Pointer or Setter, I sure have. But that only makes it sweeter when they hand you the trophy. A good Vizsla can compete against any breed. A mediocre Vizsla can beat other mediocre Vizslas on any given weekend. You decide which you would rather have.