



Standards, Health and Genetics in Dogs

CHAPTER I - The struggle against hypertypes: an old dog fancier's point of view

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Abstract - After more than 50 years' experience in canine organisations, the author attempts to show how a dog fancier's perspective may differ from that of a scientist when it comes to defining and dealing with hypertypes. In dog shows, the all-importance of champions has resulted in beauty, or the perception of what is beautiful, taking precedence over what is good. However, the most beautiful dogs should also be the most functional. We examine the roles of veterinarians and judges.

We can attempt to judge dogs collectively, give more importance to gaiting and less to stacking, insist on a working trial from all dogs if they are to become champions, and ensure that the standards, which should be written with care, are respected by all those concerned within the FCI. A number of exaggerations must be corrected. It is important to relentlessly educate and convince, and to demonstrate moderation in all things.

Keywords: Dogs, Breeding, Selection, Hypertype, Cynology.

PREAMBLE

This text has been published in French in three journals (*Ethnozootecnie*, *Revue de la Cynophilie Française*, and the *Bulletin de la SADB*); the originality of its presentation in this book does not therefore lie in a new version of the text in French, but in its distribution to a wider international audience through its English translation.

A young author once asked Victor Hugo what he was reading, and was told: "At my age, sir, one does not read, one reads over again". This leads me to caution you that at my age, one does not say, one says over again.

In order to address the problem of hypertypes, it is important to properly understand them, not just in terms of their scientific definition, which was worded perfectly by Doctor Chaudieu in his article in the superb book recently published by the SCC, *Le Chien, Morphologie, Esthétique, Jugement* (Dogs, Morphology, Aesthetics, Judging), but from the perspective of a dog fancier, a lover of purebred dogs.

I once gave a definition of type, lack of type and hypertype, which had the good fortune to please Camille Michel, then President of the SCC. I concluded that: **"one might ask whether 'hypertype' should be assimilated to 'lack of type', even if a dog showing hypertype errs on the side of excess rather than insufficiency"**. In the middle ground are dogs with type, and equidistant on either side are those that lack type and hypertypes. If confirmation is refused for dogs that lack type, then logic dictates that it should also be refused for dogs showing hypertype. Yet dog fanciers are not convinced, and this is why I said "one might ask". Dogs that lack type (let us call them hypotypes) no longer belong to the breed. They have nothing. They are nothing. Hypertypes exaggerate the characteristics of their breed, but they do possess them. They are not to be rejected, and can put a new shine on the breed if necessary. Many dog

fanciers fully believe this, and the very term “hypertype” annoys them. They see the struggle against hypertypes as obstinacy. Hence the boast by one well-known judge that: “hypertypes are the height of beauty!”.

Alain Pécoult, a competent, educated and moderate judge, neatly summed up the difficulties of judging purebred dogs: “we have to strike a careful balance between a spectacular hypertype and an ordinary dog”. But for dog fanciers, the pleasure is foremost in **seeing** a beautiful dog. This began in England when, in the Pickwick Papers by Dickens, Mister Winkle said: “I should like to have **SEEN** that dog”. I once told Mr Michel, who removed the word “beauty” to replace it with the expression “standard conformity show”, that it would be a hard struggle since he was swimming against the tide. For the FCI, 20 years on, dog shows are still “beauty” shows.

Breeds stand out in the show ring because breeders have cultivated their differences and, prompted by partiality, with everyone wanting his “own” breed, we have now reached a total of 359 recognised breeds (minus a few that have disappeared). Some varieties that become breeds may differ only in terms of ear carriage. The latest breed recognised by the FCI is the Miniature Bull Terrier (n° 359), which was hitherto just a variety. It has even been known for two varieties that have become breeds to be placed in different groups (the Beauceron and the Briard in Great Britain, the American Akita and the Japanese Akita for several years within the FCI for policy reasons). In shows, a single individual from the breed will stand out because it expresses this difference to the extreme. And this escalates from best male and best female to best of breed, best of group, and on to best in show, the cream of the crop. In the main ring at the major international championships, all dogs must be able to walk like an Afghan Hound before a tuxedoed judge if they are to stand a chance. **This is the “glittery” side to dog shows. It is only concerned with aesthetics. Health, longevity and the future of the breed belong to another world. Dog “addicts” care nothing about that. All they want is for their own dog to win**, and above all that it does not come second, which is meaningless.

In some breeds, the current average model may even be a hypertype. An example often given is the Bulldog, which has evolved very rapidly since the first English show in 1859; just look at its projecting jaw. In the 1970s, under the impetus of Mr Olive, I personally witnessed the topline becoming increasingly sloped in the German Shepherd, until it formed a right-angled triangle with a curved hypotenuse. Some judges – fortunately very few – have gone a step further, putting up the hypertype of the hypertype as the best: the obese, breathless Bulldog, the enormous Dogue de Bordeaux (which I call the Rambo effect), the skeletal Azawakh, and the Neapolitan Mastiff lost in its folds of skin. A comment I once made, which pleased Professor Queinnec, was that prior to the 19th century, dogs had no standards, but they did have their health.

Mr Michel believed the champion class should be removed (and that people should not take part in the renowned FCI show, which selects the champion of champions every year). There is a definitive solution to the problem of hypertypes: remove their root by banning dog shows.

Dog showing is a “sport” in the sense of “an outdoor amusement in which dogs and horses can take part”. Like many other sports, it has also developed indoors and, for the time being, it endures, with every kind of excess. It should be recalled that the first standards appeared in the famous British Rural Sports by Stonehenge (John Henry Walsh), which also includes rules for shooting, hunting, coursing, fishing, running, riding, swimming, cycling, etc.. and dog shows (15th edition of 1881). We can thus measure the progress made. Unfortunately, we can no longer talk about sport without mentioning the problem of doping. Some oversized “Dogues” lead us to wonder.

Today, the “flashy” and celebrity aspects of dog shows have developed considerably. Celebrity dogs take the top spot on the podium alongside celebrity judges, who are in demand in the main rings (and are themselves judged by their close colleagues in the VIP area, who would have chosen another dog for its extraordinary qualities that their colleague missed). Let us not forget the celebrity handler, known to all judges and feared by some, who is not interested in second place in the general triumph of the “English

style” positioning that Doctor Luquet was already criticising when I was a young man. Hurrah for the dog with legs extended beyond the rear, meticulously stacked by its handler kneeling next to it and, more recently, wearing a cooling coat.

Fortunately, many judges are still aware and proud of the leading role they play in the choice of champion dogs and in educating people, which is made increasingly difficult by the ever-growing number of dogs to be judged in a day (100, 150, without making a report and with a bonus per dog above a certain number). **Many very competent judges may be caught up in the whirlwind of glitter and make poor choices.** I heard a celebrity international judge give an excellent presentation on the danger of hypertypes, yet the next day he awarded first place to an Irish Setter that was the very model of hypertrichosis, with a thick cushion on its chest and hair that almost reached the ground. In response to the reproach I later ventured to make, he answered: “it depends whether you want be invited back as a judge”. And this Setter (or its lookalike) adorned the president’s office.

To buck this trend, should there be a veterinarian behind every judge? One might be tempted to think so given the success of judging at the Paris Agricultural Show. I can say this because in the early days I was against it. I wondered what professors of veterinary medicine would be able to achieve in this predicament, if they were not themselves dog fanciers. The professors have had the sense to be discreet and are apparently well accepted. What must be avoided is the British model, in which a veterinarian examines the dog after it has been selected by a single judge (the United Kingdom does not accept collective judging). At Crufts in 2012, several champions were thus downgraded. The ensuing public outcry resulted in the clubs rebelling, and in 2013, no dogs were refused after judging. Some dog fanciers fear that by attempting to avoid exaggeration, it will inevitably occur in the other direction and the ordinary dog that Pécoult spoke of will become the norm. The Kennel Club quailed and, according to Mrs Perkins, whose best Bulldog was rejected, that will not help to improve the breed. She told me that of the 4 000 Bulldogs born every year in the United Kingdom, only 200 compete. The other owners have not even heard of the Kennel Club. At the Paris Agricultural Show, judges are involved on the same terms as veterinarians who, having left their equipment at home, judge as they do, “on sight”. The most beautiful animals are also the most functional. I have always been in favour of positive selection: commending the good rather than castigating the bad. As Hélène Denis said, breeders and exhibitors need convincing; they need to decide whether they are respecting their animals or producing a commodity.

The score chart once presented by Doctor Yves Surget proved effective in this sense, once over the first hurdle when it was jeered by CACIB certificate collectors. Show results are tempered by those of hip x-rays. At the SADB, we then published only the results of A, B and C rated hips, and dogs could only become French champions with A or B hips. The disclosure of the secret of a Dogue de Bordeaux with multiple CAC and CACIB certificates (including some I awarded) that had D rated hips made its owner furious and led the president to resign. In the 1960s, I saw mastiffs brought into the ring on their owners’ shoulders and a Dogue de Bordeaux awarded the Paris CAC while sitting, being incapable of putting one foot in front of the other. Thus, when the SCC introduced the Test d’Aptitudes Naturelles (Natural Aptitude Test), at a time when many clubs just tested temperament, I remarked that there was nothing more “natural” than walking, trotting and galloping. For the Dogue de Bordeaux, I established the “triangle gaiting” pattern and the current president, Mrs Tompousky, values it greatly. Three judges stand at the points of an equilateral triangle of 30 metres per side. Each judge therefore sees the dog’s front, rear and side movement. The first part is done at a walk, and the second and third at a trot. In the second round, the first two parts are again done at a trot, and the third at a gallop. The judges give marks for gait on panels with marks from 0 to 5. The last judge, who sees the dog arriving at a gallop, can drastically reduce the mark if its breathing becomes raspy. In the past, we even envisaged a veterinarian in this position. In addition to the show provided, which dog fanciers love, the “triangle” means there are no more sprawling, cow-hocked or lame Dogues. Other clubs have adopted this pattern in France and elsewhere (Spain, USA) and, for example, on Sunday 22 September 2013, during the Régionale d’Elevage show in Sorges, of more than 100 English Bulldogs, only two were eliminated for rasping, the awful noise that was once very common in this breed. It should be remembered that the first Dogue de Bordeaux that

produced this rasping sound, a superb dog, was downgraded from first to second place in the Nationale d'Elevage show by a collective jury, and the organiser of the show himself subsequently sent a circular letter of protest against this decision.

Although I knew there was no prospect of success, I once suggested doing away with CACs and ranking dogs collectively rather than individually. Within the open class, the judge would select a group of dogs "worthy of breeding to maintain or improve the breed qualities", and a second group of dogs authorised to breed. This is why I currently like the Régionale d'Elevage shows that do not award CACs or rank dogs. People come in the hope of receiving an "excellent", ultimately to be in the first group and to move up in the score chart, which is the same thing in effect, without any vying for first place. Moreover, at these shows, dog fanciers rediscover what it means to get along and to help one another.

However, the goal is to be crowned champion at the Nationale d'Elevage show, since it awards the CAC as well as the title of Best in the National (collective jury). At the SADB, I once attempted to modulate this pursuit of beauty with the title "Club Champion", and the current board is following this policy. In order to become "SADB Club Champion", a dog must obtain an "excellent" at the National show as well as in the natural aptitude trials (temperament and gait), have A or B rated hips, satisfactory elbows (graded 0, near normal, or 1) and a full pedigree. All dogs meeting these conditions are judged by a collective jury. The Club Champion is showcased in the newsletter in the same way as the Best in Show.

The club newsletter is a key element in the struggle against hypertypes, as it publishes the results of the different trials and not simply photos of champions standing still. We need photos of dogs in action, running, jumping and even swimming, and with families and children. Ultimately, we must encourage the famous "beautiful and good dog", an expression already held dear by Gaston Fébus in the 14th century and still used today, for example by Jean Paul Kerihuel, judge of the Best in Show in Marseille in 2013. This is easy, some might say, for hunting dogs, sheepdogs and guard dogs! Not necessarily. Indeed, for the first time, an FCI standard was published, for the English Cocker Spaniel, establishing the dichotomy dear to the English, that a show dog differs from a working dog, and not only for Cocker Spaniels: "As with a number of gundog breeds there is nowadays a difference between those used for work and those used for show: the show Cocker is a sturdier, heavier version of his working counterpart".

I am told that this disuse of "beautiful and good" endorsed by the FCI Standards Commission is simply a sign of the times. Are we moving towards a working hypotype? It appears that this is already happening. All-round judges, in particular, struggle to recognise working Malinois dogs.

French judges, who tend to sit on the fence when it comes to breeds with working trials, could find this very confusing. This eternal disparity in judging was again criticised by a renowned German judge, Mr Kliebenstein, in *Unser Rassehund*: in South America, excellent Boxers would only get a "good" in Germany, and vice versa. They nevertheless have the same standard. In the official dichotomy between show and working dogs, there are two different standards, one official and one unofficial, and two different judges, one on either side of the fence; one judge for large Setters with long hair and another for very small working Setters which, in France, horrified Hans Müller, President of the FCI.

Standards are being considerably modified in the context of the struggle against hypertypes. The FCI publishes formulaic paragraphs which, when added together, are seen as repetitious if not utterly paradoxical by dog fanciers. Having accepted "heavier" show Cockers, we are told that faults will be penalised in proportion to their effect upon the dogs' health (so make them lighter!) and their ability to perform their traditional work (we have just said that they no longer work, since they are show dogs). The latest insight from the FCI (February 2013) is an attempt to keep up appearances:

"Only functionally and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation should be used for breeding".

Consequently, the “heavy” show Cocker should not be used for breeding. We could take the FCI at its word. Let us have “functionally and clinically healthy dogs” and, to achieve this, remove the comment “without working trial” from standards. Let us invent exercises that would determine whether dogs can be entered for shows or, at least, become standard conformity champions. Our dogs would then show that they are “good” (at something) before being “beautiful”.

A well-written standard that is clearly understood by judges and breeders, and published and republished by the breed club, can work wonders. Over 20 years, I reduced the minimum undershot in the Dogue de Bordeaux from “1 cm” to a simple lack of contact between the upper and lower incisors. Additions to the standard can have rapid effects on shows dogs. The tiny incisors set irregularly in the gums, known as “pearls”, have rapidly disappeared. The “hideous folds” (the expression used by Kunstler, 1910) are in sharp decline. For the English Bulldog, judges are known for “putting their fingers in dogs’ behinds”. The results are worth it. At the Régionale show in Sorges, mentioned above, only two dogs had ingrown tails. After the FCI asked me to rewrite the standard for the Shar Pei in order to avoid excessive folds of skin, the accordion dog disappeared from shows when the judges were ready to read the new text (which breed clubs cannot stress enough). The fontanelle in the Chihuahua has been closed due to a change in the Mexican standard, even if one French authority told me that this was not a good thing as it would change its “well rounded apple head”.

In the United Kingdom, the new standard for the Bulldog has not had the same impact because the fierce determination of the French president is lacking, and because many judges are opposed to any change and judge according to their “mental image of the standard”. Tacit acceptance of the famous “layback” prevents any lengthening of the muzzle. In Switzerland, the muzzle has been lengthened for the Continental Bulldog, but the FCI does not recognise this breed. Once more, everything is down to the judges. What can be done, since they are irremovable? In France, Léon Rouillet, for the journal L’Eleveur, once wrote a report on dog shows and did not hesitate to criticise (with humour) specific dogs selected by his colleagues. Ultimately, the judge was being judged. This is still a common practice, but is now more covert. We can imagine meetings where judges would agree on the acceptable limits for interpreting a standard, but they all know that once appointed, “they do not come” if they do not judge. We can (and must) revise standards, taking care to avoid exaggeration in the struggle against exaggeration, since we cannot, in avoiding hypertypes, reduce all dogs to the medium-proportioned, straight-lined, medium-sized type. There is a need for practical work such as masterclasses, where an expert judges aloud, describing several well chosen dogs to a group of knowledgeable dog fanciers. I thus demonstrated in the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands and Poland the limits of concavity in the Dogue de Bordeaux. We need to be able to resist trends... and not to make only friends. We need to have faith, to give our time and energy, and to persuade breeders that enough is enough. We need to insist again and again in club newsletters, while assisting research, that beautiful dogs must also be happy dogs.

Purebred dogs, sometimes to their misfortune, are dependent on humans, and it is therefore down to mankind to demonstrate moderation in all things.

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