

Fletcher

B R I A R D B R I E F S
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MAY YOU, AND YOUR BRIARD, ENJOY THE MERRIEST OF HOLIDAY SEASONS !

Arriving at the end of another year and entering into the 13th year of The Fellowship, the writer wishes that he could report outstanding progress during the past year. Unfortunately that is not possible if facts are to prevail. One of the most serious problems is the lack of litters during the year. Why this should be so we cannot explain. The facts are that there is a list of people anxious to buy Briard puppies and no youngsters available.

An almost similar situation applies to the show ring. There are plenty of good Briards of show age but owners simply will not show them. This results in the gradual loss of Briard entries. One owner will do his best to get his dog out but soon loses interest when he finds little or no competition. So he drops out of showing and others who contemplated getting the breed into the limelight find interest lacking and forget the whole idea.

Out in Washington, members Mayall and Barrasso are active. In Wisconsin the Thomas's are doing their best but find no competition. We did get a nice entry for our specialty at Far Hills and last spring, the Twin Brooks entry was within reason but other than that the showing has been spotty.

The Fellowship is continuing the practice of sending a spoon to the winner of every best of breed award at all AKC point shows throughout the country.

What else can be done from an organization standpoint ? Many years ago we took the matter up with George Foley who knows more about dog shows than anyone else in the world. It was his suggestion that we concentrate on a few shows each year and forget any attempt to drum up entries for every affair. This has been done as far as the New York area is concerned but it is obvious that we cannot help our members in the Mid- or Far West by promoting a few shows around New York. In fact it seems impossible to do anything for members who are located where there are but few Briards.

Obviously if there were more Briards; more litters brought out each year; there would be a chance of getting dogs into areas where they could provide competition. Like the snow ball rolling down grade, competition breeds more competition. Yet there is no way of demanding that a member must breed or show. The only possible method seems to be the one we have been following, unsatisfactory as it may be.

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If any member has suggestions for the general stimulation of breed interest, we would welcome the information although, over the years, just about every scheme has been tried other than the one that prevailed in the breed some 35 years ago. At that time a breed officer used to pay entry fees out of her own pocket. The first the dog owner knew about the show was when a letter arrived stating that the dog had been entered in such and such a show and had better be there on time or else ! To do that takes more money than any of us have, plus an iron-clad nerve that we also fail to possess. This, truly, is getting entries the hard way.

Financially, The Fellowship is in such shape that we again appear to have enough cash on hand to carry us through another year without the present membership paying dues. New members coming in during the year will be asked for the usual dues. Briard Briefs can be published at intervals as we have done during the past few years. The publication cannot be gotten out each month for the simple reason that there is not enough news to fill it.

If the status quo is not satisfactory -- and it certainly is not -- the writer must confess that he does not know the next steps to take. If Briards are to survive there must be more litters and more dogs at the shows.

Speaking for the New York area, the famous Morris & Essex show has been permanently cancelled. Westminster remains for those who do not mind -- and can afford -- to take two days off from business to sit for two full days and two evenings in the basement of Madison Square Garden with their dogs. If that is sport we certainly fail to understand the definition of that term. But even if some of us were willing to defy weather and boredom it would not be of any help to our members several thousand miles away unless they are to be asked to travel an unreasonable distance.

Recently a member stated that if she could ever win a group placing it would all be very simple. Unfortunately, experience has shown that even winning a group does not alter the situation. The writer has gone through that without seeing any improvement in lasting interest.

There is nothing wrong with Briards and there is nothing wrong with our members. Perhaps what we need -- and most surely do not want -- is professional activity. Most breeds are backed by groups who turn out litters because they can make money and who show as a variety of advertising. Luckily we have kept our membership away from the "puppy factory" idea and all of its bad aspects and it would be truly unfortunate if, after all these years, we are to find that we must have professionalism instead of sportsmanship to keep our breed alive.

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