



WHY is a breed shown a certain way and **WHO** determines that way?

A good example of this will be the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, a Canadian dog now making its presence felt in the show ring with two recent Bests in Show — a first for the Toller. The method of presentation will be determined by a few exhibitors.

In the following article and accompanying pictures you will see three ways of setting up the Toller, all accepted at the moment, as there are not large classes and a definite pattern has not yet emerged. The end result will be a few people who show and win to a greater degree than others and they will create the Toller picture. This could even be determined by a winning dog that does not carry the heavy tail feathering at a particular peak winning period; or one longer in the back; or one shorter in the back; or perhaps another that gives his best if the tail is held high; or straight out as a Golden; or in repose! Gives food for thought as to why and how other breeds came to be handled in 'their' way.

Ch. Westerlea's
White Ensign (BIS)



Even breeds that are well established can have different handling techniques in different countries. Labradors in England are shown with the show lead deliberately dropped to the dog's shoulders and baited on a loose lead.

When Alison Strang moved to the Maritimes from Rhodesia in the 1960's, she was introduced to the 'Little River Duck Dog' when the family spent summers in

Nova Scotia. A Toller bitch puppy joined the family as a show dog and when the Strangs moved to Surrey on the West Coast in 1976, the bitch, her three week old puppies, their Newf and two of the five Strang children made the trek in the family station wagon.

Alison has worked very hard to promote the Toller, contributing articles, appearing at 'Dog World at the P. N. E.' as well as other canine promotions, even television. She edits Toller Talk, the quarterly publication of the N.S.D.T.R. Club of Canada. Definitely one of the keenest boosters of the Toller, she gives the purpose of the breed and her thoughts on handling this up and coming retriever.

Ch. Bellboy of
Jeffery Coldwell

NOVA SCOTIA DUCK TOLLING RETRIEVER

There's a little red 'dark horse' moving up fast on the outside dog show track these days. While it is unlikely that he will ever catch better-known 'favorites' of the Sporting group, the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever is beginning to prove his right to be recognized as 'Canada's own all-round dog' not only in the hunting field, but in the show ring and as an excellent family pet.



For many years the Toller has enjoyed a reputation second to none as a tough, dauntless hunter down in Southwestern Nova Scotia where he originated well over 100 years ago. Such was the performance of the dedicated little dog that he was jealously guarded by local duck hunters and few were allowed out of the area. However, in the last 20 years the dog has gradually spread across Canada, even into the United States. Ten years of showing by an ever-increasing number of exhibitors finally culminated in the ultimate accolade, Best in Show, going to two fine Tollers in June, setting the seal on the acceptance of this truly Canadian breed as a worthy competitor with some of his more glamorous cousins.

Dual Purpose Dog

Most Toller fanciers hope to avoid the hunting/show split which has afflicted so many other sporting breeds. Several Tollers are responding in this area very well to early trianing for hunting and field trials. Several

are now being run in licensed field trials and time will tell if they can compete on a level footing with the larger retrievers. Increasingly, hunters are coming to value the Toller's immense retrieving drive and keen nose, as well as appreciate his compact size.



The main difference between the Toller and other retrievers, apart from size, is his dual purpose as both decoy and retriever. He lures water fowl within gunshot range; indeed, Webster defines 'toll' as: "To entice game (esp. wild ducks) to approach by arousing their curiosity, as by the antics of a trained dog." Tolling waterfowl into nets with a small dog is a very old European practice which spread to the shores of North America. Yarmouth County in Nova Scotia became the stronghold of this method of hunting, minus nets, and it was there that the Toller had its origins, which are somewhat uncertain. Every old tolling man has his favorite theory as to how the dog evolved, but the most likely idea is that dogs of various breeds, many undoubtedly mixed, were used — mainly retrievers, spaniels and the little yellow farm collies so often found in the area. Crosses of Irish Setter and, much later, Golden Retriever are almost certain.

The Toller was originally developed to simulate the red fox, the finest natural waterfowl toller around. Foxes hunt in pairs, one hiding in the reeds while the other gambols and rolls around on the shore. The ducks appear mesmerized by such antics and gradually swim in to investigate. A Toller does a similar 'con job' by retrieving and playing with sticks thrown by his hidden master, also running up and down the shore, flourishing his beckoning busy tail. The dog is trained to ignore the ducks but is always well aware of their presence. Once the birds approach within gunshot range, the Toller is recalled to the blind, the birds flushed and shot. He then assumes his other role, of dauntless retriever, swimming out to fetch the dead and wounded birds.

It will be apparent that the Toller was not bred to range far and wide all day so he does not have the size nor fluidity of movement

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necessary in a pointing dog. He does, however, possess a very keen nose and has been used most successfully on upland game. The Toller, who is around the 20 inch and 50 to 55 pound mark, must be a rugged dog capable of bringing in a goose in extremely cold water and heavy weather. He has a jaunty rather than fluid gait but must have good reach and drive, and must possess the substance, muscle and heart necessary to tackle the coldest waters.

New Standard

Many Tollers, at first glance, appear to have the playful nature so necessary to their work, but when called upon to retrieve,



their whole aspect changes to one of intense concentration and excitement. Other Tollers are jaunty and playful all the time, the hunting man does not mind as long as his dog can do the job. In the show ring it is a different story and the more outgoing temp-

erament is desirable. It has become expected that all Tollers will go around the ring with tail happily waving, but this is a contradiction of the present standard which states: "There is a half sad expression, until the dog is put to work, when that sad expression springs to inquisitiveness and the dog trembles with excitement, alertness and determination." This particular sentence has been eliminated from a new standard drawn up by a committee elected by the N.S.D.T.R. Club of Canada and recently submitted to the C.K.C. Time will tell if this omission will have any effect on the dog's working ability.

Ch. Westlea's Commander Lady Conformation Ring

Handling the Toller is not unlike handling most sporting breeds — the dog should move out smartly on a loose leash, he should not be strung up so that his front legs hardly touch the ground. Many Tollers have poor fronts so if the dog is shown strung up the gallery can draw its own conclusions. Judges like to see the Toller trot around gaily, with tail waving, but it is doubtful if any Toller will ever show with the tail fully arched as it is when the dog is on total alert, or flashing from side to side as it does when he is tolling or hunting. The high-arched tail carriage is a Toller trademark, and some exhibitors like to hold the tail high to point up this special feature. A good Toller has a bushy, luxuriant tail, his crowning glory, and it should be emphasized as such.

The Toller should impress the eye with strength and agility, a well-muscled, substantial dog, smallest of all the retrievers. It would be a great pity if we were to see Tollers scissored and back-combed within an inch of their lives — they should appear as if they could do a day's work but also be sparkling clean, the medium length double coat well groomed, whiskers removed and ear feathering trimmed, feet neat and round; in other words, having a smart but not dandified appearance. Excessive trimming and coat shaping is frowned upon, but we certainly do not want specimens looking like Martha Thorne's 'Flying wombat in moulty'! Moderation is the order of the day.

There is no one way of stacking the Toller — most Tollers are not excessively angulated in the rear so we do not wish to see them set up with the hind legs stretched far back in the unnatural pose adopted by so many exhibitors of other breeds. Each dog should be treated as an individual, with the handler doing his or her best to emphasize the dog's best features. If the dog is most comfortable posing in a free stack, or being baited to a stack, then that is the best way to show him. If a really sound dog can free stack, more power to him. However, most Tollers DO look more alert if they are stacked with the tail held either stretched out, a la Golden Retriever, or held up in the high curve. No other sporting dog is shown in this latter way, but as the high-curved tail

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is a Toller trademark this would help the breed to establish its own identity in the ring.

More fanciers in other breeds are getting to know the spunky Maritimer and he is no longer the standing joke of the dog world, the 'little mongrel type.' Years of work by a handful of dedicated Nova Scotia breeders and a dauntless lady on the Prairies have paid off as more specimens of high quality are produced. Recognition in the show ring and acknowledgement of the dog's hunting qualities across the country mean one thing — the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, 'Canada's own all-round dog', has arrived — and he's here to stay!