

# BUILDING A RESPONSIBLE BREEDING PROGRAM

*By Judy Richey, Everwhen Vizslas, 2 May 2000*

A breeder is anyone who has contributed to the gene pool by producing a next generation of dog. This would include anyone who breeds once to occasionally; a hobby breeder for show, field or any of the sports; backyard breeder because he happens to have two of the same breed or the commercial puppy mill breeders. This would also include the stud dog owner.

**Harold & Maria Zucconi of Poquito Vizslas** (prefix in New Mexico) *defines a responsible breeder as having a clear idea of what they want to accomplish with a breeding and definite goals for the litter being produced.* They have a plan and will know where they want to be in ten years with their breeding program.

**Susan Mulley of Comynara** (prefix in Canada) *equates responsible breeding with the making of a table. As a table should be balanced by having four equal legs; the Vizsla should be bred to be balanced as cited in the standard. The four legs being: Health, Temperament, Conformation and Natural Hunting Abilities.* Without all of these four legs, the Vizsla would not be that same dog bred in Hungary for the past 1000 years or so.

**Education is a key to being a responsible breeder.** The more you know about the breed, its original purpose as a hunter and a family member; that it is a well-balanced dog of medium size with moderate conformation, the more apt you will be to make the right choices.

**Does your bitch meet the Vizsla standard?** Start with an honest evaluation of your bitch (this includes the stud dog owner). Not every champion or other titled dog must be bred or perhaps even should be bred. Your breeder and other responsible breeders you may know will be valuable assets in helping with advise with the assessment of your dog or bitch. Do not allow "Kennel Blindness" to play a part in your plans for a healthy, quality litter.

**Learn all you can about the pedigrees (ancestors) of your bitch and stud dog.** The pedigrees should be studied and considered seriously to determine if these two would be a good match. *Their history of health -- temperament (Are they good with children, noises, crowds, strangers, other dogs/bitches? Are they dominant, aggressive, shy, aloof, happy, friendly?), conformation and hunting abilities.*

**Earning titles on a dog/bitch in various events is one way of showing that your dog/bitch has passed the test for having this trait to his/her merit.** To what advanced degree has the dog proven himself? Does he show that his hunting/field instinct and natural ability is strong? If bred before, what accomplishments have the prodigy of the sire/dam achieved?

**In what areas is your dog/bitch weak?** Is this a minor or major fault? Will the bitch or stud dog be strong in these areas? You must consider yours and the stud dog's littermates as well. Remember that you will be breeding to those ancestors as well - good or bad. Dogs with minor and especially major faults, even though not disqualifying ones, may still pass on these undesirable traits.

**Not all Vizslas pass their quality to their get.** If your bitch is the only one to exhibit quality traits, you will not be guaranteed that even one of the litter will inherit all the good traits. Some of the most well known Vizslas have not been able to reproduce themselves even with the most careful planning of the breeders.

**Part of the evaluation would be to conduct various tests to assure your bitch and stud dog are in a good state of health.** OFA hip x-rays done when the dog is two years of age is a must.

No Vizsla should be bred at all if it does not get a clear OFA certificate for hip dysplasia. Good and Excellent grades are preferred. Fair is acceptable.

**Check for diseases.**

A **Brucellosis** blood test is good for only one year. It should be done in advance of the bitch's season. The test is sent to one of the few labs prepared to do the test. Stud dogs should have this test done yearly. The test detects the bacteria *Brucella canis*. The bacteria is a major cause of sterility in dogs and bitches. There may be no obvious signs of the disease, and there are no known cures. It causes late abortions and possibly the cause of stillborn pups or puppies that die shortly after birth. It is transmitted mostly through mating.

**Von Willebrand disease.** A blood sample is taken to detect this bleeding disorder. An inherited disease, this prevents the clotting of the blood.

**OFA** (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) The following tests are evaluated by OFA and certificates issued to dogs that pass the tests.

**CERF** (Canine Eye Registration Foundation)

This is a test of the eyes to detect various hereditary eye defects such as **Retinal Atrophy** and **Central Progressive Retinal Atrophy** which can cause blindness in the dog. This test should be done periodically, if not yearly, as the defect can show up at any time after the first test. Dogs failing this test must not be bred.

**Thyroid** blood test - this test is new under the OFA certification program. It is a more defined blood test than the T3/T4 test. Low thyroid --**hypothyroidism**-- can be hereditary. It is the low output of the thyroid hormone. Dogs exhibiting hypothyroidism have patches of lost hair; skin gets thin; energy level slows down; sometimes they are obese; there is drooping of the eyelids and, in bitches, irregular heat cycles. There is a thyroid supplement which can be given as treatment but it is not a cure.

OFA now does a **cardiac test** and gives certificates for those dogs which do not have defects of the heart.

DNA tests are done by the AKC: The Vizsla Club of America will require AKC DNA certificates in order to advertise in the *Vizsla News* by 2001. By 2004, DNA will be required to participate in any VCA National Event. AKC has said for some time that this test will be required of all registered dogs. It is already required for all artificial insemination breeding.

**Epilepsy** has no test to aid in detection at this time, but research is being conducted at various centers and colleges to help detect the gene which might be responsible for the defect. This is where researching your bitch and stud dogs' pedigrees is so important. Often the defect does not appear until about four years of age, well after an epileptic dog may have produced one or more litters.

**A responsible breeder plans well in advance of the bitch's heat cycle for the breeding.**

Contact and ask questions of the stud dog owner about his/her dog. Have your questions outlined so you will remember what to ask: they should be the same you have asked yourself about your bitch to determine its quality. Is he a dog you would have live with you? The pups may very well be just like him.

**A stud contract should be obtained from the stud dog owner; it should show clearly the costs and conditions needed for a breeding by that dog.** Will the mating be natural or artificial insemination (AI). Copies of AKC certificates of title, OFA certificates, other health tests certificates, pedigree and most likely a photo should be provided to the stud dog owner and likewise the same information should come to you before signing the contract. Will your bitch go

to the stud dog by air or will you travel by car? What preparations have been made to leave your bitch with the stud dog owner; will there be an additional boarding charge or staying in a motel with her?

**Always have your bitch checked over by your vet before mating to determine any abnormalities which may prevent her from mating, conceiving and/or whelping.** Also have the vet to do vaginal smears at intervals during her heat cycle to determine the most likely time for her to conceive.

**Your responsibility after the mating is to assure that the bitch is properly fed, given vitamins if suggested by your vet and observed for any problems during gestation.** Have your vet give her periodically examinations during gestation to ease your mind that the pups are developing accordingly.

**Prepare for the litter again with information on the whelping event.** Make contingency plans with your vet for the possibility that an emergency call for him may be needed for a safe and healthy whelping for both dam and pups. Do you have the equipment needed to aid in the whelping? Is everything sterilized and in place? Will the pups be kept warm and the dam from laying on them, possibly crushing one or more? Can you identify a pup or the dam in crisis? Are the pups feeding; if not, do you have puppy milk ready? Is the dam caring for them or will you have to stimulate them to eat and to eliminate? Weighing and measuring and identifying each pup as it is born? The proper equipment to house and raise and socialize a healthy litter? Are you able to stay with the litter during the whelping and for a couple of days afterwards in case of problems?

**Proper medical care should be given to the bitch and puppies 12 to 24 hours after birth.** The vet will check each pup for abnormalities. And probably give the bitch an injection of oxytocin to aid in letting down milk and involution of the uterus. This will expel any retained placentas.

**The pups should return to the vet for dew claw removal and docking of the tails.** They should be put on a regular schedule to return for inoculations.

### ***That just about covers the easy part of being a responsible breeder!***

**A responsible breeder is usually a member in good standing with a local club or Vizsla Club of America or both.** Announcing the litter through these clubs' publications is strongly recommended because the people most likely to meet your criteria of a good home will also be members.

**Responsible breeders are committed to each pup in each litter for its lifetime.** They have obtained the knowledge needed to answer questions from the buyers and advise them throughout the lifetime of each pup. They encourage the new owners to join the local clubs and/or VCA in order to keep up with their education about the breed. Many will go to shows, tests, trials, etc. to help with handling or advising the new puppy owner at these events.

**Careful placement of each pup will help with keeping in touch with the pup and its owners and its development.** This communication is vital to a responsible breeder. They want to follow the litter's growth and achievements. This will tell the breeder how if the match she/he made was a good match or not. This is done with detailed interviewing and observation of the entire family of the prospective owners with the purpose that each pup will have a safe, caring and loving home. Temperament testing and observing the pups for 7-8 weeks will help determine which pup is suited to each family. A puppy is never placed with a family if the breeder is uncomfortable or uncertain the family is right for any pup.

**Responsible breeders use a written contract in order to assure the buyers of their intention of commitment and then show them what is expected of them as a new puppy owners.** Breed and developmental educational material are made ready to for the new owners to help them develop the pup as a positive representative of the breed. Written guarantees for health and conformation are part of the contract. Also used are limited registration and a spay/neuter clause for pups that will go to non-show homes. Some offer incentive refunds to encourage pet owners to do hip x-rays at two years of age and any other test thought to be an aid in their breeding program. They provide the same information from dam and sire as was needed for the breeding (pedigree, health tests and OFA certificates and registration forms for AKC).

**A responsible breeder breeds to insure the quality and preservation of the natural hunting instincts of the breed for the future. He or she does not breed for money.** Anyone who bought a pup, raised it properly, cared for it with love and by health checks and tests and trained it to continue with show, field, hunting, or any of the other sport events will have spent more money than will ever be reaped from a litter of pups. If you made money on a litter, you haven't gone about it properly.

**Your finances should allow you to provide proper prenatal care of bitch and pups or the possibility that professional vet care may be needed** as well as cover the cost of the stud fee, transportation for bitch to and from mating; phone bills; announcements in Vizsla club publications; copies of photos, pedigree, contract, certifications and other vital information useful to the new owners. And to make refunds if necessary.

**Can you afford the possible (more like probable) destruction of your home and property?**  
Or take off work to care for the pups - vets visits etc.?

**What if you don't find each pup a home?** Will you be willing to take back a pup if the new owners decide they no longer want the pup? How will you socialize the pups before going to their new homes? What if a defect shows up after the pup is older, will you take the pup back or offer a full or partial refund? These are the some of the things responsible breeders do as part of their commitment because they literally hold the breed's future in their programs.

***You breed the best to the best and hope for the best. I would say that is so much easier to buy a good pup from a more experienced responsible breeder than it is to breed one for yourself!***

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