



4-1-2004

Animal Crackers

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“New” AKC Breeds

The black Russian terrier and the Neapolitan mastiff become eligible for competition in the working group at AKC shows on July 1, 2004. On October 1, 2004, the Glen of Imaal terrier will be eligible to compete in the terrier group. This will make 153 breeds with full recognition.

The black Russian terrier was developed in Russia in the 1960s for the national security force. Seventeen breeds were used in its development, particularly the giant schnauzer. It also has Airedale, Newfoundland, and Rottweiler characteristics.

The Neapolitan mastiff has existed in Italy since Roman times. The mastino has a large, unique head with skin hanging in exaggerated folds. The dogs move slowly with a bear-like gait. Originally bred as a fighter, they are no longer pugnacious toward other dogs. Stoicism is a characteristic of the breed. Mastinos are noble and devoted guardians. Recently, the breed has been in the limelight as “Fang” in a Harry Potter movie.

The Glen of Imaal terrier is an old Irish breed used to hunt badger and control the rodent population, and as a turnspit dog. The breed was recognized by the Irish Kennel Club in 1934, several years before the soft-coated wheaten terrier. The breed gained a foothold in the United States about 1980. Glens resemble a heavyweight Sealyham. Accepted colors are wheaten, blue, and brindle.

Further information may be obtained at <www.akc.org>.

Manatees

It is said the fossils suggest that manatees have made their home around Florida for 45 million years. These shy, chubby marine mammals, sometimes called sea cows, eat aquatic vegetation. An average adult is about ten feet long and weighs 1,000 pounds. Manatees and dugongs, a close relative, are believed to have inspired the mermaid legend. Breathing through their snouts, they surface to take a breath every few minutes. In cold weather, they tend to huddle near warm springs or power plants.

The manatee has been listed as an endangered species since 1967. Before they were protected, people killed manatees for their succulent meat. Collisions with boats are a leading cause of death for manatees. Propeller scars have a pattern similar to fingerprints and serve as a basis

for manatee identification. Thousands of photographs are stored in Gainesville, Fla. One documented manatee has scars from 49 previous run-ins with boats—the 50th killed the animal.

The manatee is a tourist attraction. Recently, there has been some controversy about their endangered status. New speed zones for Florida waterways and areas where boaters would be restricted or prohibited anger some groups. There is an active Save the Manatee Club.

Most Popular Breeds

According to AKC registration figures for 2003, the Labrador retriever, for the 14th consecutive year, is the most popular purebred dog in America. The Labrador’s versatile nature makes him ideal for work or play. He is shown in AKC events and used in hunting, service work, and as a family companion.

At the other end of the list, the least-registered purebred dogs are English foxhounds, otterhounds, harriers, American foxhounds, and komondors.

Pet Ownership

A recent survey showed that there are 64.2 million pet-owning households in the United States. These pets include 77.7 million cats, 65 million dogs, 16.8 million small mammals, 17.3 million birds, 8.8 million reptiles, 7 million saltwater fish, and 185 million freshwater fish

Another finding was that one-third of small-animal owners consider their pets as children or family members.

Tribute to a Dog

U.S. Senator George Vest wrote this tribute in 1870. “The one absolutely unselfish friend that man can have in this selfish world, the one that never deserts him, the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous, is his dog. A man’s dog stands by him in prosperity and in poverty, in health and in sickness. He will sleep on the cold ground, where the wintry winds blow and the snow drives fiercely, if only he may be at his master’s side. He will kiss the hand that has no food to offer, he will lick the wounds and sores that come in encounter with the roughness of the world. He guards the sleep of his pauper master as if he were a prince. When riches take wing and reputation falls to pieces, he is as constant in his love as the sun in its journey through the heavens.”

Petting Zoos

Children are enchanted by face-to-face encounters with animals, but there always is the possibility of an animal transmitting disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued safety guidelines for events and facilities that offer public contact with farm animals. These guidelines recommend providing hand-washing facilities with soap and disposable towels, prohibiting human food in the interaction area, and posting information about disease that can be contracted from animals.

Outbreaks of illness can be caused by nail-biting, eating food, or other manners of touching the mouth after petting the animals. This can be prevented when proper precautions are taken. Washing hands is an important requisite for disease control.

Pacemakers

Implanting a pacemaker in an animal is not unusual in veterinary medicine. A pacemaker is indicated in cases where the conduction system in the heart is diseased and thereby causes an abnormally low heart rate. Most of the pacemakers used in animal patients are donated by family members of deceased persons with pacemakers. Such pacemakers have plenty of battery-life left and can help a dog, cat, ferret, or other animal. Pacemakers can be sent to the Cardiology Service, Matthew J. Ryan Veterinary Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, 3900 Delancey Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

Cardiac Disease Screening Offered

Cardiologists at the Ryan Veterinary Hospital offer clinics to screen dogs and cats for cardiac diseases. Breeders and owners can make appointments for individuals and litters to be screened for inherited cardiac defects.

The screening includes auscultation, and if an abnormality is detected, further evaluation would be recommended. The clinics are scheduled for one day every other month, beginning in May 2004. To make an appointment, please call 215-898-4680. The charge is \$40 per dog.