

SETTER NEWS

Winter Edition: April – June 2020



Pastel by Vicente Roso - An Irish & English Setter flush a brace of Mallard ducks

Page Content:

2. The Irish Setter Epidemic
6. Canine Corona Virus
10. Paws Then Play
11. The Importance of Maintaining Purebred Dogs
12. Facts About English Setter Beltons
14. Governor Percival Baxter (1921-1925) Maine USA
16. Life with Rhum
20. Signing Off

Winter Supplement: THE LIFE & TIMES OF JAMES HERRIOT

1.

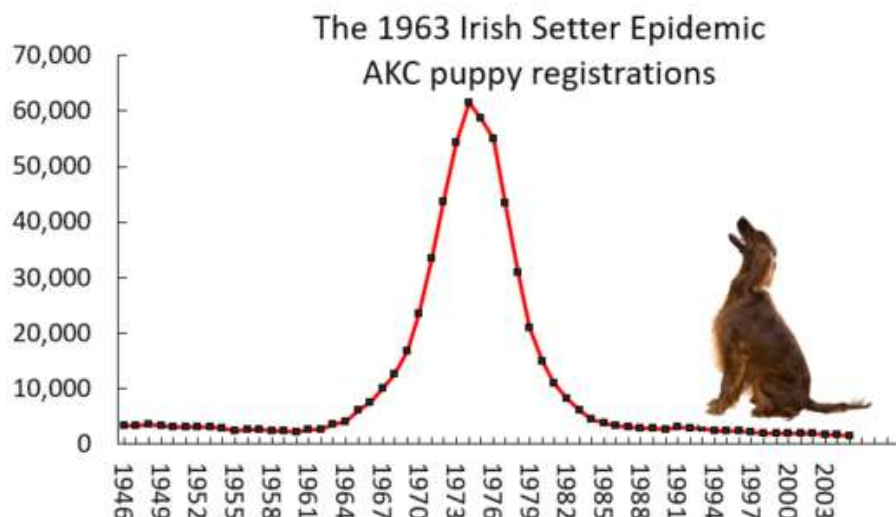
THE IRISH SETTER EPIDEMIC by Hal Herzog PhD

In a 1991 essay, the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins compared the spread of disease-causing virus with socially contagious units of culture. He argued that these are passed from human minds to human minds via learning and imitation. Fifteen years earlier, in his book *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins had named these hypothetical bits of cultural replicators *memes*.

There are, of course, profound differences between the spread of COVID-19 and the popularity of the infectious tune Old Town Road by Lil Nas X. Yet there are some surprising similarities in the dynamics of epidemics caused by germs, computer bots, and contagious cultural preferences. Take the short-lived enthusiasm for Irish Setters in the United States

Originally bred as gun dogs, Irish Setters were among the first breed to be recognized by the American Kennel Club when it was organized in 1884. But for the next 80 years Irish Setters were not particularly popular. In the post-war decades, the number of Irish Setter puppies registered with the AKC languished between 2,000 and 3,500 a year. By 1960, it had fallen to the 27th most popular breed in the United States.

In the early 1960s, however, the popularity of the breed suddenly began to skyrocket. Between 1963 and 1974, AKC Irish Setter registrations jumped 1,500%, from about 4,000 puppies a year to over 60,000 dogs. And Irish Setters rose from America's 27th most popular canine companion to number three. (Only poodles and German shepherds were more popular.) For a while, Setters were the proverbial "next big thing." But fads are fickle, and the crash began in 1974. By 1986, AKC registrations had dropped 95%, to a little over 3,000 puppies, and the breed fell to 46th in popularity. (Now they rank 77th)

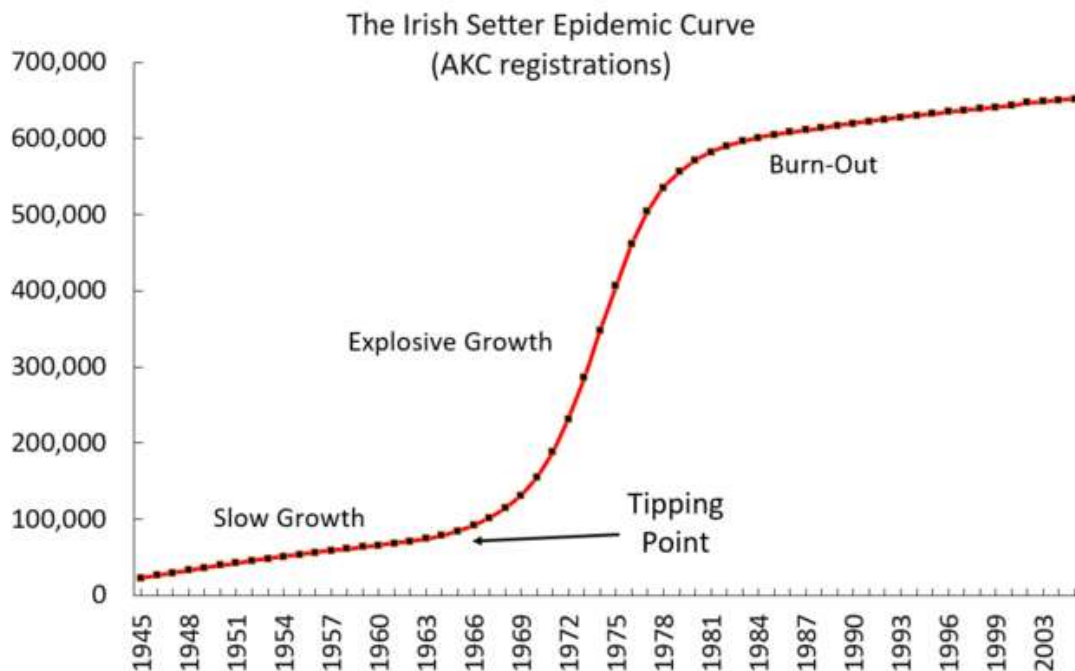


Dog Breeds as Models of Social Epidemics

Fifteen years ago, the American Kennel Club sent me a very nice present. It was the number of new registrations for each breed for every year between 1927 and 2005 (60 million puppies). In a series of papers, my colleagues and I have used this information to examine how preferences for types of dogs spread across our cultural landscape. Here are some of the questions we have sought to answer.

Are Dog Breed Fads Really Social Epidemics?

In some ways they are. For example, dog fads follow the same patterns of growth and decline as disease epidemics. The first stage is *slow growth*. But when the tipping point is hit the second stage begins – *explosive growth*. In the final stage, both disease epidemics and social epidemics burn out.



How Common Are Dog Breed Epidemics?

Most of the 170 breeds in our data set never became popular. But when a breed goes viral, the results are spectacular. In the 1960s and 1970s, nine breeds suddenly skyrocketed to fame and then just as suddenly, their popularity collapsed. Annual Old English Sheepdog registrations, for example, jumped 10,000% in 14 years. The boom in Rottweilers was the most impressive. Beginning in 1976, they quickly jumped from 1,400 new puppies a year to 104,000 puppies.

How Long Do Dog Breed Epidemics Last?

We found that, on average, they last 27 years. Of the 9 breeds with the most pronounced boom-and-bust pattern, the boom phase lasted 14 years and the bust phase 13 years. During the peak of the Irish Setter social epidemic, puppy registrations were doubling every 18 months. (In contrast, as I write this, the doubling time for COVID-19 infections in California is 3 to 4 days.)

Why Do Some Breeds Suddenly Take Off?

In some cases, breed popularity is sparked by a movie. The tipping point for Irish Setters was caused by the release of Walt Disney's *Big Red*, which starred an Irish Setter. In a study of dog movies released between 1927 and 2004, we found that the 10 most influential movies resulted in an additional 800,000 new puppy registrations for those breeds.

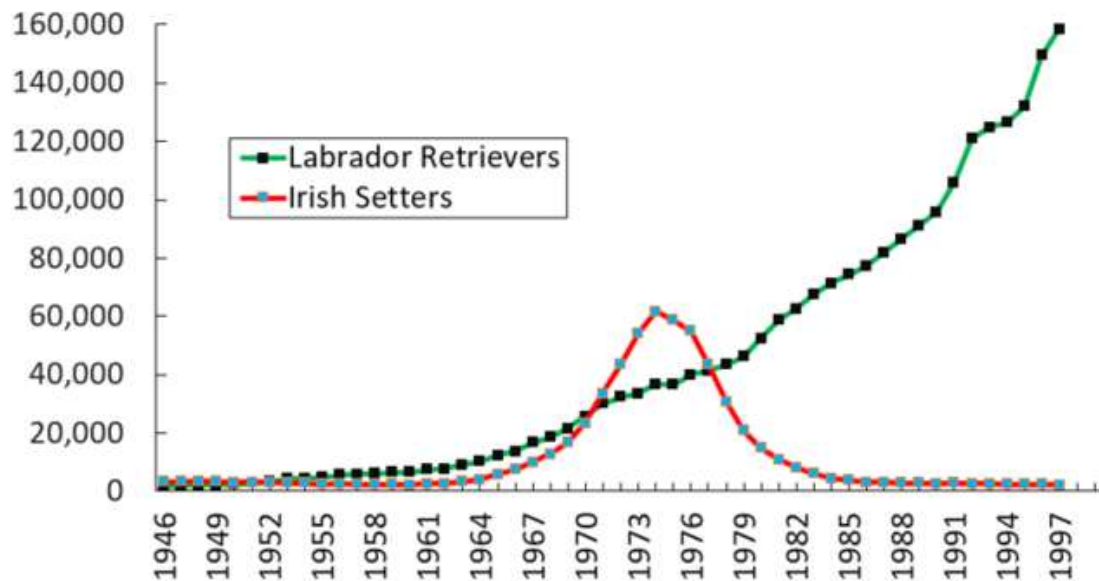
But most canine fads are not produced by a movie, and most dog movies do not produce a social epidemic. In a 2004 paper, Alex Bentley, Matt Hahn and I found that most shifts in the popularity nicely fit a "random drift model" of evolution. In short, breeds get popular mostly by dumb luck coupled with our proclivity to unconsciously copy what other people are doing. This theory also explains a host of other forms of pop culture. These include baby names, top 40 songs, skirt hemlines, and even Neolithic pottery styles.

Do "Better" Breeds Become Popular?

No. We found that breeds with lots of behavior problems were just as likely to become popular as breeds with fewer behavioral issues. And to our surprise, breeds with more genetic problems were more likely to become popular than breeds with fewer inherited disorders. The current craze for French bulldogs, a breed laden with genetic issues, is ample evidence that our choices in dogs often defy rational explanation.

This is still a bit of a mystery. As a general rule, forms of pop culture that rapidly become popular subsequently show the steepest declines. This has been called, "the logic of fashion cycles." Jonah Berger of the University of Pennsylvania found that baby names that grew slowly in popularity had lasting power while names that got popular quickly were soon dropped. Using our AKC data, Alberto Acerbi and his colleagues found this pattern was also true of dog breeds.

AKC Puppy Registrations



Labrador Retrievers are the best example of a slow but steady rise to success. They became America's favorite breed in 1991, and after 30 years, they remain our nation's top dog.

Some breeds, including Irish Setters, have characteristics that may facilitate particularly rapid falls from grace. This conclusion is based on dog owner ratings on the University of Pennsylvania's James Serpell's Canine Behavioral Assessment and Research Questionnaire. Dr. Serpell has found that Irish Setters tend to have some irritating behaviors. They scored high in the C-BARQ categories of Chasing, Escaping/Roaming, Pulling on Leash, Hyperactivity, Food Begging, and Food Stealing. The 1990s fad in Rottweilers suddenly went south when insurance companies started canceling homeowner's policies of Rottweiler owners due to a dramatic increase in fatal attacks attributed to the breed.

Germes and Viruses of the Mind

The differences between the 2020 COVID-19 epidemic and the 1963 Irish Setter epidemic are vast. The epidemics occur on different time scales and geographic scales, and the costs in terms of human suffering are incomparable. But as evidenced by the vagaries of the rises and falls of dog breed popularity, there are similarities between epidemics caused by germs and those caused by viruses of the mind.

The good news that, sooner or later, they all burn out. Stay safe.

(Acknowledgments to Psychology Today – Viruses of the Mind published March 2020)

CANINE CORONA VIRUS

Type I - CCoV

Canine coronavirus disease, known as CCoV, is a highly infectious intestinal infection in dogs, especially puppies. Canine coronavirus is usually short-lived but may cause considerable abdominal discomfort for a few days in infected dogs. The virus is from the Coronaviridae family. The virus gets its name from the fact that when viewed from above under an electron microscope, the virus has a ring of projections that appear like a coronet, or a small crown made of ornaments fixed on a metal ring. There are many types of coronavirus, each affecting different animal species, including humans.

"Canine coronavirus (CCoV) is not the same virus as SARS-CoV-2 that causes the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)."

Canine coronavirus (CCoV) is not the same virus as SARS-CoV-2 that causes the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). CCoV does not affect people. CCoV causes gastrointestinal problems in dogs, as opposed to respiratory disease.

How is canine coronavirus transmitted?

Most cases of canine coronavirus are contracted by oral contact with infected fecal matter. A dog may also become infected by eating from contaminated food bowls or by direct contact with an infected dog.

"Crowding and unsanitary conditions favor transmission."

Crowding and unsanitary conditions lead to coronavirus transmission. The incubation period from ingestion to clinical signs is one to four days. The duration of illness is two to ten days in most dogs. Secondary infections by bacteria, parasites, and other viruses may develop and prolong illness and recovery. Dogs may be carriers of the disease for up to six months (180 days) after infection.

What are the signs of canine coronavirus?

Most canine coronavirus infections are sub-clinical and produce few clinical signs in dogs. Occasionally an infection may cause more severe symptoms, particularly in young puppies. The most typical sign associated with canine coronavirus is diarrhea, typically sudden in onset, which may be accompanied by lethargy and decreased appetite. The stool is loose, with a fetid odor and orange tint. It may contain blood or mucus. If a puppy has a mixed infection, for instance both coronavirus and parvovirus, the illness will be more severe.

Are there diseases that can be confused with canine coronavirus?

There are many causes of diarrhea in dogs. Severe cases of coronavirus can

be easily confused with parvovirus, and they may occur at the same time. Be sure to see your veterinarian if your dog has diarrhea that does not resolve within twenty- four hours or is associated with significant lethargy or loss of appetite.

Is there any treatment?

There is no specific treatment for canine coronavirus.

"Antibiotics are ineffective against viruses, but may be useful in controlling secondary bacterial infections."

Antibiotics are ineffective against viruses, but may be useful in controlling secondary bacterial infections. Withholding food for twenty-four hours after diarrhea ceases and gradually reintroducing small amounts of food may be the only required treatment. A dehydrated patient may require intravenous fluids to correct the fluid and electrolyte imbalances. Early medical intervention is the key to successful treatment of severe cases.

What about vaccines?

Canine coronavirus vaccines are available. This vaccine is not recommended for all dogs and will be administered based on your dog's lifestyle and risk assessment. **This vaccine will only work for the CCoV type of coronavirus.**

(Acknowledgements to Rania Gollakner BS,DVM, MPH and Ernest Ward DVM – VCA Hospitals)

Type II – CRCoV

Recently a second type of canine Corona virus (GroupII) has been shown to cause respiratory disease in dogs. Known as Canine Respiratory Corona Virus (CRCoV) and found to be similar in strain OC43 of bovine (cattle) and human Corona Viruses. First isolated in UK in 2003 from lung samples of dogs and has since been found in Europe and in Japan. A serological study in 2006 has also shown antibodies to CRCoV to be present in dogs in Canada and USA where about 50% of tested dogs had antibodies to the virus indicating past infection. A retrospective study in Saskatchewan found CRCoV may have been present there as far back as 1996

What is canine respiratory coronavirus?

It is genetically related to the bovine coronavirus (which can cause respiratory infections in cattle) and the human coronavirus that causes the "common cold" in people. **CRCoV is NOT related to the group 1 enteric coronavirus that can cause diarrhea in dogs.**

What type of infection does CRCoV cause?

CRCoV can cause an acute respiratory infection, and is part of the complex of viruses and bacteria associated with canine infectious respiratory disease (CIRD) or "kennel cough". CRCoV infection alone can cause CIRD, but also occurs in co-infections with other canine respiratory pathogens such as parainfluenza virus, adenovirus, distemper virus, herpes virus, influenza virus, Bordetella bronchiseptica, Mycoplasma spp, and Streptococcus zooepidemicus.

Who is susceptible to CRCoV infection?

The risk for CRCoV infection is highest when large numbers of dogs are housed together in close confinement, such as boarding/training kennels, shelter facilities, dog shows, and racing greyhound kennels. Dogs of all ages and breeds are susceptible to infection. There is no evidence that CRCoV can infect other animal species or people.

How is CRCoV transmitted

As with other respiratory pathogens, CRCoV is highly contagious and is spread by direct dog-to-dog contact, aerosols of respiratory secretions, and contact with contaminated environments or people. The most efficient transmission occurs by direct contact with infected dogs and by aerosols generated by coughing and sneezing. Virus can also contaminate kennel surfaces, food and water bowls, collars and leashes, and the hands and clothing of people who handle infected dogs.

What are the clinical signs of CRCoV infection?

Most dogs have a mild disease consisting of cough, sneezing, and nasal discharge. Some dogs have a subclinical infection with no clinical signs, yet they shed virus that can infect other dogs. A small minority of dogs infected with CRCoV have progressed to pneumonia, particularly if co-infected with other respiratory pathogens. The incubation time from CRCoV exposure to clinical disease is unknown, but may be a few days. The number of days that virus is shed is also unknown. The clinical signs usually resolve after 1-2 weeks, depending on whether co-infection with other pathogens is involved.

How is CRCoV infection diagnosed?

Virtually all the viral and bacterial respiratory pathogens in CIRD cause similar clinical signs of coughing, sneezing, and nasal discharge. Therefore, CRCoV cannot be diagnosed based on clinical signs. IDEXX has developed a canine respiratory pathogen PCR panel that detects the nucleic acid of 7 respiratory pathogens, including CRCoV, parainfluenza virus, adenovirus, distemper virus, herpes virus, influenza virus, and Bordetella bronchiseptica. The URL for this diagnostic panel

<http://www.idexx.com/animalhealth/laboratory/realpcr/tests/crd.jsp>.

Nasal and pharyngeal swabs collected from dogs with clinical signs of CIRDC can be submitted to IDEXX for this PCR panel.

What is the treatment for CRCoV infection?

There is no specific anti-viral therapy for CRCoV infection. Treatment consists of supportive therapy based on clinical signs. Antibiotics may be needed if there are signs of secondary bacterial infection. Since CRCoV is highly contagious, isolation of infected dogs is necessary to minimize spread of infection. The quarantine time for infected dogs is unknown since the time period for virus shedding has not been defined. A conservative estimate based on other respiratory viruses is 3 weeks. However, co-infection with other pathogens such as distemper virus or Bordetella bronchiseptica will extend the quarantine time since these agents can be shed for months.

Is there a vaccine for CRCoV?

At this time, there is NO vaccine to prevent CRCoV infection or reduce the clinical disease. CRCoV is not related to the canine enteric coronavirus (Type I); therefore, vaccines for canine enteric coronavirus are NOT effective. Studies have shown that CRCoV infection generates antibodies that reduce the risk for re-infection or at least reduce the clinical disease if infection occurs. The duration of infection-induced immunity is unknown.

How is CRCoV infection managed?

Important management strategies for reducing spread of CRCoV infection include isolation of sick and exposed dogs, biosecurity measures (such as changing of clothes and hand washing after handling affected dogs), and effective sanitation. The length of time that CRCoV persists in the environment is unknown, but may be at least several hours. Most viruses that cause CIRDC are inactivated by routinely used disinfectants (except for adenovirus). Disinfected surfaces should be thoroughly dried because moisture promotes virus survival.

How is CRCoV infection prevented?

Even though there is no vaccine for CRCoV, dogs in boarding/training kennels, shelters, and dog shows should be vaccinated against other respiratory pathogens for which vaccines are available, including parainfluenza virus, adenovirus, distemper virus, and Bordetella bronchiseptica. This will reduce the risk for co-infection with these pathogens. Clinical disease in dogs infected with CRCoV can be more severe if co-infections occur.

Importantly, dogs with respiratory infection and dogs exposed to other dogs with respiratory infection should not be taken to kennels or show grounds.

People who are in contact with sick or exposed dogs should avoid handling of other dogs or at least wash their hands and change their clothes before doing so.

(Acknowledgements to the American Veterinary Medical Assoc)

PAWS. THEN PLAY

With the lockdown restrictions leading to isolation at home our dogs have had the luxury of our attention 24/7. Now with these restrictions being gently lifted the kids returning to school and their parents to work, pets may experience some degree of separation anxiety, Spotify Pet's Playlist may ease the transition when your pets are left alone at home. Kate Mettler tested Spotify and reported on her findings in the Cape Argus on 8th Feb 2020 as follows:

Pet owners of the world: Spotify wants you to know that it sees you – and your furry beloved – and is acknowledging the range of emotions that come with your version of parenthood.

No longer should you worry whether your best bud likes Adele as much as you, nor should you feel guilt over the separation anxiety your cat or dog or even lizard may be experiencing while you work off your own tail for hours every day. Your pets might be alone, but they won't be lonely. There's Spotify playlist for that.

The popular music-streaming service announced it had developed an algorithm to curate "pawfect" playlists that serve the soothing needs of you and your pet, as long as your pet is a dog, cat, bird, hamster or iguana (sorry, teacup pigs). Its five-step process asks pet owners to identify their animal's breed and then select on a sliding scale whether they are relaxed or energetic, shy or friendly and apathetic or curious.

For this reporter, the owner of a large, fluffy black cat named Tank who purrs like a diesel engine, drools like a dog and hates it when others feel peace, the curation quiz meant toggling each slider hard to the right.

The final step includes telling Spotify your pet's name and uploading your favourite picture of its cute face. Then the streaming site's algorithm says it is "syncing your taste" and puts out a personalized playlist.

Tank's Pet Playlist included *Velvet Kitty Cat* by Prince, a song from the Moana soundtrack and a Rose Cousins tune titled *The Benefits of Being Alone* – which reflects his human's brand and seems to communicate a special message for his frenzied, feline ears.

To develop the Pet Playlists algorithm, a Spotify representative said the streaming company consulted musicologist David Tele, a cellist with America's National Symphony Orchestra who pioneered species-specific music and composed two albums of music for cats.

“An energetic dog might get a playlist with tracks that are upbeat while a shy cat might get something with slower tempos,” says the news release. Spotify says pets seem to prefer classical music and soft rock.

A survey of 5000 animal lovers from the US, UK, Australia, Spain and Italy found that 71% consider the emotional well-being of their pets every day. Sixty-nine percent of pet owners sing to their animals 59% dance with them. And more than half of pet owners surveyed said they would pick their pet owner a human partner if forced to choose.

Spotify’s initiative is one of many pitches that tech companies and others have served up for pet owners who are hoping to help their animals be happier.

Spotify concedes that pet music “isn’t an exact science”, but says the goal of Pet Playlists is to build upon the “true connection” pet owners feel between their “beloved animals and music.”

This pet owner just hopes Tank’s Pet Playlist becomes the calming soundtrack that keeps him from peeing in her potted plants.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING PUREBRED DOGS

Even though many purebred dogs no longer serve their original purpose, responsible breeders are committed to maintaining them as close to their original form as possible. In the best sense, they are curators of their chosen breed. They understand that purebred dogs with their endless sizes, shapes and colour, tell our human story. And while Labrador Retrievers, German Shepherd Dogs and many other commonly recognizes breeds are numerically robust, there are others – such as the English Setter and the Irish Red & White Setter whose numbers are low enough to be endangered species.

Breeders aren’t just interested in preserving a breed’s physical appearance; what goes on inside that beautiful dog is just as important. As with their physical attributes, dogs also pass on genetically ingrained behaviors from generation to generation. Many of the instincts that made dogs indispensable to our forefathers in helping provide food, transportation and protection, are etched on their DNA. The Pointer’s (or Setter’s) characteristic, shock-still stance when he scents a quail isn’t learned: it is lying in wait, reinforced through decades if not centuries of purposeful breeding.

A breeder’s deep understanding of her chosen breed is what prompts her intense scrutiny of prospective buyers. For a responsible breeder the point of breeding is to carry on the baton that was handed to her by those who came before. And that starts with placing the right puppy in the right home. Because purebred dogs are usually so predictable, a good breeder can gauge whether a would-be buyer will be able to cope with a dog’s full-grown size, temperament, energy level and grooming demands.

Owners, in turn, are ambassadors for a breed, whether they intend to be or not. Every time their dog is in public, they are shaping opinions of the breed. Many may not know the history of their breed, why it is a certain size or colour, and how these attributes helped their dogs' ancestors do their jobs. These owners just know that they have a special connection with the breed that they have chosen. And because the only thing that stands between a breed thriving and possible extinction are loving owners, this strong connection is vitally important

(Edited partial extraction from AKC National Purebred Dog Day Promotion)

FACTS ABOUT ENGLISH SETTER BELTONS

Black and white (blue belton), orange and white (orange belton), lemon and white (lemon belton), liver and white (liver belton) or tricolour, that is blue belton and tan or liver belton and tan, those without heavy patches of colour on body but flecked (belton) all over preferred reads the KC English Setter Breed standard.

The terminology Belton refers to a coloration pattern that can occur in any dog breed - Havanese and Lowchens are examples, but is synonymous with English Setters. The term appears to have originated from one of the breed's founders, Edward Laverack, who hunted with his setters around the area of Belton Village in Lincolnshire UK. In the strictest sense a Belton coloured English Setter is a dog with a white coat flecked (ticked) or finely mottled and with no patches of solid colour, but many such dogs have head and/or ear patches of colour.

In SA the most popular colour of English Setters is Orange Belton, but there have been many blue Beltons over the years, but I can only recall one liver Belton in the last 50 or so years.

Puppies are almost always born completely white and it usually takes several weeks to see colour come to the surface, especially if the pup is lightly ticked. So it is not always possible to determine exactly what the adult colour will be. Ed.

What Colour is that? Is that Liver?

Diane Michelsen, who has bred under the Gold Rush prefix for about 40 years in America, discusses liver and lemon belton, colours that have become rare in show circles. Diane, a student of the inheritance of colour in English Setters for many years, is one of the leading experts.

The first Laverack English Setter imported from England in 1874 was a liver male. Pride of the Border was a prominent sire in his day, a good hunting dog that won Best ES at early American shows. Today's current show winners are his descendents. In the 1950's some British imports also carried the liver gene.

A judge evaluating a liver or lemon English Setter should be colour blind. Judge the dog on his merits and place him accordingly. Accept that his eye color and pigmentation are appropriate for his liver genes. To paraphrase a breeder-judge, a good dog is a good dog, even if that dog is pink!

Liver beltons are an integral part of our breed heritage. They can and should hold equal ground with the other colours. Liver is a beautiful colour; in many breeds, liver is the most popular colour. With exposure to this colour, more people will realize its beauty and it will become a colour that is seen more often.

GOVERNOR PERCIVAL BAXTER (1921-1925) – MAINE USA



GOVERNOR PERCIVAL F. BAXTER
AND
HIS IRISH SETTER "GARRY"

When it comes to Irish Setters with a high profile in the world of politics, most of us might think of the White House. At least three American presidents are known to have owned Irish Setters during their time there, including Harry Truman ("Mike"), Ronald Reagan ("Peggy"), and Richard Nixon (King Timahoe, arguably the most famous White House Irish Setter of them all). The most beloved Irish setter belonging to an elected official, however, may

have been Garryowen (or Garry II), who belonged to the governor of Maine from 1921-25, Percival Proctor Baxter. Garry was already part of the Baxter family when his owner became governor, and the pair were so often seen walking near the State House that kids would wait along their route to pet Garry or shake his paw. Garry had his own couch in the governor's office, and was included in Baxter's privately published book on his dogs, "My Irish Setters": *"Garry is my constant companion in the Governor's House and in my office at the State Capitol. He goes back and forth with me between Portland and Augusta both by train and automobile, and understands the duties of the Governor's Office as well as could be expected of any dog."*

When Garry died while Baxter was in office, the devastated man ordered the flag at the State House to be lowered to half staff; the act made headlines around the world for the fury it caused among several veterans' groups who thought the order was disrespectful. Still, Baxter, should be remembered not only for his love of animals, but for his forward thinking at the time: He sent stray dogs to prison as companions for the inmates, he set aside 200,000 acres of forest land and deeded it to the state of Maine in perpetuity (making Baxter State Park the third-largest state park in the nation, and the largest ever given by an individual), and visited Portland livery stables every Christmas Eve to give the horses a feast.

Percival Baxter died a bachelor in 1969 at the age of ninety-two, all his Irish Setters buried in the animal cemetery on Mackworth Island, the family's summer estate in Casco Bay which today, is the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf – his gift. As for his decision to lower the flags to half mast to honor Garry, a note he wrote that was found in 2001 read, *"Good old Garry II was the first dog in history to be thus honored. His spirit lives on and through him, dumb animals the world over will be treated more kindly and mercifully."*



Percival Baxter's Irish Setter dogs – all 14 of them and his horse, named Jerry Roan are buried on Mackworth Island. This cemetery was protected when the island became a state park. The 1921 plaque above reads: "To my Irish Setters Life long friends and companions. Affectionate, faithful and loyal"

LIFE WITH RHUM by Ruth Richardson

From being a teenager, Irish Setters have been part of my life some joined our family as pups from breeders and some, adult rescues. A lot of people have said to me, "I wouldn't rescue a dog because you don't know what baggage you're taking on", my response is, "I've never experienced a dog with baggage". My rescue dogs have, shall we say, had "challenges" but they were no different to the "challenges" faced when rearing a puppy. Walking at heel on a lead, instead of pulling like a tractor and the endless attempts at recall were the two main issues, with all my dogs. They all have had their own personalities, but overall they have all been typical Irish Setters, handsome or pretty, playful, cheeky, stubborn and full of love!

After our first rescue Setter passed away, there was no question of not rescuing another one. I contacted the Irish Setter Breeders Club (as it was then) now the Irish Setter Rescue and Rehoming Charity (UK) and spoke to the Secretary. On hearing we had just lost our dog, she asked whether it was too soon to take on another one. I explained that although I appreciated for some, replacing their beloved pet straight away was unthinkable, I had never had that view. Homing another dog provided me with a new purpose and turned sadness into a positive experience. She agreed with me and said she felt the same, but recognised it is a very personal view.

Two weeks later, we got a call to say a dog had come into rescue. He was 18 months old from the working side of the breed. (They tend to be slighter in build with less feathering). His owners handed him into rescue for his safety as they lived on a farm and let their dogs have the run of their land. However, the Setter left to his own devices regularly left the farm and crossed a motorway slip road as he had discovered a fast food restaurant where the staff fed him left over burgers.

As we'd already been home checked from having our previous rescue dog, the charity felt he would be a good fit with our family, so all we had to do was agree to have him, which of course we did!

When I saw him, I was shocked at his appearance. Although the charity had sent me some photographs of him and warned me he'd had to be clipped as his coat had been neglected and he was under weight, I wasn't prepared for just how small and skinny he was. His hip bones were protruding and his head looked out of proportion with his body. He did however have a very waggy tail and trusting eyes. Looking at him, I felt a surge of anger sweep over me, I cannot and never will understand how human beings can neglect animals so badly and discard them so easily. "Never mind", I said to him, "you've come to live at the right place".



Rhum in the Highlands April 2009 (two months after rehoming him).

As life with us was a new start for him, we gave him a new name; Rhum. We spent most of our holidays in the Highlands and we'd taken to naming our dogs after places there. I gave him a small amount of food to eat which was devoured in seconds and then he found his bed by the radiator and curled up. When I left the kitchen and went into the living room he got up and followed me - a good sign I thought. He came into the living room and lay down by us for the evening being cuddled and loved by the kids. His expression said everything! It was clear he'd never had so much attention. At bedtime, he went on his bed and didn't make a sound all night. I wasn't sure if the next morning I'd come down to chewed kitchen units, but there was no damage. In all the time he's been with us, Rhum has never damaged a thing, intentionally that is. We have had broken Christmas decorations whipped off the tree with his wagging tail over the years!

The next morning, I got ready to go out on our first walk and as I'd been advised to take him on short walks initially until his weight and strength increased, it was a quick 10-minute affair. During the walk, he kept looking up at me with a strange expression, as if to say "oh you come too" and I realised this was probably the first walk he'd had with a human in tow!

We fed him four small meals a day initially to help increase his weight. As soon as his dish was put down, it was empty. I'd never seen a dog eat so quickly; a habit that still remains. After a couple of months, although still on the light side, his hip bones had disappeared, the feathering on his legs had begun to grow and his coat had developed a lovely shine. It wasn't the deep chestnut colour you see in unneutered Irish Setters, but I felt as though progress was being made.

Rhum settled into our family straight away and loved us all unconditionally.

Whoever his “chosen one” for the evening was, whilst they were sitting on the sofa, Rhum would come over and put his head on their knee. If he was ignored he’d paw said knee and if he was still ignored, he would put both front paws on the “chosen one’s” knees, blocking the TV, wagging his tail, waiting for a stroke.



He made friends with my daughter’s cat, Beano and they developed a daily routine of Beano running up to Rhum every morning, Beano would box Rhum in the face two or three times then run away with Rhum in pursuit.

The first time I let Rhum off his lead, he was off like a bullet. My heart sank thinking I would lose him but he eventually came back. I soon got used to him shooting off, flushing out ducks, geese, pheasants, rabbits, squirrels and even deer. He could be two fields ahead of me, my heart in my mouth thinking he’d get lost, but he never did. I’d never experienced this type of behaviour in a dog before, but being from the working side, he was just doing what he had been bred to do.

I bought a whistle which helped his training and after a while his recall improved. To this day, I cannot claim his reaction when called is ‘instant’, more like ‘hang on, I’ll be with you in a minute’ but I’ve never lost him, or rather he’s never lost me.

A couple of years ago, we moved house and two days after moving, Beano, got out of a window and disappeared. After four days of searching and calling him up and down the road and nearby area, we thought he was gone for good.

Given Rhum’s talent for flushing out wild life, the thought crossed my mind of the possibility that Rhum might be able to find Beano if he found his scent. I didn’t share my idea with anyone as I wasn’t convinced myself but nothing ventured, nothing gained.

That evening when we left the garden on our walk, rather than taking Rhum where I wanted to go, I let Rhum take me. He looked up at me quizzically, unfamiliar with this change in routine and I said “where’s Beano, go find him”, (yes, I actually did say that). His nose went down immediately scraping the ground as usual and within seconds he picked up a scent and was off like a bloodhound pulling me in the opposite direction we usually walked. We crossed the high street, then went back again, he tried to get into people’s gardens, jump fences which I had to pull him away from and we finally ended

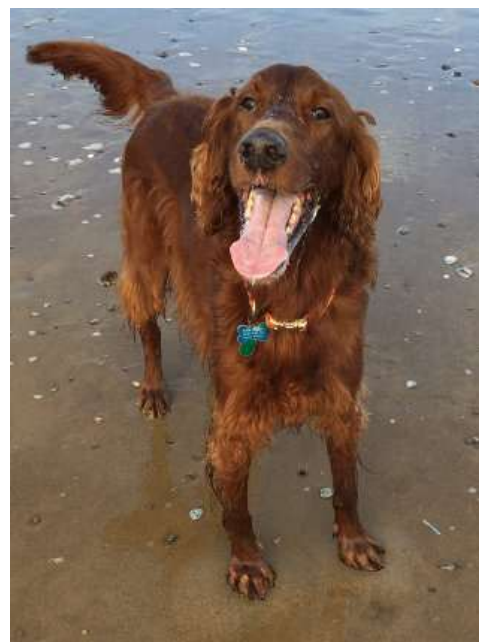
up in a cul-de-sac, with Rhum's front paws resting on a wall and his head stuck in a privet hedge. He was whining and his tail was wagging quickly; I knew there was something there, but it was pitch black and I couldn't see a thing.

"What are you doing?" I thought to myself, "this is ridiculous". I started giggling feeling I was in an episode from Lassie (for all of you who remember the TV show). As no-one was around I called out Beano's name anyway, but there was no response. I called him again but nothing, so pulling Rhum away, feeling a little bit stupid, I turned around to go home. As we did so, I heard a meow and out from the privet jumped Beano. I could not believe it! Rhum was super pleased with himself, wagging his tail like crazy and I was speechless!

Rhum's been part of our family for eight years and we have loved every minute. We were so lucky to have been offered him and I understand when other people I know with rescue dogs believe their dog saved them, not the other way around. The rewards you get from rescuing a dog are hugely fulfilling. They arrive scared, nervous, underweight and neglected but with a little bit of time and effort, they turn into the dog they were born to be, confident, handsome and full of life. My dogs have always been loving, but with a rescue dog, I'm convinced they know you've given them a second chance and so they love you that bit more.



Rhum with Ruth



Rhum at the beach.

Before you buy a puppy or dog as a family pet, please consider a rescue. If you favour a breed, most have a rescue charity and if you love mongrels, there are many charities in need of homes for their dogs.

A responsible charity will never just hand a dog over, they will want to meet the family and will match the right dog to the right family. If there are issues to be considered, the charity will inform you prior to the homing, so you'll be able to make an informed decision. The last thing they want is for the homing not to be successful.

A wonderful quote on the Irish Setter Breeders Club Rescue site states, "Saving one dog won't change the world, but surely for that one dog, the world will change forever."

SIGNING OFF

We hope you find this Setter Newsletter enjoyable and informative, despite there being no Show Results due to these events being postponed as a result of the lockdown. Meanwhile, life continues and thankfully we can now exercise our dogs outside our properties.

There has been a cluster of enquires from prospective owners seeking to own an Irish Setter puppy and one wonders if the isolation and loneliness we have all been experiencing in lockdown has prompted the need for the companionship of a dog, but due to the regulations, road and air transportation to Provinces outside the breeders location has been problematical. Fortunately, with a litter bred in Gauteng by newcomer Charl van Deventer and Karen Black having a litter in the Overberg, Cape Town most of those seeking a pup were able to fulfill their wish. In the meantime, breeders, please let us know your future breeding plans.

Hopefully by the time Spring arrives our lives will have reverted to normality.

STAY WELL AND STAY SAFE

Your Editors Bridget & Mark Simpson
Mss01@telkomsa.net Landline: 028- 4233934