

A FEW WORDS ON ORIGIN

The Black and Tan Coonhound is one of the few breeds around that can claim the title of All-American. Although the exact origins are unknown it is probable that many of the European hunting hounds went into the basic make-up of the early coonhounds, including Bloodhounds and Foxhounds of the time, and possibly the Kerry Beagle and the French Bleu Gascogne hounds. At any rate the evolution and development of the Black and Tan took place here in America and by the turn of the century the breed was here to stay. The first Black and Tans were registered with the United Kennel Club in 1912, the American Kennel Club followed in 1945. This is a hunting dog. Years upon years of selective breeding have gone into his background and though he does not need to hunt to be happy, most all possess strong hunting instincts. A hound may travel miles and miles from home in pursuit of game. Once they are on the scent it is difficult to capture their attention again.

SELECTING A PUPPY

Take your time. Buying a puppy is a big decision, not one to make hastily. The best bet is to contact a reputable breeder. Most breeders will have adults of their line on the premises. You should ask to see them as well as both parents. Check with your local veterinarian who can give you some pointers on how to evaluate general health of a puppy. When you have decided on that special puppy, the breeder should give you a completed registration form or a detailed bill of sale. The record should contain the puppy's breed, sex, color, birthdate, registered name and numbers of both parents, the breeder's name, along with the breeder's signature. At home or in the field, the Black and Tan Coonhound is a superb animal and if you choose this breed you can look forward to years of pleasure in his company.

LIVING WITH A BLACK AND TAN COONHOUND

Basically a happy-go-lucky breed, they adapt fairly easily to most situations. They are very people oriented and enjoy being with the family. They are very good with children and are seldom quarrelsome with other animals. They are playful but gentle despite their proportions. The breed is slow to mature and requires patience and a firm and loving hand. Independent by nature, do not expect exacting obedience from your Black and Tan, rather compliance from a loving friend. This is not a breed for everyone and there are several factors a prospective owner should consider before he or she commits himself to an adoring puppy.

Black and Tans are medium-large dogs (65-100 pounds), and can adapt to living either outside or indoors. They thrive on human companionship, and enjoy being part of their owner's life. Hunting isn't essential, but moderate exercise is. The average lifespan is ten to twelve years. Early socialization is necessary for the puppy to grow up calm and confident. As housedogs, B&Ts tend to be very laid-back, and they enjoy their creature comforts. If you aren't willing to share your furniture with your hound, you may be fighting an uphill battle. Most B&Ts are good travelers and enjoy car rides. The B&T may not be as frivolous in his play as some other breeds, but most have a sense of humor. They tend to chase and tree small animals, and neighbors may object to their deep, booming voice. A securely fenced yard is essential unless you live on enough acreage for your B&T to wander without getting in trouble. In the field, Black and Tan Coonhounds work their trail with consummate skill and determination. They trail Bloodhound fashion; entirely by skill, with nose to ground, "barking up" or giving voice the moment their quarry is treed. Though especially bred for coon, these dogs train well for the deer hunter, bear hunter, mountain "cat" hunter, right down to the squirrel-hunting enthusiast without too much additional training. Their short, dense coat makes them easy to groom and care for, with a rubber currycomb an ideal tool for this type coat.

HEALTH

He is a sturdy dog, not prone to the average canine disorders. Some degree of hip dysplasia has been recorded. Many breeders screen breeding stock by means of X-ray, and a number of breeders have their stock certified by the Orthopedic Foundation of America. Ear problems, as with any pendulous type ear, are a consideration, particularly with the hunting hound, but with a weekly check and cleansing of the ear there is little need to worry. As with other hounds, there is tendency towards a "houndy" odor, but regular bathing eliminates this problem – a few Black & Tans will occasionally slobber, but never to the extreme of the heavy flewed hounds.

OBEDIENCE

Obedience training for a Black and Tan Coonhound can encompass many facets. The first, known as "competition" comprises exercises that must be performed in order to be awarded the AKC obedience titles. The most important thing to remember is that, like snowflakes, no two Black and Tans are exactly alike. Know your Black and Tan. Know what turns him/her on and work with it.

Work them at a fast pace; that is to say, a quick walking dog will have less time to think about other things. Train the exercise correctly the first time as any Black & Tan owner will attest to; they never forget. If you let them get away with a crooked sit, they'll do it every time. If possible, visit obedience-training classes in your area. Watch the training methods. A Black & Tan Coonhound does not respond favorably to a heavy hand. Talk with the instructor. Does he/she exhibit enthusiasm? The instructor you choose should work with you and your Black & Tan as a team. The second way to train your Black & Tan is "manners." You may never consider competing in the obedience ring, but the difference between a well-mannered dog and one that's not, could be your sanity. The main idea is to have a dog you can live with. Teach the limits and restrictions early and consistently. Third, if you wish to hunt your Black & Tan, even in the woods, a few commands may make quite a difference. Coming in when called, heeling, and a command to stop barking (perhaps in the truck) will make your hunting trip more enjoyable. And the fourth, the breed ring. Even the few exercises required in the breed ring are a form of obedience. To stand still when examined and to gait properly demand training and practice. Whether you participate in hunting, showing, obedience, or just want an enjoyable pet, exercise is very important-run that extra energy out before practicing-then again after-make it fun-let them look forward to these sessions with eagerness. A lot of trainers report that their Black & Tans approach training in many different ways. Some will perform without a hitch, but with minimal amount of enthusiasm, while some enjoy every moment of practice-but tend to deviate from the exercises. These dogs like to practice "creative obedience"-adding their own touches to the commands. Perhaps you may be working too slowly, or training the exercises in the same order. Try to vary the order and/or add new ones. Above all, enjoy your dog. When you give him a job to do, he will be happy. And that's the best possible relationship between a canine and human. Happy. The tracking enthusiast will find it difficult to find a more eager trainee than our B&T Coonhounds-what better sport than tracking with a dog bred to use his nose!