

Speak English, Not Doglish

Next time you're at a dog event, pause for a moment and listen to the jargon and acronyms we all use in casual conversation. Imagine how confusing it is for people new to the world of dogs. We've all seen a breeder initiating new puppy owners into what is going on at the event. Sometimes you see the person's eyes glaze over. Other times, you see a lightbulb going off. But for others there's a light bulb going off. Dog people talk in a shorthand of titles, letters, and words specific to our sport. We need to translate and teach our specialized language. I'll never forget the first field trial I attended. The terminology was baffling. I was standing in the clubhouse when a diminutive woman garbed in muddied camouflage burst into the room and announced in a frustrated, red-faced tirade, "The judge made me pick up my dog!" All I could envision was this tiny lady trying to lift her 80 pound dog since a judge told her to do it. It was all very confusing till someone translated.

Just listen and there's a flood of words in conversation that have meaning to us but sound absurd to the uninitiated. When a dog is "finished" people are happy. How odd!. "My dog is a "class dog". Of course he's classy!. A "broken" dog is good. Really strange. And watch the reaction when you start casually using the word "bitch"!

It's our responsibility to teach new puppy owners our highly unique language if we want to keep them involved. Getting new people "hooked" insures the continuation of our sport, but to do it well requires an awareness of how to best get newbies off to a good start. Remember, reading "has a good nose" in *Wine Spectator* means something very different from when you read it in the *AKC GAZETTE*.

On a totally different subject, as your new Weimaraner columnist I feel that I owe you a short introduction. It starts out with a confession: I never planned on getting a Weimaraner. All I wanted was a pet dog that was large, smooth coated, smart, and energetic. That was 1978, but like so many others in our breed, one thing led to another and Weimaraners became a beloved, integral part of my life.

My name is Carole Lee Richards and I live (with 3 Weimaraners) in southern NJ. Getting that first Weimaraner set off an avalanche of changes. First there was the move from my chic downtown Philadelphia apartment to the suburbs (we all need good fencing and room for the dogs to run). Next, the full sized van room for crates and equipment for shows, field, agility, and so on. Why not join some dog clubs and get involved? Who knew that would lead to a nine-year stint as WCA national Futurity/Maturity chairman, AKC Delegate, and chairman of more events than there are dog hairs on my sofa. And Then there was campaigning Top Ten dogs in both show and obedience. And in my spare time, why not teach handling classes and write a book on training for the show ring? Spare time was something I had in my BMW days - "Before Multiple Weimaraners" days.

Do you have ideas, suggestions or comments on this column? Drop me a note,; I'd love to hear from you.

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