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THE BOUVIER DES FLANDRES AND THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB WORKING DOG SPORT

March 1, 2014

By Carol Walker, ABdFC's WDS Committee Chairperson
and Bill Walker

Working Dog Sport: History

"The Germans call it "hundesport", dog sport. For generations, people from Europe and North America have been drawn into this unique idea of participating in an active sport with a dog. Schutzhund offers this in a way that no other sport can. It is outdoors. It is physical. It is mental. The demands are great, but the sport also offers competition and new friendships. In short, it is what all recreational sports should first be: good exercise, fun and full of rewards." (1)

"Schutzhund started at the beginning of this century (1903 Author Note) as a test for working dogs. Its initial purpose was to determine which dogs could be used for breeding and which had true working ability. The growing demand for working dogs made more sophisticated tests and training necessary. These dogs were needed for police training, border patrol, customs, military and herding. As these tests evolved, more people participated just for the sheer enjoyment of seeing if their personal dogs could be trained as effectively as these "professional dogs". Now, over sixty years after the first formal Schutzhund rules were introduced, tens of thousands of people participate in the sport each year." (1)

Working Dog Sport: The Beginning

The process for the American Kennel Club (AKC) Working Dog Sport (WDS) was started in 2003, with the American Bouvier des Flanders (ABdFC) having a major role from the beginning. ABdFC President Carol Walker and North American Working Bouvier Association (NAWBA) President Kathy Heilenman asked Charles Price to represent both organizations on the AKC WDS advisory committee.

Mr. Price (breeding under the kennel name "Crestwood") was selected because he has an excellent reputation as a breeder, in the conformation ring and in the working arena with the unique qualification of breeding, owning, training and trialing a Bouvier to earn Schutzhund III and IPO III titles. Mr. Price worked with the other committee members and the AKC's Vice President of Performance Events to create the rules and regulations of the WDS.

AKC has recognized agility and herding as working attributes of the Bouvier. Now, AKC recognized that the breed can "...demonstrate the physical and mental abilities needed to perform scent and protection work, while maintaining a high level of control and a strong degree of obedience." (2)

In 2007 the American Kennel Club's (AKC) Board established the Working Dog Sport (WDS). They allowed individuals to earn WDS titles at events held by breed parent clubs. The AKC Board of Directors granted the request of four Parent Clubs to approve the WDS, effective January 1, 2007. The initial breeds approved to compete in WDS were the Bouvier des Flandres, Doberman Pinscher, German Shepherd Dog, and the Rottweiler.

"The AKC Delegate Parent Club Committee endorsed the WDS and recommended four criteria that have been incorporated into the program:

- Each Parent Club; the American Bouvier des Flandres Club, the Doberman Pinscher Club of America, the German Shepherd Dog Club of America, and the American Rottweiler Club are directly responsible for its own events and may not assign this responsibility to others.
- The Parent Clubs involved are directly responsible for this program. A WDS Advisory Committee will be formed with representatives from the participating Parent Clubs.
- Each Parent Club may run up to five events in a calendar year.
- The program will be run on a test basis for three years and then reviewed." (3)

Carol & Bill Walker have been in pure breed dogs for 40 years. Carol has been a Board Member of

Carol & Bill own two Bouviers. Both have working "Careers"; Spice in IPO, SAR, AKC Obedience and tr

Special Thanks to Charlie Price & Patric Taylor for their editing, knowledge and support.

Bouvier have been added to the list of breeds on the AKC website – www.akc.org/dog_shows_trials/titles/parentclub_workingdog.cfm

. Titles earned back to January 1, 2000 will be acknowledged. Title application forms may be found on this same website.

And for more information see also the DVG-America website, dvgamerica.com, our selected Working Dog Sport Affiliate.

