

So You Are Interested In Breeding Your Weimaraner?

GROWING UP....

So here you are, with a new little 6-10 week old, bundle of gray fur that is the light of your life. You couldn't imagine how you ever got along without her in your life. She brings you joy and laughter with all her kisses and silly puppy antics. Welcome to the world of life with a Weimaraner!



Gretl – Puppy who was surrendered to rescue.

Whether you found her in a pet shop, called on an ad in the newspaper, or waited on a list for a year from a top weim breeder, she's yours now, to shape and mold into a liaison for the breed. The possibilities are endless with your new little girl: she could be a show weim, a field trial champion, an obedience guru, a tracking fool, a therapy dog, a hunting buddy, or just someone to warm your feet at night and snuggle up with. Weims are a versatile breed and can excel at anything you, or they, put your minds to.

In the first 6 months, you'll work on typical puppy stuff. Probably things like housebreaking, crate training, getting her to sleep thru the night, teaching the puppy to "sit", "lay down", "come" when called, "leave-it", maybe "stay" when told. You'll be strengthening your bond with her, teaching her not to pull on the leash or jump up on people, and what's appropriate and what's not appropriate to chew like shoes, furniture, the cat, kids, carpet, walls, etc. You might even start working on her hunting instincts and expose her to some birds. You'll take her out and socialize her with dogs and people of all shapes, colors and sizes and expose her to as many different situations as possible. You'll want to give her the best chance at being a well rounded, fully socialized, non-fearful adult that will be a pleasure to live with, to have around houseguests and to accompany out in public.

WELCOME TO PUBERTY....

Anywhere from 6-14 months old, she will come into her first heat cycle. If she wasn't spayed at 6 months, this will mean 3 weeks of extreme vigilance on your part, so your baby doesn't end up becoming a mother at such a young age. There might be hormone rushes, changes in behavior, bleeding, and all the male dogs in the neighborhood will be knocking on your back door. Never underestimate what a male dog will do to get to a female who is in heat and make sure she stays safely away from intact males until your vet has confirmed that she is no longer susceptible to being bred.

There are many advantages to spaying or neutering your weim. You won't have to deal with hormonal bitches during heat cycles or crazed males trying to run off to find the female in the neighborhood who is in heat. Males are less likely to mark in the house, fight with other dogs, challenge your alpha position as owner, or develop testicular or prostate cancer later in life. Females won't bleed all over your house, exhibit odd hormonal behaviors, become aggressive or bitchy or have the chance to develop pyometria, mastitis, or mammary cancer. The old tales that they'll gain weight, get lazy,

won't hunt as well, etc. are all false. Eating too much with no exercise will make them fat and lazy and neutering/spaying will not reduce a dog's hunting ability if the hunting instinct is there and it will keep their focus on the birds. Another good reason for spaying/neutering is not adding to the overpopulation of cats and dogs that we have here in the United States. Too many dogs and cats are put to sleep in shelters every year because of all the puppies and kittens being born because of irresponsible owners. There just aren't enough homes to love them all and keep them their entire lives.

TO BREED OR NOT TO BREED....

Your little girl is almost considered an adult weim now and you've kept her intact because you've contemplated the idea of breeding her. Maybe she's from excellent lines, excels at field trials, is healthy as can be and a wonderful pet. Maybe you'd like to carry on her line and keep a puppy from her litter. Maybe your vet told you that she'd be a better companion if she only had just one litter and was then spayed. Maybe you'd like your children to experience the "miracle of birth". Maybe you think she's a fine example of the breed and figure you'd be able to sell her puppies for good prices. Whatever your reasoning, you have a duty as her owner to become a responsible breeder, to follow the ethics involved with breeding and to make sure that you not adding to the growing numbers of unwanted and abandoned weimaraners that are ending up in rescue.



Summer enjoying the snow

The first tip is to find your self a mentor. If the breeder you bought your girl from is a well respected, reputable breeder who is very active in weims with showing, hunt testing, tracking, Weimaraner Club of America, etc., then by all means, go to them with your wishes and accept their advice. If your breeder wasn't as stellar as you thought or you bought your pup from a pet store, join your local weim clubs or hunting clubs and meet people who are also interested in preserving and bettering the breed. The first thing anyone should tell you is that you should always be striving to improve the breed as a whole. Work with your mentor on developing a breeding plan with steps and goals in mind.

The next step would be research. Take a look at your weim's 5-generation pedigree. How many of her ancestors had their hips checked by the Orthopedic Foundation of Animals (OFA) or PennHIP and had a rating of "good" or "excellent"? Canine Hip Dysplasia is common in weimaraners and also proven to be linked genetically. Dogs that are bred with excellent or good hips have a better chance of producing pups with good hips. How many were show champions (CH. in front of their name)? Proper size and shape help today's Weimaraner remain true to breed founder's philosophy and purpose they had in mind when developing the weim in Germany. Good structure and type and a sound dog will move more smoothly and be able to run in the fields all day. How many

had agility, obedience, tracking or hunting titles? A dog that excels at these events, even if you not interested in competing, has proven to carry the natural instincts, willingness to work, desire to please and ease to train by competing and winning.

Research weim pedigrees, DNA, genetic faults, offspring, and performance titles and read up on all the health concerns in weimaraners that we're dealing with today. Have your girl's health evaluated. Does she have a strong immune system? Do her hip and elbow x-rays show good or excellent ratings? She should be no younger than 2 years of age before she is bred because the OFA certifications are only accountable at 2 years or older. Are her eyes clear of double eyelashes? Does she show normal thyroid functions? Study her lineage and find out what genetic faults run in her family. Talk to the breeders of the dogs in her pedigree and ask them if they know of any health problems or concerns that you should be aware of when picking a mate.

Start attending shows, field trials, hunt tests, obedience and agility competitions and observe all the different types, lines, and temperaments of the weims we have available today. Have your girl evaluated by judges or people who have been involved with the



breed for a long time to confirm that she is indeed within the standard and a fine example of the Weimaraner breed. Perhaps you can show her to her championship yourself or have a professional handler work with you. Start competing with her in any of the events already listed and show the rest of the weim community that she too possesses all the wonderful traits mentioned in the breed standard to pass on to some lucky puppies.

Ch. Pennywood's Achy Breaky Heart JH, OA, OAP, OAJ, V

Look at your girl's strengths and faults and try to pinpoint areas that need improvement. These are the attributes that you'll be looking for when selecting a male to complement her strengths and make up for her faults. You'll also want to make sure his hips, eyes, and thyroid has been checked with OFA and CERF certifications and that he is free from sexually transmitted diseases and parasites. You will have researched his pedigree and from looking at his ancestors, other dogs out of his litter and his offspring, you'll be able to come up with a good idea of what recessive genetic faults he might be carrying, but not outwardly showing that could provide a recipe for disaster if your female was also carrying those recessive genes. His owners should also follow that same ethics as you do and realize that unless he is out there proving himself, no one will come looking to breed their bitch to him.

The following is an excerpt from an email written on the weim.net email lists when a discussion came up defining ethical and responsible breeding. It tells of a personal experience of delving into the world of breeding.

“Bear with me...I need to talk about an experience I had years ago that convinced me that all show people and breeders were snobbish and snotty. Then I need to tell you how I became one of them. LOL. (A show person, not snotty and snobbish).

Years ago, my husband and I went to a local dog show with friends who owned a dog... some kind of terrier (I forget the breed)...They were on a mission to find a stud for their female. Okay, so she was a pet store pup, but a really, really nice dog. Well, we were getting really strange looks from people. Hardly anyone would talk to us. Finally someone explained to us about health checks, preserving lines, etc. My friends soon made an appointment to spay her. We were grateful that someone finally told us the real reason that no one was interested in breeding to her. Sometimes silence is worse than the truth.

Okay now here is my story.... years later we were in search for a Weimaraner puppy, we had the opportunity to go to the Weimaraner Nationals in Rhode Island. We had lost our first weim 3 years earlier. Unfortunately, everyone wanted us to show and we didn't want to become one of those snotty show people. LOL. To make a long story short, one of the breeders we spoke to had a dog come back to her due to divorce. He was a 2 1/2 year old male who had 5 show points including a 3-point major. Both of his parents were Champions (BROM producers - breed register of merit).

We were told that we didn't have to show him, just provide a good home. The breeder was very attentive to us...gave us an informational packet that she provides for all her pups, including his pedigree. She called us regularly and we remain friends to this day.

She put us in touch with someone locally who was actively involved in showing and breeding. That was my first introduction to a reputable breeder. The person she introduced us to became a very good friend as well as a valuable mentor. Alex (Ch. Ultima's Jacob Alexander, JH, NRD, V, CGC) was shown by our friend and finished very quickly. As you can see, we also got actively involved in hunting and retrieving activities and added more titles. Alex became a registered therapy dog that I brought to work with me (I worked in a nursing home at the time).



Ch. Pennywood's Achy Breaky Heart JH, OA, OAP, OAJ, V

When we decided to get into breeding, we were fortunate to have an experienced mentor. She has bred a number of champions and is an AKC judge. She had worked in a well know Great Dane Kennel as a teenager. Said she listened to what the breeder had to say...how to read pedigrees, how to pick the best dogs to breed etc. She told me that I could be a great breeder or a mediocre one. To be a great breeder, we needed to find the best bitch that we could find and to be patient. We selected a female who became a Group winning champion, and a BROM Producer.

Okay, now here is my point. I can go on and on about how great my dogs are etc. I haven't touched upon the joys and the heartache of breeding. I have to say, that I don't think I would ever embark on something as serious as breeding without the guidance of a mentor/experienced reputable breeder. It doesn't stop at selling puppies on spay/neuter contracts.... it's being there when something goes wrong or when there is simply a question about puppy raising. It's educating people who have my dogs and who also follow the same ethics as I do.

I think breeding is the most difficult thing I have ever done. It is an ongoing process that does not end the day the pups go out my door. I have had the opportunity to educate my puppy owners as well and they in turn have been better owners, whether they get involved in showing, hunting or just have a beloved pet. I have had the benefit of acquiring a wealth of knowledge from reputable breeders and I am able to pass on that knowledge as well. I also talk people out of breeding their pets...and they are usually grateful for the time I have spent educating them.

Let me put it into another perspective. If money was not an issue and you had the choice of buying a well-made oak dresser or a box that was made out of plywood, which would you pick? If you were choosing a vehicle, wouldn't you research its safety features, its quality including its service warranty? If you had a choice of say, a Mercedes Benz or a Chevy Chevette, which would you pick? If you had the choice of being an honor student or a C student, which would you be? I think the message is that quality is the most important issue. Breeding is multi-faceted and downright complicated...and I would think that someone who embarks on such a venture would want to be as educated and well-informed as possible. “

If you do decide to breed, you want to be improving the breed, not because you want to provide the world with cute weims even if you do it in a responsible manner. There are too many weims as it is that fulfill the "cute weim" criteria, and many of those are in rescue. Before you actually breed it's recommended that you have a list of puppy buyers made up. You can never have too many people on the list as someone might change their mind or you might end up with a litter of 14 puppies.

THEY'RE HERE, NOW WHAT.....

Like the excerpt mentioned above, your job as a breeder doesn't end when the pups head out the door to their new homes. Not only should you carefully screen your puppy



Week old puppies with dam

buyers, you should also be a mentor and educate them as others have done for you. You're puppies should be on spay and neuter contracts with limited registrations to prevent someone from breeding litter after litter with one of your puppies. You should give them puppy packets with information on vaccination schedules, training, feeding and health problems in the breed. You should also be available to them so that should a problem arise

they can call you and ask for advice. The most important part of your puppy contract is that should anything happen during the life of that puppy where the owners can no longer keep him/her, you should be notified immediately to take back that puppy or help place him/her in an approved home. You were the reason that puppy is in this world, so you're ultimately responsible that this puppy has a safe and loving home till it's last day! This also applies to the stud's owner in that they should also realize that if the dam's owner cannot take a puppy back at a certain time, they would also be equally responsible.

Breeding should not be taken lightly. Over 70% of dogs in city shelters are put to sleep every year because there aren't enough homes to care for them. A lot of these dogs have wonderful temperaments and would make amazing pets, but unfortunately don't ever get the chance because of high kill rates due to overcrowding shelters. Be responsible and if you think breeding sounds like too much work to do it the right way, the next time someone asks you about getting a puppy from that wonderful female of yours, send them to a rescue group! There are plenty of good dogs there waiting for their forever homes!

For more information please take a look at the virtual breeding website
<http://www.bluegrace.com/virtualbreeding.html>

For questions regarding this article, contact Tori Goessling, lilgrycr@hotmail.com

Is Your Dog Breeding Quality?



Yes, you have a dog of breeding quality. However, if you are not active in showing or working your dog, think very carefully about your reason for breeding. Breeding should be done to *improve the breed*, not so the kids can see puppies being born, or because you want "a puppy from her," and *NEVER* to make money selling puppies!
Don't breed out of greed!

