

Thoughts from the FSS Breeders

Debbie
Dales



Sun Meadow Appenzellers
Appenzeller Sennenhunds

1. Please tell us a little bit about yourself. Where do you live? How many years in dogs? How many years as a breeder? What is your kennel name?
2. In your opinion, is your breed in good condition overall? Any trends that warrant concern?
3. As a Preservation Breeder, can you share your thoughts on the sport today? How's the judging these days?
4. How important are Performance Events to you as a Preservation Breeder? As an Exhibitor?
5. In your opinion, is social media good for the sport? Is it harmful?
6. What are the biggest challenges facing the dog show community as a whole today and how can these be addressed?
7. What are some of the positive changes you've seen in the sport over the past decade?

1. I have been exhibiting and breeding dogs for over 12 years. In May of this year, I relocated to Stony Plain, Alberta, Canada, with my Appenzellers Rik (aka Ch Highleigh Ulric) and Dani (aka Daenerys von den Sommer Wald). I formerly resided in a small town called Deroche, located in the province of British Columbia, Canada, and was breeding under the kennel name of Deroche Appenzellers for 8 years. Because my partner in Deroche will continue to breed Appenzellers, I have changed my kennel name to Sun Meadow Appenzellers, hoping to minimize confusion among our Appenzeller family and friends.

Pugs were my breed of choice when I started breeding, and to help keep our Pugs safe, I wanted a larger dog presence on our property to help ward off the area's many predatory animals and birds. I researched many dog breeds before discovering the Appenzeller Sennenhund breed.

I concluded that Appenzellers:

- have no inherent health issues with greater average longevity than most dog breeds;
- are vocal;
- have great guardianship traits;
- have amazing agility skills;
- are devoted companion dogs.

These were the qualities I was looking for and could not have found a more suitable breed.

2. The expression "good things come to those who wait" could not be truer due to the rareness of the Appenzeller Sennenhund breed. I was not planning to breed Appenzellers, but because this is a rare breed and there are so few Appenzeller breeders in North America, I ended up doing just that.

Appenzellers are an extremely hard-working breed and require a great deal of physical and mental exercise to remain happy and healthy. Although an excellent herder and guarder of livestock, their high maintenance and high exercise requirements have limited their popularity in North America. Appenzellers are not a breed for everyone, particularly the first-time or inexperienced dog owner. A well-trained Appenzeller is a loyal and loving companion. Give him a job and provide good leadership, and he will be loyal and content.

3. Because the number of Appenzellers is still exceptionally low, there are very few being exhibited. So, most North American judges have not had the opportunity to evaluate Appenzellers in the Conformation show ring, and it is a rare opportunity for those judges who do. With so few Appenzellers in existence worldwide, it will take a long time to increase the population in North America before we see this breed fully recognized. Appenzellers have been listed with AKC Foundation Stock Services since 1996 and were recently listed with CKC in the Miscellaneous Group on July 1, 2023.

4. You are more likely to see an Appenzeller in the Performance ring, as they excel in all kinds of Performance activities.

5. Social media plays a significant role by providing real time events and educating the public. It is a great way to keep dog fanciers up to date on current events and provide live coverage of various dog sports such as Conformation, Agility, and many other Performance activities. I use social media to educate new and up-and-coming Appenzeller owners and to provide puppy updates. The AMDCA (Appenzell Mountain Dog Club of America) uses social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc., to provide information about "everything" Appenzeller.

Although social media is a great resource for information, there can be a lot of bashing at times and some people do have a difficult time with complainers and finger pointers. So, consequently, a number of my Appenzeller families and friends avoid social media.



“It is clear that the purebred dog community is deeply committed to preserving the unique qualities of our breeds. As we navigate through the challenges we face, it is essential to remain hopeful and dedicated to our mission. By continuing to put in the effort and work together, we can ensure that the passion for preserving our breeds thrives and evolves positively over time.”

6. The economy certainly has added challenges for the dog show community. Costs have increased exponentially in the past few years. Work commitments are keeping more people away from home for longer periods of time, leaving less time for them to spend with family pets, resulting in an excessive number of dogs ending up in shelters. As a result, community shelters are becoming increasingly more visible on social media, using slogans such as “adopt, don’t shop” and bashing purebred breeders in an effort to find homes for surrendered dogs.

As an exhibitor, economics has had a great affect on the number of dogs I show as well as the number of shows I attend. In addition, the CDC’s new import regulations restricting puppies under 6 months of age from entering into the US is another challenge that I face as a breeder. I have had to cancel a number of my litter plans because the demand for purebred companion dogs has declined, and I am unable to provide young puppies to our US customers. For these reasons, plans for my next up-and-coming show dog(s) have also been delayed.

7. When I started out as an exhibitor and breeder, health testing was not a regular practice even though test kits were available. Over the past few years, health testing has become routine with most breeders I know. Social media was a platform where most people shared pictures of their fancy dinners. Since then it has become an amazing educational platform that also provides us with dynamic live data.

It is clear that the purebred dog community is deeply committed to preserving the unique qualities of our breeds. As we navigate through the challenges we face, it is essential to remain hopeful and dedicated to our mission. By continuing to put in the effort and work together, we can ensure that the passion for preserving our breeds thrives and evolves positively over time.



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Carlo & Anita
Schneller



Sommer Wald Appenzellers
Appenzeller Sennenhunds

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5. In your opinion, is social media good for the sport? Is it harmful?

1. We live in Moravia, New York, and Mansfield, Pennsylvania. Prior to owning our Appenzellers, while raising our family, we owned a purebred Norwegian Elkhound. Several years later we rescued a Rhodesian Ridgeback mix from our local animal shelter. As we started to think of retirement and how we might spend our spare time, we chose the Appenzeller with the idea that they would keep us active, since they love the outdoors and love to be busy. We purchased our first Appenzeller in July of 2012. We traveled to Switzerland to import our beautiful girl Bickli. We had thought of the possibility of breeding, but we also knew that finding a mate would be difficult. In March of 2017, we traveled once again to Switzerland to pick up another Appenzeller female, Mela. In November of 2017, after five years of searching in both the US and Canada, we found the perfect match in Canada for Bickli and our first litter was conceived via AI. With this litter, Sommer Wald Appenzeller came to be. Bickli went on to have another litter conceived via AI, also from another wonderful Canadian male, and then she retired. Mela has had two litters sired by our own male, Anzel, from Bickli's first litter, and now she has retired. We have been raising Appenzellers for the last seven years. We have a total of six Appenzellers: Bickli (Switzerland), born in 2012; Mela (Switzerland), born in 2017; Anzel, our own puppy from our first litter in 2017; Carly, our own puppy born in 2021; Danka, our own puppy born in 2022; and Slavoy, imported from Prague in May 2024.

2. Appenzellers are in good overall condition. As part of being a member of AMDCA and AKC Foundation Stock Service, we do health testing for our breeding dogs. We test for hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, patella luxation, and eyes. We also have co-efficient standards to control inbreeding. No dog can be bred before the age of two and all tests have been passed.

3. I myself do not show my dogs. The availability of shows in my area and the distance of travel to shows is a determining factor. I did reach out to other Appenzeller owners who show who also have concerns with availability and travel.

4. To show as an AKC FSS or Miscellaneous breed does have its challenges. The number of shows is one of the challenges encountered along the road to AKC recognition. It is hard to encourage new buyers to get into showing when there is a limited number of shows and the possibility of long travel times to the available shows. As a result, with small breed representation, it extends the path to full recognition. Also, it is harder for judges to get experience with the FSS breeds. It would be great to increase the number of FSS shows or allow some specialty shows.

5. I do think social media, in general, can highlight the good, but it can also bring out the worst in things.

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Thoughts from the FSS Breeders

Paula
Webber



Van Isle Appenzellers
Appenzeller Sennenhunds

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1. I live on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. I grew up with dogs all through my life. My dad had hunting dogs; Labradors and Chesapeake Bay Retrievers. I suppose my love of dogs came through my father. He was the most empathetic person when it came to animals. He often took on the misfits, loved them, trained them, treated them as family members. I had numerous dogs as an adult, mostly mixed breeds. My first purebred dog was a Bernese Mountain dog. Then, in 2002, I acquired my first Appenzeller Sennenhund, and my second in 2014, a beautiful male that I began breeding in 2018. He has sired six beautiful litters in Canada and the US. I don't have a registered kennel name. I have one stud dog, and use Van Isle Appenzellers, but as yet have not registered the name with CKC.

2. Appenzellers, overall, are a healthy breed but can be susceptible to hip and elbow dysplasia, and patellar luxation, not unlike many other medium to large breeds; which is why testing for these conditions is required prior to any planned breeding. My first Appenzeller lived close to 16 years.

3. As the owner of a rare breed, the challenge is education about the breed, not just for judges but for dog fanciers in general. I began showing my male in 2014, and at that time he was the only Appenzeller being shown in North America. Most judges had never seen an Appenzeller, unless they had foreign judging experience. In addition, there are limited opportunities to show that make it affordable to travel cross border, being an exhibitor from Canada, until 2023 when the breed became listed with CKC. AKC FSS shows are few and far between on the West Coast. For many years, my dog(s) were the only Appenzellers competing in any dog sports and Conformation. We are beginning to see a few more in the show ring, and in performance/companion events. That said, the sport is not for everyone.

4. The biggest challenge for Appenzellers is the low number of dogs showing. Currently, there is only one Appenzeller with CMs. Until such time as more dogs enter Open Shows, it will take a very long time to achieve full recognition. In addition, there are few Appenzeller breeders in North America, thus a small gene pool. With the new CDC Dog Import rules, the import of dogs to the US has presented major challenges for breeders.

5. Social media can be very useful in terms of education, news, and providing information. As with anything else, dog fanciers need to scrutinize the social media forums. I'm only interested in those that benefit the fancy.

6. My goal, since I acquired my first Appenzeller over 20 years ago, is to raise healthy dogs, love them, train them, and showcase their incredible versatility and beauty. For me, it's not about the wins, which are always a bonus, but more so that judges, other exhibitors, and dog fanciers can learn about this magnificent breed.

7. In terms of my own rare breed, and the efforts I've put into my dogs, sharing my knowledge of the breed, a positive change is that more judges have had the opportunity to put their hands on an Appenzeller and see good examples of the breed.

"For me, it's not about the wins, which are always a bonus, but more so that judges, other exhibitors, and dog fanciers can learn about this magnificent breed."



Appenzeller Sennenhund

A RARE AND SPIRITED SWISS BREED

BY THE APPENZELL MOUNTAIN DOG
CLUB OF AMERICA

WWW.APPENZELLERS.ORG

Among the world's rare dog breeds, few stand out as distinctly as the Appenzeller Sennenhund. Known for its striking tricolor coat, tenacious work ethic, and lively personality, the Appenzeller originated in Switzerland where it has long served as a herding and guardian dog. Despite its impressive qualities, the Appenzeller remains a hidden gem in North America, with a small but passionate following of breeders and owners dedicated to promoting and preserving this remarkable breed.

A BREED STEEPED IN SWISS TRADITION

The Appenzeller Sennenhund has a rich history that dates to the 1800s. Originating in the Swiss Appenzell region, this breed was developed to meet the needs of local herders and farmers, serving as both a livestock guardian and a herding dog. In 1853, Friedrich von Tschudi described a spirited, medium-sized dog capable of driving cattle and guarding homesteads, traits that still define the breed today.

Shortly after the Swiss Kennel Club's formation in 1895, it took steps to standardize and preserve the breed. In 1906, the Swiss Club for Appenzeller Sennenhund was formed, and strict breeding guidelines were established to maintain the breed's physical traits, temperament, and working abilities. These efforts solidified the Appenzeller Sennenhund's place as a robust and reliable working dog.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The Appenzeller's appearance is both classic and distinctive. A medium-sized, muscular dog, the Appenzeller is known for its agility and the trademark "post horn" tail curl over its back. Its coat is short, double-layered, and comes in two base coat variations: black tricolor or havana brown, each complemented by rust and white markings. The breed's "cheeky" expression reflects its lively temperament, and its physical structure emphasizes both power and agility.

Beyond looks, the Appenzeller is defined by its spirited personality. This is not a breed for the casual dog owner; its high energy and its herding and guardian instincts require experienced handlers who can provide consistent training and ample physical activity. For those prepared to meet its needs, the Appenzeller offers unmatched loyalty, intelligence, and a deep bond with its human family.



APPENZELLER SENNENHUND

APPENZELLERS IN NORTH AMERICA: A PRECARIOUSLY SMALL COMMUNITY

The story of bringing the Appenzeller Sennenhund to North America is still being written.

Although there have been Appenzellers in the US and Canada since the 1950s, the breed remains exceedingly rare on this continent. Even with a studbook established in 1990, now maintained by the Appenzell Mountain Dog Club of America (AMDCA), the population is still small, and maintaining a diverse and healthy population is challenging.

For dedicated breeders, the process can be fraught with setbacks. AMDCA breeders strive to adhere to European guidelines and must be prepared to forego breeding a dog that would not meet them. Dogs imported or selected for potential breeding are evaluated to ensure that only healthy, well-tempered, and physically sound Appenzellers are bred. Finding unrelated mates within the small population is also difficult. Yet this commitment to quality over quantity is a testament to the breed's strong foundation and the passion of its fanciers. New barriers to successful preservation of the breed in North America have recently been erected by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), where new rules severely restrict the movement of dogs less than six months of age into the U.S.

THE APPEAL OF BREEDING AND OWNING AN APPENZELLER

For those drawn to the Appenzeller, the breed offers both challenge and reward. Owning an Appenzeller requires a deep commitment. This is a high-energy dog that thrives on human interaction and plenty of mental and physical stimulation, and suffers without them. Ideal homes are those with a large yard or property, and owners who understand the demands of a working breed. With the right training and environment, the Appenzeller excels in various canine activities, from Agility and Obedience to advanced Herding competitions.

Despite its demanding nature, the Appenzeller has a charm that's hard to resist. The breed is incredibly loyal, highly intelligent, and possesses a unique combination of toughness and playfulness. It's also known for being a bit reserved with strangers but utterly devoted to its family. For those willing to invest the time and energy, the Appenzeller makes a wonderful companion and an excellent working partner.



BUILDING A FUTURE FOR THE APPENZELLER

Appenzeller fanciers in North America hope to see this remarkable breed gain a foothold. By sharing the breed's story, enthusiasts aim to inspire others to take an interest in the Appenzeller and consider bringing one into their homes. Whether as a companion, working partner, or show dog, the Appenzeller has much to offer for those willing to take on the responsibilities that come with it.

In conclusion, the Appenzeller Sennenhund is not only one of the rarest breeds in North America but also one of the most rewarding for dedicated owners. Its heritage, personality, and versatility make it a breed worth preserving and promoting. With increased awareness and a commitment to quality breeding, the Appenzeller could yet take hold in North America. For those interested in a breed that combines history, heart, and high energy, the Appenzeller may be the perfect fit. ■

REFERENCE:

Schweizerischer Club für Appenzeller Sennenhunde. *Der Appenzeller Sennenhund*. 1976, edited by Walter Fassler.

