

## Chapter Three

### Observations on their good qualities and their faults

*From al-Mutawakkili:*

If we succeeded in explaining what we wanted about knowing the times when hounds breed, the length of their gestation and how to deal with them in this regard, we relate in this chapter some detailed observations indicating their good qualities and their faults. That will be one of the things that will help you to know in advance about the good qualities before starting work with them, if Allah wills.

One of the ways which will help to know in advance about the excellence of their puppies and their intelligence is to use a test at delivery in a circle of dry grass. The puppies are put inside and their dams are held so that they can see them. The ends of the circles are set alight and when they have caught fire their dams are freed. They take them from the fire one at a time and the best of them is the one that is brought out first and the following one is the second best. As each one's transfer comes next, it will be better than the succeeding one to be rescued and the worst will be the last to be rescued.

What also indicates the good quality of their puppies is their weight. The one which is heavier than the others is better than the one which weighs least.

*From Kushajim's book:*

If the bitch gives birth to one, it will be the best.<sup>1</sup> If it gives birth to three of which one is a bitch resembling the dam, it will be the best of the three; and if one of the three is a dog, it is better than the other two. When the puppies are small and cannot stand on their legs, take them to a hilly place and whichever walks on all fours and does not fall much is the best.

*From al-Mutawakkili:*

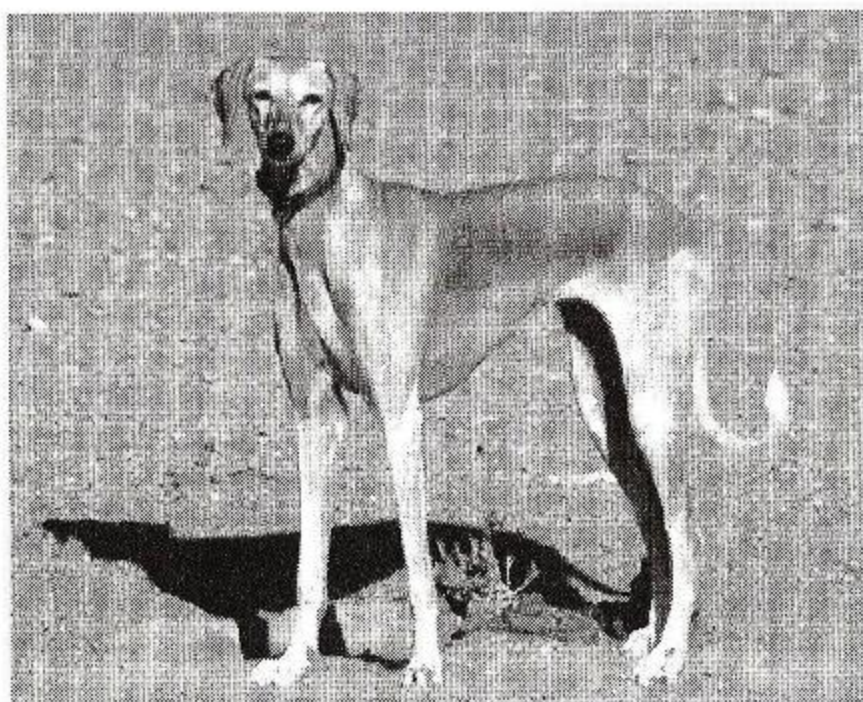
It is most necessary to remove the rejects from these tests from their dams and to leave the best of them to be suckled. The rejects are given to another bitch to foster them. If it does not suckle them, take some milk from a bitch which has refused to suckle and mix it with saliva and spread it on the backs of the rejected puppies. Then if it licks them and smells them it will foster them and suckle them. When the dams' milk is too little and they need more, take some bull's lungs and burn them. Feed the puppies the ashes with their food and it will save them.

As for discerning the excellence of what has been selected, it has nothing to do with what sort of colours they are, which are cream, red, black, white, greyish, fawn,

<sup>1</sup> Philott 1907, 47; translates "*afrah*" as "best" rather than the usual meaning of "clever" or "lively". Kushajim's text inserts here another sentence: "If it gives birth to two, the male is better than the female."



blue, black and white, ash<sup>1</sup> and the like, because they tell you nothing about their qualities, but the purpose of selecting certain colours is merely to find them pleasing to look at. It may be that the colours of some are ugly, hateful, which are superior to those of a better colour. When you examine them their keenness, the beauty of their shape, their bone structure and their moderate build show that they are good.



8. Tribal Saluqi, Iraq.

*From Kushajim's book:*

The black ones tolerate less well heat and cold; and the white ones are better if they have black eyes.

Some people claim that the black ones tolerate the cold and believe that they are stronger. Certainly every black animal is stronger than any other colour.<sup>2</sup>

*From al-Mutawakkili:*

As for the good qualities indicating the noble breeding of those chosen for mounting, the best are those which have refined heads with wide, raised tear ducts; loose, fine, long, wide-spaced, floppy ears, as if moulded to their necks, with long,

<sup>1</sup> These are all colours to be found among eastern Saluqis. The Arabs say green for a hound which is called blue in the West. Solid black is very rare: there are usually some white hairs present either on the chest or the feet.

<sup>2</sup> In practice colour does not seem to play a role in the ability of Saluqis to hunt in any conditions. Though light-coloured hounds are more common in desert conditions, black hounds are also found there and do equally well.



soft hair; foreheads with many veins; prominent orbits of the eyes which are contiguous with their foreheads and the corners of their mouths in line with their eyes; a long, fine snout; sharp, wide, sparkling eyes with strong, black pupils, deep-set like the set of the eyes of lions, cheetahs and wolves;<sup>1</sup> sharply pointed noses; wide mouths; bright, shining, beautiful faces, with full napes on long necks; wide, fleshy shoulders; long between their stomachs and their chests; moderate, well-muscled spines, connecting the powerful flanks with their stomachs and their backs; prominent, oval, well-muscled hips, protruding more than their forequarters; fleshy and with fine hair in the soft parts of their stomachs; small, round, hard, symmetrical feet; long between the forelegs and the rear legs; short-backed, moderate limbs; fine, short tails, well-formed, firm, taut, with the ends docked;<sup>2</sup> powerful, firm muscles; the hind quarters higher than the forequarters and the rear legs longer than the forelegs; hard nails; long, well-made bodies with long, soft hair. If these or most of these characteristic features are present, it indicates their long descent and noble breeding, their perfect skilfulness, and their strong running, if Allah wills.<sup>3</sup>

As for the good qualities indicating the noble breeding of the males selected for hunting, they should have small heads, hollow gullets and lean cheeks, with a noble stop,<sup>4</sup> and lots of saliva; that indicates they have plenty of stamina.

They should have wide nostrils, prominent foreheads and chests, pendant ears, prominent ribs and the two pieces of cartilage of the widest rib, wide, deep chests, and short backs: this is an indication of their running power. [Those with fine, short tails are the best bred.]<sup>5</sup>

Those with lean flanks and back, but not dry with poor backs and croup, are the strongest at running.

Those that are sharp-witted and energetic, and dislike leads and chains are of noble breeding.

Those that are many-coloured and shaped like bitches, with many prominent veins on the face, broad backs, lean flanks and tightly looped tails show their running power, their pure breeding and their skilfulness.

Those that have tails well clear of their hocks show their nobleness of character and the strength of their backs.

<sup>1</sup> Arrian 4.5 refers to eyes like those of leopards, lions or lynxes.

<sup>2</sup> Columella 7.14 says: "It will be found best to cut the tails of puppies forty days after birth in the following manner: there is a nerve, which passes along through the joints of the spine down to the extremity of the tail; this is taken between the teeth and drawn out a little way and then broken. As a result the tail never grows to an ugly length and (so many shepherds declare) rabies, a disease that is fatal to this animal, is prevented".

<sup>3</sup> This description amounts to a breed standard and reflects similar descriptions in Xenophon 3-4 and Arrian 4, 5 and 6, although the Arabs drew a distinction between the standard for dogs and that for bitches which is not found in the Greek texts.

<sup>4</sup> Literally what is between the eyes and the snout.

<sup>5</sup> In parentheses is a marginal note on the MS.

As for what is regarded as faults, it is everything opposite to these descriptions, especially if they are humpbacked from the croup. This makes them failures and lacking in breeding.<sup>1</sup>

As for the good qualities indicating the noble breeding of the bitches selected for hunting, those that have black or blue prominent pupils; large eyes; soft mouths, with coarse tufts of hair below the jaws and on their cheeks too; broad, deep and long chests, as if they are dragging on the ground; prominent withers; fine waists; long, full thighs; strong muscles with the skin stretched tight between them; the two bones, adjacent to the thighs and the pelvis should be small, measuring three fingers;<sup>2</sup> and a balanced back: this shows their keenness.

Those that have their hind quarters higher than their front are faster at running uphill, downhill and on the flat.<sup>3</sup>

Those that have their fore quarters higher than their rear are not fast at running, except on the flat.

Those that are black are more tolerant of cold than of heat.

Those that are white are keen if they have black eyes.

Those that have dew claws on their legs or loops on the base of their tails indicate their pure breeding, so dock them in order that they do not wound them when running.<sup>4</sup>

These are the conditions indicating their keenness and pure breeding and those that are contrary to this description of their traits of character are contrary to keenness.

Those that are broad between the joints of the root of their well-muscled tails are more pure bred and make less mistakes in hunting, contrary to what has been said before that males should have short, fine tails.

Those that keep their toes together when walking or running are better than others because that prevents mud and dirt entering between the interstices.

*From Kushajim's book:*<sup>5</sup>

The indications of a good hound are: long between forelegs and hindlegs, short in the back, small in the head, long and broad in the neck, floppy-eared with breadth

<sup>1</sup> Arrian 6.3.

<sup>2</sup> This probably refers to the distance between the points of the ilia which according to the Bedouin in Iraq and Syria today should measure three fingers, cf. Allen 124, though Dickson 376 records the width of the whole hand including the thumb.

<sup>3</sup> Copied straight from Arrian (5.10).

<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that ear cropping is not mentioned, although it is a common practice today, particularly in the Kurdish areas of northern Syria, Iraq and Iran and in parts of N. Africa, where it is done not only to prevent injury when running or fighting but also for beauty, speed or identification (cf. Clark 1995, 157)

<sup>5</sup> Kushajim 136.



between the ears as if they cling to the neck, large, wide-spaced, blue eyes<sup>1</sup> with prominent pupils, a long, fine nose, ample jowls, a wide prominent forehead and strong opposition to the leash.<sup>2</sup>

The indications of pure breeding are that it should have under its chin a single tuft of coarse hair and the same hair on its cheeks.

It is desirable that it should have small forefeet and long hind feet as this is good for hills and for dealing with hares, which cannot be caught in the mountains unless the feet are like this; a long, broad, deep towards the ground brisket, the upper half prominent; broad upper forelegs; straight forefeet with the toes close together so that dirt and mud can hardly enter between them; broad between the shoulder joints; broad between the groins of the long, well muscled thighs;<sup>3</sup> a well-balanced back; a good cut up; a long flap of skin between the top of the thighs and the brisket; straight back legs with no bend for the knees; short pasterns; a short, fine tail, hard as a stick, but it is not a fault if the tail of the bitch is long; and soft hair over the whole animal is desirable.

Al-Ma'mun<sup>4</sup> said to a man: "Buy me horses!" The man said: "I have no eye for horses, I am rather a hunter." "Do you not have an eye for hounds?" The man said: "Yes." "Then look for everything which you would aim for in the keen, well-bred hound and seek the same in horses."

The sign of good breeding is: a curved end of the tail to the pastern and it is right that it should be docked. If the hound takes its kill alone, perhaps it will go farther and take gazelle or onager or mountain goat,<sup>5</sup> which is possible only by those of strong constitution in a pack of two or three and if they are not outrun by it and are not afraid of its horns.

As for hare and fox, the hound will take them single-handed, provided it does not catch the hare in the mountains or the fox does not dodge about. If it does not go to ground, it will catch it. It may be that it turns towards the hound whose tongue is hanging out from running and it bites it and drives it away. The hound may also hunt francolin,<sup>6</sup> just as the goshawk or the saker hunt hare.

<sup>1</sup> See earlier references to blue eyes. p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Kushajim 136, adds: "and to the chain".

<sup>3</sup> Kushajim 136, gives this reading with the words "*atfay aslay al-fahkdhayn*", meaning literally "the two pits of the groins"; whereas al-Mansur's book has "*'azmay aslay al-fahkdhayn*", meaning "the two bones of the groins", which does not make much sense.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Ma'mun b. Harun al-Rashid, Abbasid Caliph, died in 833.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote to *al-ayyil* in Part VIII, p. 60.

<sup>6</sup> See footnote to *al-durraj* in Part VIII, p. 95.