

**Title: The Working Corso**

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Summary: I wish to open my introduction to this working section with two quotes, the first from an exasperated Jim Engel a tireless working Bouvier enthusiast, the second from the "father" the German Shepard and working trials.

The people involved in Bouvier breeding today for the most part have no real conception of nor interest in serious work. Their motivation is to collect trophies and be on some level "important" in the world of pet and show dogs. Their interest in work is limited to what myth building can do to serve these pedestrian ends. Trying to inspire a passion for working dogs among the disinclined is destined for failure, is like trying to teach a pig to sing: not only is it an exercise in futility, it annoys the hell out of the pig and puts him ( or her ) in a foul and vindictive mood, as we have seen. Experience has shown that building a working Bouvier renaissance by trying to make believers out of existing show breeders and pet owners is stupid and futile. Sure, some of these people will come to believe, most of us started out as pet owners who came to want something more. But the fire in these bellies will ignite regardless of what we do or do not do; our real need is to make sure those seeking more find it in a Bouvier des Flandres rather than a Malinois or German Shepherd, and to let the others fall by the wayside. If we build it, they will come..... We must value correct physical structure and correct type because these things are essential to excellent work and because the uniform and handsome appearance is an fundamental facet of the breed. But we must remember that structure and form for the working dog must follow function; those ignorant of the work of the breed must be denied a voice in its structure. There is no such thing as a working dog "show" breeder, although pretenders are legion. Working character comes from the heart of the breeder, from men and women obsessed with the character of their dogs above all else. You can not tack on working character by every once in a while buying an IPO I dog or breeding occasionally to a dog with a title in its lines, for all this produces is working dog shells, empty replicas devoid of the soul. The tragic mistake of the Dutch must not be perpetuated; we must bring working character together with uniform and handsome appearance in one dog. "I don't care what it looks like as long as I get my working certificate" may lead to a certain kind of personal satisfaction, but it becomes the credo of the living dead when we all live by it. Conformation must come second, but it must be a strong and demanding second for the breed to reemerge as a serious player in the working dog world." Jim Engel. Jim's Kennel in the USA has the following motto "where dogs who can not work are not Bouviers.."

<http://angelplace.net/Angel/index.htm> My second quote is probably the most used in the working v beauty argument. Max von Stephanitz, the founder of the German Shepard breed wrote the first breed standard for the German Shepherd Dog with emphasis on "utility and intelligence". It contained the sentence: A pleasing appearance is desirable, but it can NOT put the dog's working ability into question! And to be certain he wouldn't be misunderstood, he coined the phrase: "German Shepherd breeding is Working Dog breeding, or it is not German Shepherd breeding" The WUSV (World Union of German Shepard Clubs) Standard contains the following statement:- "The German Shepherd that corresponds to the Standard offers the observer a picture of rugged strength, intelligence and agility, whose overall proportions are neither in excess or deficient in any way. The way he moves and behaves leaves no doubt that he is sound in mind and body and so possesses

physical and mental traits that render possible an ever ready working dog with great stamina." "With an effervescent temperament, the dog must also be cooperative, adapting to every situation, and take to work willingly and joyfully. He must show courage and hardness as the situation requires to defend his handler and his property. He must readily attack on his owner's command but otherwise be a fully attentive, obedient and pleasant household companion. He should be devoted to his familiar surroundings, above all to other animals and children, and composed in his contact with people. All in all, he gives a harmonious picture of natural nobility and self-confidence." "Sound nerves, alertness, self-confidence, trainability, watchfulness, loyalty and incorruptibility, as well as courage, fighting drive and hardness, are the outstanding characteristics of a purebred German Shepherd Dog. They make him suitable to be a superior working dog in general, and in particular to be a guard, companion, protection and herding dog." Now you will notice that I have not used the term Cane Corso once in the above, the question is do we ten or fifteen years down the line want to be Jim Engels. bemoaning the " death" of the Corso breed as a worker. We are in a very precarious position in the UK, currently we cannot register any home breed litters with any responsible organisation. The "non" relationship that exists between the KC and FCI means that it is unlikely that we will ever be asked to adhere to the General Articles and Regulations of the FCI. So for us the future lies unfortunately with the Kennel Club. I say unfortunately because there is no reason why the KC could not put the "working ability" back into working breeds, yet it is unlikely it ever will. In the UK no working breed is required to work, to obtain the ultimate prize of Supreme Champion, under the FCI however things are different, below is part of there regulations on International Champions. ( The complete document is freely downloadable from here, [http://www.fci.be/uploaded\\_files/international%20Championship\\_EN.doc](http://www.fci.be/uploaded_files/international%20Championship_EN.doc)) FCI REGULATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP I. FCI INTERNATIONAL BEAUTY CHAMPIONSHIP FOR ALL BREEDS TOGETHER Breeds not subject to working trials To be eligible for the title of International Beauty Champion, dogs from these breeds must have obtained : a) over a minimum period of one year and one day, four CACIB in three different countries, under three different judges, no matter the number of dogs b) the period between the first and the last CACIB must be understood as follows : for example, from Jan 1, 1996 to Jan 1, 1997 For a) and b), exceptions may be granted provided they are approved by the FCI General Committee Breeds subject to working trials. To be eligible for the title International Beauty Champion, these dogs must have obtained : a) over a minimum period of one year and one day, in two different countries, under two different judges, two CACIB, no matter the number of dogs. b) the period between the first and the last CACIB must be at least one year and one day (for example, from Jan 1, 1996 to Jan 1, 1997), the date of the trial is not taken into account. at least a 3rd prize, or a grade "Good" in a working trial where the national CACT is being competed for. However, if the trial is judged on points, the prizes shall not be taken into account, but the dogs must have obtained at least 75% of the maximum points. Not that the above is currently relevant as the FCI standard lists the our breed as :UTILIZATION : Guard-, protection-, police-and tracking dog. CLASSIFICATION F.C.I. : Group 2 Pinscher and Schnauzer Molossian and Swiss Mountain- and Cattle dogs. Section 2.1 Molosside breeds Mastiff type. Without working trial. Unfortunately, the breed is listed as without working trial. Hopefully this can change over time. But the Utilization classifies it as Guard-protection, police and tracking dog. This being the case the onus to maintain the breed as one with true working potential falls to "us" the owners. We must promote the breed as a worker, and PROVE IT. There are two avenues open to us, the first and most conventional is to make information on all of the working type activities available in the UK, and encourage all working breed owners to "give it a go". (oh no not flyball). The other slightly more radical form, which can still complement the others, is to as a group devise a breed specific test, that can be awarded to UK Corso's . It should cover temperament and obedience in a form similar to the Schutzhund, BH qualification. I think both avenues should be followed. With this in mind I formally propose the creation of the " UK Friends of the Cane Corso

Standard Test.". I recognise that our numbers are small at the moment and most of us are seperated by some distance. My concept for the early stages is a test that could be administered by local KC dog training club's on an ad hoc basis. We publish the test requirements, then when somebody feels they are ready to meet the standards, they find a dog club (I would bar thier local one if they hold or have held office). We then communicate with that club. If you pass we issue a certificate and record the details. We could also offer testing at Corso specific events. I think it must have a fun element, but not stint on the temperament side. please submit your suggestions on this. Well rant over, on to the fun. Ian