

VIZSLA

VIZSLA MYTHS

I have often been intrigued by the apparent need of many fanciers to claim great antiquity for *their* chosen breed, and assertions that this or that breed harks back to Alexander the Great or the Pharaohs. I confess I care not a whit whether the Vizsla breed goes back to the days of Genghis Khan or is a creation of 19th-century breeders... I am satisfied that it exists now! Others will focus on certain physical or behavioural traits that are confidently proclaimed to be unique to a given breed, as if uniqueness were somehow proof of a breed's superiority. These claims often have no basis in reality and this was brought home to me recently in the course of studying other breeds.

Many Vizslas sport 'Futaki horns.' A typical explanation for these growths was that published in a Breedlines column a few years ago: "Smooth-coated Vizslas are perhaps unique among the pointing breeds in having small appendages, tags or 'horns' along the upper front edge of their ear flaps. In Hungarian, these horns are called *szarv* (plural *szarvas*). In their early days in North America, Vizslas from the Futaki line bred by Count and Countess Bela Hadik seemed to exhibit these ear decorations more frequently and in a more noticeable size than Vizslas from other lines – in North America they were labelled 'Futaki horns' because of this.... The origin of ear 'horns' is part of the origin of the Vizsla itself."

But according to Chauncey Smith, who worked with Bela Hadik and took over the Futaki Kennels following his death, the Futaki Vizslas did not exhibit this trait any more frequently than Vizslas from other lines, and he has no explanation as to why or how the Futaki kennel name came to be associated with this feature.

In any event, the suggestion that this feature is unique to the Vizsla breed is also contradicted by evidence that ear tags are found in a number of other breeds, including the German Short-haired Pointer and the Weimaraner. In GSPs, ear tags are known by some fanciers as 'Grabenbruch horns.' Among some Weimie fanciers, they are called 'Gretchenhof horns.' And 'devil horns' is used by a few in all three breeds.

Every breed probably has its own baggage of accepted 'truths' that research will show to have no basis in reality. Next month, I will discuss the 'Esterhazy saddle.' – *François-R. Bernier, 42 de la Gravité, Hull, Que. J9A 2Z2; e-mail: vizslas@bajnok.com*