What is a “Stud Fee”?

By Maureen J. Clark – Sharcon Great Danes

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Editor’s note: Though this was originally written and first published thirty-seven (37) years ago,
it provides interesting reading and food for thought through the differences and similarities of breeding contracts today.

The “stud fee”, my lady, is simply your dowry. You see, if you want to have happy little ones by that fine fella, and his people are agreeable, that is only one step. There is a little more to the whole deal than “I want you to want me!”

There are, on the market available through various magazines, standard stud contracts which one can use. One thing for sure is every breeder should use one, and part of the American Kennels Club’s rulings are that you keep appropriate records. Many breeders and stud owners do their own thing. If you have a popular stud dog it would be a good idea and advantage to have a package of some sort ready to go to the prospective bride. The package should include a recent photo of the dog, a five generation color-marked pedigree, a photocopy of his OFA certification, an up-to-date health certificate, information on his dominant traits, and the requirements for the prospective bitch. As a stud owner, when you receive the initial inquiry, send the bitch owner all of these things, along with a copy of the stud contract you will be using. You will also want at this point to disclose a stud fee, or inquire about receiving a puppy back as the stud payment.

It will be up to the owner of the bitch to decide whether or not it is agreeable to go with a puppy back in lieu of the money fee. Most stud owners, if asking only for a monetary fee, prefer it to be paid when the bitch arrives, before the actual breeding takes place.

Now, if the stud owner is nosey, well, all the better. After all, it’s neat to know that he or she cares about his guy’s kids! He may ask you to provide him with a hodgepodge of information including a description of each pup whelped, including those born dead or culled at birth and at what age you intend to let your puppies go. He may ask you to specify that all pups be cropped by you or by no later than a certain date, and may insist on a minimum sale price for the puppies. He may also permit no litter-lot sales or pet store sales and may specify that you destroy any puppies with physical or mental abnormalities and those of unacceptable color according to the Breed Standard. In addition, the stud owner may require the names and addresses of the puppy buyers of the pups and expect a contract to be signed in duplicate. No doubt he will also want your bitch up-to-date on all her inoculations and to be tested for Canine Brucellosis and Beta Strep. He will also want her free of internal and external parasites and he may require OFA certification, along with a color-marked pedigree. Many stud owners reserve the right to inspect the litter prior to singing the litter registration papers, either personally or through and appointed agent.

The Stud contract itself should list the names and AKC registration numbers of both the dog and the bitch in addition to the sire, dam and registration numbers of the bitch to be bred. The contract should be dated at the time of the breeding, with a “due to whelp” date listed. The first line should list the fee for this mating. You can list puppy fees and your own specifications under that.

Let’s talk about puppy fees. Say the breeder of the bitch has agreed to a puppy fee rather than a “cash on the line.” This can be handled in a variety of ways. Some of these I have personally heard and others have been told to me (and some are just plain unbelievable!). You will find the following among the options.
These are just a few examples:

a) This stud owner wants “pick of the litter puppy,” his choice at time of whelp.
b) This stud owner wants “pick of litter puppy,” his choice at the age of 12 weeks.

c) This stud owner wants two puppies back, 1st and 3rd pick.
d) This stud owner wants to co-own the whole litter.
e) This stud owner wants you to pay the cash stud fee, and then for each puppy born and registered over the total of five puppies, you shall pay him an extra $100.00 per pup.
f) This stud owner wants you to pay the cash stud fee and give him pick of the litter.

You had better stop and think. What else does that contract say? It should state that the pick puppy be taken at a certain age. That way the bitch owner is not tied up for five months, holding onto pups waiting for the stud owner to make his selection. If no pregnancy results will the bitch owner be granted another service? If so, when? At the next heat season or later on? Will the service be to the same stud dog or to another? What if the stud dog is injured? What if the stud owner does not own another dog? What happens when the stud owner is to get a puppy back but no pregnancy resulted, and then the stud dog dies before the bitch comes into season again? What happens if the bitch dies before the stud owner can return the service due you? Will the stud owner accept another bitch?

Here is another thing to think about; the bitch owner always takes her bitch to the stud. Normally it is not the other way around. If you are taking a virgin bitch, be prepared to have her muzzled. The stud dog will no doubt think that she is just lovely, but the bitch may not feel the same way about him. Many a stud dog has been ruined by a frightened, biting virgin bitch.

Find out where you can stay with your gal. The stud owner is not obliged to put you up. Some stud owners will accept a bitch who has been flown in. They will pick her up at the airport and will have the facilities to house her. You should ask if there is an extra charge for this service. If you are driving with your bitch please bring her own food for her. She may not like what the stud dog is fed, then again, the stud owner might be between food orders. You never know.

You will want to have a litter registration application available when the pups are born. And remember, if you co-own the bitch with someone else, you will both need to sign the litter application. Only one signature is necessary on the application for the owner(s) of the sire.

The biggie…start planning early. Don’t start making arrangements to visit that special guy the day your bitch comes into season. Chances are his date book will be filled. It is not ridiculous to start planning six or ten months ahead of time. And it is not unusual to start stud searching one or two years ahead of time.

Save your money. Breeding is not cheap, and that is just the beginning. You are going to have ‘mucho’ expense when those babes hit the ground. This is breeding, baby! The stud dog can stand regally by, and when that ‘special one’ from him takes Best of Breed a year or so later, he will brag, “Just look at my son, a chip of the old block”.