

## WINNING LETTER

## MUSTO

This edition's winning letter writer will receive a superb Musto leather cartridge bag, worth £150. Made from soft, nubuck, oiled leather, with a capacious main compartment, it also has ten instant access pockets, so you never need to be caught fumbling for cartridges when the going gets hot.



Ros – a field trial winning Clumber – retrieves a partridge

## Clumbers offer KC a lesson

In the century since BASC was founded, much has changed in field sports. Not all for the better. At a time when the breeding quality and soundness of dogs is coming under the scrutiny of a Kennel Club panicked into action by the damning indictment of a BBC television documentary *Pedigree Dogs Exposed*, it may be instructive to reflect upon the experiences of one working gundog breed.

For the Clumber spaniel, the breed standard today specifies a dog of double the weight given in the standard in 1908. In the intervening years, there were in fact four standards, each progressively raising the size of the breed to match the dogs of the show ring. The last change made in 1986, recommending 80lb as the "ideal" weight for a Clumber dog, was opposed during a prior consultation period by the Working Clumber Spaniel Society but, as a new grouping seeking Kennel Club registration in order to function at all, its voice was a little muted at the time.

After the TV programme was aired last August, the ruling body of dogs hastily and shamelessly tried to reinvent itself as the guardian of dog health and breeding quality – listening to public opinion (for which read 'fearing for its reputation') and needing to do more about inbreeding and breed standards that ignore crippling faults. It would like to portray itself as independent of the show interests that we all know call the tune and pay the piper.

In less than a quarter of a century since its formation, the Working Clumber Spaniel Society has helped achieve a remarkable transformation in the fortunes of Britain's largest land spaniel. Among the minority spaniel breeds, Clumbers dominate.

In the past 10 shooting seasons, 11 different dogs have won field trials. This compares with just one in the previous 84 seasons. The average hip score of work-bred Clumbers is 12, while that for others is 55. In size and type, trainability and temperament, pace and punch, Clumbers have been restored to a Victorian model that owes nothing to the breed standard, but meets the expectations of sportsmen. Demand continues to grow for these appealing gundogs, although for most guns it is still a comparatively rare joy to see one or more working on a shoot.

Amazingly, the Working Clumber Spaniel Society, its credentials including an evaluation scheme for work, size, hips and eyes approved by the British Veterinary Association and used as a model by other breeds, was not even informed by the Kennel Club of the review of the breed standard and the development of a breed health plan it loudly announced in October.

The enthusiasts passionate about working Clumbers stand ready to share their knowledge, for the benefit of all, with the body in the dog world that allows no other to represent them.

JAMES DARLEY, Buckinghamshire

## Should BASC support keepers' ring at Crufts?

I was amazed to see on page 12 (November *Shooting & Conservation*) gamekeepers being encouraged to attend Crufts. After watching the television programme about the Kennel Club and Crufts, I should think it's the last thing we should support.

Surely we are against bad breeding? They don't seem to be too bothered. I wonder if any other BASC members feel the same?

C CHURCHILL, Suffolk

**BASC director for South West England Jamie Stewart says;** Since BASC took over the organisation and running of the Gamekeepers' Ring at Crufts, this

unique annual happening has almost nothing to do with show dogs – it is about working gundogs.

Yes, every dog is judged to the breed standard but major consideration is given to its appearance looks and conformation as a working gundog which has just finished a hard shooting season. This fact alone makes the class unique. The Gamekeepers' Rings at Crufts have grown in stature over the last few years and we are now hosting some of the largest classes on gundog day.

I would encourage any keeper, beater or picker up to apply and experience the wonderful atmosphere with the confidence that every gundog on show is a genuine working dog.

immediately said bring your car in and we will repair or replace the tyres. One of his fitters checked and make safe the car for my son's safe return to college on Sunday afternoon. The manager did suggest we replace all the tyres and as a member of BASC we were offered an excellent price and the tyres were fitted when my son returned from college. A big thank you to ProTyre of Gloucester.

BILL FIELD, Glos

## TOP TYRES

I would like to mention the excellent service provided by ProTyre a division of 4Site 4x4 who advertise in S&C.

My son was returning home from Sparsholt College only to have a burst rear tyre – a large piece of Hampshire flint had left a hole large enough to put your thumb in. When fitting the spare he noticed that it had a nail in it. He contacted ProTyre of Gloucester and they