

Extracts from Eddie Chapman's book 'The Working Jack Russell Terrier'

Chapter 1 - What is a Jack Russell?

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Today's terriers may not meet Mr Russell's specifications of height and weight, that is fourteen pounds and fourteen inches high at the shoulder, but they still have one thing in common and that is gameness, but also gameness with brains.

The answer is that the Russell has not changed, but the pedigree terrier has. It has been developed from a practical working terrier into an animal which is quite unsuitable for the job for which it was originally intended.

Mr Russell was a protagonist of the old type. He was insistent on gameness and took no notice of fashion. Anyone with a terrier similar to his type calls it a Jack Russell.

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Showing should always come second when choosing a sire and working qualities should come first. If you are dedicated to improving your stock you should always demand to see a stud dog work before using him no matter how many championships he has won or how long his pedigree.

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So, for the genuine working enthusiast there is only one way to pick a sire - see him work yourself. Watch how he handles himself, how honest he is in his work. Does he bay when not up to his fox? Does he run around an earth just looking for a fox? Does he sit back and bay or lay hold of the fox and lie silent? What sort of voice has he? Does he need to be encouraged to go for a fox? What is his attitude to other dogs and to strangers?

A sire's temperament is most important as he will pass this on to his pups.

I think it is true to say that the genuine workers are of the most docile temperament and show their true spirit only when at work. The opposite can be said of the coward, which to the inexperienced, looks to be a worker because he snaps and snarls at any terrier which comes within reach. He looks as if he could eat a fox, but you will invariably find him useless for the real job.

It therefore follows that if I pick up a dog and can only just span him with a squeeze, then the dog cannot get to a fox in a tight place and a dog that cannot get to a fox cannot be considered a Jack Russell. Either you are breeding a terrier suitable to work to fox or, if he is too big to get to a fox, you are just breeding for looks.

What annoys me more than anything at Jack Russell shows is that very few judges put any importance on this vital part of a terrier. I have seen it happen so often, even in these past few years when the standard of judging is supposed to be improving. I sometimes feel like screaming, 'Stop! Please stop! Don't you understand you are judging working dogs?'

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If judges would only think fox when they go over a Russell Terrier, they would not go far wrong. If they really want to do a professional job, they should get the experience of handling a full-grown fox firmly in their minds. **The future of the breed depends on it.**

Chapter 2 - The Jack Russell Hunt Terrier

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The type of work that a Jack Russell does today is exactly the same as that for which he was originally bred. It must be understood from the start that he is a Hunt Terrier, bred to work with hounds.

To say that one sort of Jack Russell Terrier is suitable for all the different situations the terrier man comes up against would be a great mistake. I think Mr Russell would be the first to agree. The terrier man can be faced with half a dozen situations in the course of a day's hunting and each situation can require a different type of dog.

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Not all terrier men are lucky enough to have a variety of terriers. This is mainly due to their not being able to keep a lot of dogs. For a terrier man to have four different types of workers, he would probably need about twenty to pick from as these different types of workers just crop up in odd litters.

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His terriers are the tools of the terrier man's trade. The more varied his tools are, the more efficient he is at his job. He is only as good as his dogs. He can be the most experienced man in the country, but if his terriers do not come up to scratch, he is in trouble.

Chapter 3 - The importance of breeding pure

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Its bravery is unquestionable. This is why it is such a perfect hunt terrier. There is no breed in the world that can improve on the Jack Russell's qualifications.

Chapter 4 - Advice on entering to fox

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To start with, do not waste your time and money on a pup from unproven parents. The Russell has a deserved reputation as a worker, but not everyone will become a worker. In fact, if you take all the terriers in the country that are called Jack Russells I think that out of every thousand, only ten would prove to be game workers.

I have heard people say that any Jack Russell terrier will work if given the chance and if entered properly. Nothing could be further from the truth. In every district there are few people who have the interest or the opportunity to work their terriers to fox. These people do have game terriers or they would not be successful. Because they know how uncertain gameness is, they breed only from proven stock. Showing enthusiasts go out of their way to use a stud dog which has done well at shows, but few of them are concerned whether the dog has a working pedigree or not.

If you were a shepherd and wanted a collie to work your sheep, you would not go to a breeder who did not work his dogs. I am not saying that it is impossible to pick up a good worker from a local paper advertisement, but the chance is very slim.

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At 16 weeks the pup should be capable of killing a rat.

The next stage is getting him used to going to ground. I do not mean to a fox, but to going through any earth you happen to come across. An older dog can be of use here as the pup will follow his example. If you know anyone with an older dog that goes to ground, see if you can borrow him. Pups are very inquisitive and yours will soon follow the older dog through the deepest earth. If you try the same earths every day while out on exercise,, you can be sure they are not tenanted, for if the pup were to find a fox at this stage, it could be a catastrophe.

An exceptional pup of five or six months of age should be prepared to tackle almost anything and the problem is how to stop him rather than let him go.

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If a pup is tried too young and gets a beating the fox's scent becomes a danger signal.

If you have only one terrier I would advise you to wait until he is two years old before entering him to fox, even if he seems ready at eighteen months. It can pay dividends in the long run.

Once your dog has tackled his first fox and come out of the encounter successful and confident, you should work him as often as you can. He will be all the better if he is worked regularly, as he won't be so excited when confronting a fox.

Whatever you do, do not make the mistake of cheering him on. Let him work naturally at his own speed.

Some Jack Russells are very late starters and do not enter properly until they are three years old or more. When they do enter, they make cracking workers.

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So, you see, there are always exceptions to the rule, but I am afraid that I would have given up on her at eighteen months as I like my terriers to be keen on fox by nature, and if they do not look as if they are going to make it at eighteen months, they are out. I have got rid of some top show dogs because they do not look up to work and I have never regretted it. If you keep a dog because he wins at shows, but is not game, then you very soon end up with a kennel full of rubbish. What is more, you are a traitor to the working Jack Russell of the future because by winning at shows with a dog that you know to be a coward, you are encouraging breeders to use that dog because they think the dog is bound to be a worker.

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If a terrier has got what it takes, it will enter naturally. If it has not, no amount of encouragement or the shaking of dead foxes will make the slightest difference. I have tried patience and given ungame terriers many, many chances, but I have had to give in in the end. I should have realized this when the terrier jibbed at the first bite.