

I've been asked by John Jeanneney to give an introduction to the Bavarian Mountain Hound(BMH), and to elaborate a little about the skills and mentality of the dog.

Maybe, first of all, I should give you a little introduction to who I am. My name is Lars Haugaard. I'm working as a Forest Ranger in Jutland, Denmark. Over the past 12 years I've been working with the BMH, and at this point in time I've owned and trained 4 dogs, of which 2 are still active. I take on between 60 and 100 searches for wounded deer searches each year. This includes both traffic mishaps and deer wounded during hunting. The most common deer to track in Denmark is the roe deer, but red deer, fallow deer and sika deer are tracked on a regular basis. An occasional wild hog can be searched for too, but they are officially banned from the Danish countryside due to the large pig industry in the DK.

The Bavarian Mountain Hound

The Hanoverian Hound was considered too heavy for the tracking work in the mountains. In the late 18th century the BMH was therefore "created" by Baron Karg-Bebenburg from Reichenhall, Germany. The Baron used the Hanoverian Hound as a starting point and crossed it with other tracking dog types used in the region

The BMH is a lightly built, medium weight dog. Color is normally from light to deep red, usually combined with a black mask. It's a bright and intelligent dog that needs challenge and work. If not, it will most certainly find something to do on its own! It has a calm and steady mind if treated right, and has a very high degree of self-confidence.

On the way to becoming a specialist, some things tend to be lost. And for the BMH it was obedience! (Having a past history working with German Shepard's this was quite a challenge for me!)

It is very important to realize the BMH's high degree of self-confidence – and you have to be able to live with it! The BMH works and tracks well because it wants to, not because it is forced or commanded to do so. Shock collars and the likes are therefore not the best way to train a BMH. (Anyway e-collars are banned in most countries of the European Union.). Naturally you can force a BMH to track – but the results will be significantly less impressive.

And since the BMH is a tracking specialist, the only real way to meet its demands is to stimulate its ability to track. Sticks and balls are not suited for the BMH; they will run after it once, maybe twice, but you can be sure, that the third time you risk being meet with a questioning look on the face of your dog, and you will just have to fetch that stick on your own! And the BMH LOVES to bark. Actually they are bred to do so! The BMH is the only dog, which is considered a born “totverbeller” (which means that they bark when finding dead deer.) So check out your neighbors before getting one!

The BMH in Denmark.

Actually the BMH is quite new in Denmark. It was first in the 1980’s that it was introduced here. This may seem strange, since we are neighbors to the land of origin. But there is a very good explanation for this. Before the 1980’s the tracking dog work in Denmark was poorly organized. Most tracking dogs could have, maybe, about 10 to 15 real live tracks a year. This amount did not create the need for a specialist. There was no reason for having a dog that’s good only for tracking, if the prospects of tracking were limited. Therefore most dog handlers at this time were using other “ordinary” breeds of hunting dogs, since they in this way could use them for more than just tracking.

But in the 80’s new laws were made, and the Danish tracking dog registry took its final shape. The laws gave registered dog handlers authorization to track anywhere without asking permission from the landowner. At the same time the law for the first time stated, that a hunter is obligated to contact a registered tracking dog handler if he has wounded a deer. Naturally the result of this was to create a greater amount of work for the dogs, and therefore an opening for the specialists.

Some good advice. (based on my experiences from Denmark)

History shows, that the BMH is not a shortcut to success. If one is not capable of training a “ordinary” hunting dog for the tracking dog work, you will most certainly fail with a BMH as well! (Believe me, I’ve seen it...)

The dogs can only learn so much on artificial tracks. But there is a world of difference between training and real life searches. So in order to lead a BMH to perfection you have to go out on real

natural searches!! A lot of searches. If you don't do this, you will never be able to benefit from having obtained a specialist.

And finally: It's very tempting for Americans to start breeding on the few specimens you have right now. Don't do it. Although the process of getting a BMH in Europe is hard and long, you must follow this route for the first few years in order to obtain as many different bloodlines as possible. After that breeding in the States will be of a responsible nature.