Pentimento (good read)

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Pentimento

By Diane Klumb

PRIDE & PREJUDICE

Rather than the spate of hate-mail I was expecting. I received a surprising amount of support from breeders both new and old who, as it turns out, feel exactly the same way, but simply hadn't the nerve to say anything publicly in the current climate.

Well, God knows I have my failings (and both my friends and detractors would, I'm sure, be more than glad to itemize them for me if asked!) but I'm pretty sure one of them is not lack of nerve, so here it comes, folks –

Hi. My name is Diane, and I am a Breeder.

I am good at it, and I am damned proud of it.

I bought my first show dog in 1969 and whelped my first litter in April, 1975.

I have, since that inauspicious beginning, in partnership with my long suffering husband and a few good friends produced a few dozen champions, some top producers, a handful of Specials, and a lot of superb close-working grouse dogs and well loved companions. We kept a fair number over the years and sold the rest. (NOTE: I said sold, not 'placed'...we'll address that particular idiocy later¼) We owned a kennel for many years, and trained gun dogs. This involved the killing of untold numbers of game birds, all of which we ate. I have more recipes for pheasant, grouse and woodcock than you can shake a stick at. We showed our hunting dogs and hunted over our show dogs.

I do not believe for a minute that the whelping or sale of a single one of those purebred dogs is in any way responsible of the euthanization of a million unwanted dogs a year at the shelters around the country, any more that I believed that cleaning my plate when I was a kid could in any way benefit all the poor starving children in Africa, no matter how much the nuns or my mother tried to make me feel guilty about it.

I couldn't see the logic then and I can't see it now (although today I would maybe refrain from suggesting that we bundle up Sister Edlita's meatloaf and actually send it to the poor starving children in Africa¼)

Look at it this way:

If I go to a bookstore specifically to buy Matt Ridley's The Human Genome (which, as it happens, I recently did) and that bookstore does not have it, I will do one of two things – I will order it, or I will go to another bookstore the does carry it and purchase it there. What I will NOT do is take the same money and buy Martha Stewart's latest cookbook instead, because this is not what I want.

Guilt without logic is dangerous.

Show breeders are simply not responsible for the millions of unplanned and unwanted mongrels produced in this country. Period. So don't let anyone make you feel guilty about it.

I do not understand why the top horse farms in this country are not in the least embarrassed by the fact they make a lot of money doing it, yet in the world of dogs if one is to be respected, one is to lose one's ass financially. That is a load of horseshit, pure and simple, yet we accept it meekly and without question.

Why is that?

Basic economic theory suggests that if we are not turning a profit, one of two things is wrong – we suffer from poor management, ore we are not asking enough for our product to cover our production costs. What are our costs?

Well, if we are breeding good dogs, besides basic food and veterinary costs we ought to be adding in the costs of showing these animals, and advertising, and health testing, which are not expenses incurred by the high volume breeders (puppy mills).

OK, so we have much higher costs involved in producing our healthier, sounder animals. Yet the average pet shop puppy sells for about the same as the average well bred pet from show stock, and often they sell for much more.

What's wrong with this picture?

We're stupid that's what's wrong.

Q. Why does a Jaguar sell for ten times more than a Hundai?

A. Because it's worth more and everyone knows it.

"And everyone knows it" is the key phrase here, folks. But somehow no one knows our puppies are worth more and we're embarrassed to tell them.

Why is that?

The difference between the sale price of a multi million dollar stallion and what he's worth as horsemeat on any given day at a livestock auction is quality. Yet we cannot address this issue in dogs because we are embarrassed to talk about money and dogs in the same breath.

Why is that?

OK, I'll tell you, because someone has to come and say this sooner or later.

There is a war going on.

Unlike most wars, however, this one actually has three sides rather than two.

We have Show breeders, who are producing a small number of purebred dogs.

We have High-Volume breeders who are producing a large number of purebred dogs.

We have Animal Rights Activists, who believe that neither group has the right to breed or even own purebred dogs, much less make a profit at it.

While the first group is busy trying to get rid of the second group because they don't like the way they breed dogs (which by the way ain't gonna happen as long as the American public wants purebred dogs and the first group won't produce them) the third group is winning the war.

You think I'm making this up?

Then how come we've started saying we "placed" our puppies instead of sold them?

We talk about the new “adoptive homes” instead of their new owners¼

What’s next? Instead of price of a puppy, we’ll charge an “adoption fee?”

What’s wrong with this new language?

I’ll tell you –

We didn’t come up with it, the Animal Rights Activists did – we are just stupid enough to use it.

We are stupid because it’s based on the premise that we have no right to own dogs.

It is based on the premise that dog ownership is the moral equivalent of human slavery, and that the species homo sapien has no right to use any other species for any purpose whatsoever, be it food, clothing, medical research, recreation or involuntary companionship.

Now, I don’t know about you, but my politically incorrect opinion is:

Our species did not spend the last million years clawing our way to the top of the food chain to eat tofu. The stuff tastes like shit no matter how you cook it, and there is absolutely no sense pretending otherwise.

Zoology 101:

Animals who kill other animals for their primary food source are called predators. Their eyes are generally on the front of their skulls, they have teeth designed to tear flesh form bone, and a digestive system designed to digest meat (like us). Animals that live primarily off vegetation are called herbivores. They have better peripheral vision, flat teeth for grinding, and the most efficient of them have multiple stomachs, which we do not (like cows). And lastly, Animals who live primarily off what other have killed (carrion) are called scavengers (think about that one long and hard¼)

Man like the canid, is a pack-hunting predator, which is probably why we get along so well. (If that facto bothers you, get over it¼)

How did we get to the top of the food chain?

We are the most intelligent and efficient pack-hunters ever to suck oxygen from the atmosphere, that’s how.

We are certainly intelligent enough to understand that maintaining that position on this small planet depends on responsible stewardship, not guilt.

And we are so damned efficient that we can support a tremendous number of scavengers in our midst. Like the Animal Rights Activists, for instance¼

(Me, I think we should dump the whole lot of them buck naked in the Boundary Waters and see how well this equalitarian philosophy of theirs plays out, but that’s probably too politically incorrect for anybody else to consider¼sigh¼)

So what do we do?

Well, to begin with we need to regain control. The first way we do this is with language, which is the tool they have been using on us.

These people who don’t want us to “own” dogs are likening themselves to Abolitionists. That’s a fallacy, unless you accept the premise that dogs are really little humans in fur coats, which frankly is an insult to a species that has never waged war on the basis of religious differences.

No, the group they really resemble is the Prohibitionists-remember them? A particularly annoying bunch of zealots who firmly believed and somehow managed to convince our duly elected representatives that alcohol was a bad thing, and any beverage containing it should be illegal in these United States of America. Very few Americans actually agreed with this, by the way, but by the time Congress got its head out of its collective you-know-what, whole new industry had developed- Organized Crime.

We look back at that whole debacle now and wonder how anything that stupid and wrongheaded ever happened.

Well, boys and girls, in the inimitable words of the great Yogi Berra: Its's Déjà vu all over again¼

The Prohibitionists are back.

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