



# PURINA

## *Today's Breeder*

A Nestlé Purina Publication Dedicated to the Needs of Canine Enthusiasts

Issue 65



**BREEDER PROFILES**  
Little Brownies Kennel  
Snowshoe Golden Retrievers

**Westminster's Shining Angels**  
**First Aid in the Field**  
**New Pro Plan Shredded Blend**



Paul and Lynn Morrison, shown with five of their American Water Spaniels, built their post-and-beam house and kennel to pursue their passion for the breed.

LIVING •  
*the* American  
[WATER SPANIEL]  
Dream

*“Ruger,” the Bassett Hound, passed away, and life — as Paul and Lynn Morrison knew it — was about to change. Big time.*

**I**t was 1987, and Ruger's passing motivated Paul — an avid hunter — to search for a more versatile hunting dog. He sought a dog that could handle upland game and retrieve waterfowl. He must be a good companion, and breed size mattered. A medium- or smaller-sized dog was preferred.

Lynn, a medical sales professional with frequent contacts in the veterinary world, received some advice at a Detroit veterinary conference:

“You ought to look at an American Water Spaniel.” Paul was skeptical.

“I'd never really heard of the breed so I decided to do some research to prove the guy wrong,” Paul says.

More than 20 years later, Paul's research of the American Water Spaniel continues.

He's finishing the manuscript for his second book on field training. Paul's first effort, “American Water Spaniel,” a 155-page limited-edition Kennel Club Book published in 2007, serves as a comprehensive owner's guide. Along the way, Paul and Lynn took the American Water Spaniel plunge, established Little Brownies Kennel, built their dream home and kennel near Howell, Mich., and became devoted to these little brown dogs with big hearts.

The eight American Water Spaniels that currently inhabit Little Brownies Kennel are, in turn, living the American Water Spaniel dream. The dogs enjoy spotless kennels with radiant heat, daily runs and swims on the 68-acre property, meticulous grooming and care, and take turns every evening sharing time in the Morrison's expansive post-and-beam home.

“Our first American Water Spaniel, CH Choco Lot Morrison, CDX (“Choco”), came to us in 1988, and it sort of ballooned from there,” Paul says. “Of course, once we had one we wanted more, so we bought ‘Gunner’ (CH Little Brownie's Gunner Boy, CD). Then we decided Choco was too big according to the breed standard and shouldn't be bred. So we found ‘Teal’ (AKC/UKC CH Little Brownies Cinnamon Teal, CDX), who became our foundation bitch.”

Lynn agrees, especially the part about wanting more. “We bred our first litter in 1992. From that point on, we were kind of bitten. We became involved in dog shows and obedience trials and started looking for a place to build our kennel. In fact, we spent five or six years looking for



Little Brownies Brown Sugar (“Brownie”), with his friendly personality and eagerness to perform in the field, represents the qualities for which the American Water Spaniel was bred.

the right piece of property — land for the dogs to run and land we could get zoned for a commercial kennel license.”

They found the perfect spot — a choose-and-cut Christmas tree farm about 90 minutes northwest of Detroit. The Morrissions purchased the property in 1997 and moved into their new home in 2000. Paul still plants 600 trees a year, and the Morrissions sell about 100 Christmas trees at a log cabin located on the property. The house and kennel are the focal point, however.

“We call it the dog house,” Lynn says, “because we built the house and the kennel with the dogs in mind.”

Knock on the Morrison’s door and you’ll be greeted by 11 ½-year-old CH Kei Rin’s Foxfire (“Foxy”) and 13 ½-year-old CH Little Brownies Savanna (“Savi”), now retired to the main house. Foxy and Savi sleep in the whelping room, just off the kitchen, unless there’s a litter in progress.

Waiting patiently in the kennel attached to the house are six more little brown dogs of varying size and age. From 3 ½-month-old Little Brownies



Little Brownies Namaste is 3 ½ months old and learning fast.

Namaste (“Namy”) to 11-year-old UKC CH Little Brownies Ceska Vino (“Ceska”), there’s an American Water Spaniel to fit your liking.

American Water Spaniel enthusiasts often rely on patience, thick skin and a sense of humor.

Paul and Lynn point to a framed photo and certificate from 1990 recognizing Gunner’s first invitation to compete at the Purina Invitational Dog Show in St. Louis, an event recognizing the top show dogs in breed or variety.

Paul recalls proudly making their way through the show hall when an exhibitor stopped them in their tracks and pointed at their little brown dog. “I’m sorry,” the woman said. “This show is for purebred dogs.”

Paul gathered himself and managed a firm, but polite, “Excuse me, but this is an American Water Spaniel.”

Such is life for defenders of the breed.

With only about 170 American Water Spaniels registered with the American Kennel Club (AKC) each year, chances are that most people haven’t seen or heard much of these little brown dogs, or what they’re capable of.

“We have people ask us if that’s a Poodle or a curly Cocker,” Paul says, “or, is that one of those Labradoodles?”

In the field, the Morrissions and the American Water Spaniel faithful are also sometimes forced to grin and bear it.

“The retriever people sometimes kid us and suggest we get a real retriever, like the traditional Labrador,” Paul says. “But we just smile and let it roll off our backs. Overall, most field groups and people are pretty accepting. And of course, the older generation — people in their 70s and 80s — tend to be more familiar with this breed, and their ability in the field.”

### The World’s Best All-Around Dog

That’s how Driscoll O. Scanlan, a prominent Midwest breeder of American Water Spaniels in the 1930s, felt about the breed. Scanlan, who at one time kept as many as 130 American Water Spaniels at his kennel in southern Illinois, produced a kennel brochure with the “World’s Best” claim at the top, and included convincing testimonials from buyers of his pups across the country.

Paul Morrison’s first book includes the following quote from Scanlan:



UKC CH Little Brownies Ceska Vino, 11 years old, is one of the senior dogs at Little Brownies Kennel.



Brownie, above, and Little Brownies Violet Flame, JH, right, depict the breed's versatility as an all-around hunting dog that will perform on land and in water.

“As a retriever, the American water spaniel is well-nigh perfect by nature ... The American water spaniel is equally at home afield or astream. Endowed with a faultless nose, this breed works through thicket, rough ground or almost impenetrable covert, depending on body scent for game location ... It does not point game but springs it ... The dogs are easily trained, quick to learn to drop to wing and shot.”

As his name indicates, the American Water Spaniel is one of the few purebred dogs recognized by the AKC developed in the United States. Historians trace the breed's origin back to the Civil War era and Wisconsin, and his popularity peaked at the turn of the century. The little brown dogs could do it all in the field or in the water, and also served as watchdog, housedog and faithful family companion. American Water Spaniels were officially recognized by the United Kennel Club in 1920 and the American Kennel Club in 1940. Ironically, the breed's popularity began to diminish after World War II, when other versatile breeds like German Shorthaired Pointers grew in favor.

Perhaps another limiting factor was that American Water Spaniels were one of the few sporting breeds that couldn't compete in field trials. Therefore, people who liked field trials needed to choose another breed.

In fact, it wasn't until 2004 that American Water Spaniel Club (AWSC) members passed a resolution accepting AKC field classification as a flushing spaniel, allowing the breed to participate in AKC spaniel hunting tests and requiring the dogs to also pass a special retrieving certificate test designed by the AWSC. In June 2005, the American Water Spaniel won the right to participate in AKC hunting tests.





"Savi," who is 13 1/2 years old and a housedog, visits the kennel. Inset: Each dog's kennel has an identification card complete with photograph and profile information.



"We feed Purina Pro Plan Adult Chicken & Rice Formula because we get good muscle structure and our dogs' energy level is high," says Paul, as he feeds "Millie." "We've never had a dog refuse Pro Plan and it carries them well in the field."

Paul and Lynn are committed to preserving the breed's status as a versatile hunting dog, and breeding to maintain the breed's original type and character.

"My objective with the breeding program is to produce a good, sound hunting dog and a great companion," Paul says. "We want to continue to establish our particular line of dogs. I hope we can maintain the old-time American Water Spaniels."

Lynn, who also hunts, agrees and notes that she and Paul strive to adhere to the original breed type and standard with a "rise over the loin." The coat ranges from closely curled, to marcel, which means the coat has uniform

waves. The color is brown, solid liver or dark chocolate. American Water Spaniels stand 15 to 18 inches for either sex, with males weighing from 30 to 45 pounds and females weighing from 25 to 40 pounds.

Lynn jokes that the breed does well in the show ring on rainy days. "The wetter it is, the curlier they get," she says. "And mud? Well, they're brown, so who cares? The breed is pretty much wash and wear."

In the field, the Morrisons note that American Water Spaniels have a much softer flush than the English Springer or Cocker Spaniels.

"I've been failed in some tests because the judge felt it was more like a point than a flush," Paul says. "It's a softer flush, but the dogs can certainly do the work."

Paul says there are basically two "camps" in the American Water Spaniel world when it comes to field work: those who emphasize 90 percent retriever and 10 percent field or upland work, and those who feel the ratio should be 50:50.

"I'm in the 50:50 camp," Paul says. "These dogs work well in upland situations and the marsh. Aside from the field, it's the personality. It's a sweet, fun little breed to be with. And they train fast and easy."

### An Eye for Detail

The Morrisons' home is decorated with sporting art and antiques, including seemingly every existing piece of artwork or memorabilia related to American Water Spaniels.

"There's only about three or four prints that feature American Water Spaniels," Lynn says, pointing to the framed piece above the fireplace by artist Owen J. Gromme titled "Duke — American

Water Spaniel."

Paul is a "details" man and notes that the Gromme piece is artist's proof No. 15 of 40, and the dog in the portrait was actually named "Ben," not "Duke."

That attention to detail is evident throughout the kennel, which features six indoor-outdoor runs with radiant heat. A flip of the switch warms the concrete and melts the ice or snow. Inside, each 4-by-5 foot kennel sports a comfortable bunk, stainless steel water bucket and stainless steel bowl.



Little Brownies Millie Mae has a marcel coat, meaning uniform waves.

The doggie doors offer 2-inch thick insulation, and Paul added guillotine doors for added protection on cold and snowy Michigan winter days. Outside, each 4-by-12 foot run is covered by shade protective fabric for warm summer days.

The features keep coming. The kennel has its own septic system, and a spigot with dedicated hot water comes in handy on icy days or to add hot water for cleaning and disinfecting



Paul and AKC/UKC CH Little Brownies Ceske Pivo take a break from practicing water retrieves.

the kennel. Power washing is a weekly event at Little Brownies Kennel.

The whelping room, located just off the kitchen of the house, also features radiant heat and a deep sink for bathing puppies. The Morrises typically breed one or two litters per year. “We screen for OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) cardiac, OFA hips, OFA thyroid and CERF (Canine Eye Registration Foundation) eyes,” Lynn says.

Namy, the keeper from this year’s litter, is already showing great promise at just 3 ½ months. She makes daily runs with Paul, Lynn and the big dogs, following a three-quarter mile jaunt through the firs, balsams and fields of goldenrod and prairie grass. The dogs love to swim, and retrieve.

Soon, Paul will begin formal training with Namy, teaching her to “hup” or sit on command. Paul’s second and soon-to-be-published book is titled “Hunting with Spaniels — Training Your Flushing Dog.”

Like American Water Spaniel breeders before them, the Morrises hope to continue the tradition and preserve the breed.

Lynn started the American Water Spaniel Rescue Group, and the Morrises are founding members of the American Water Spaniel Field Associ-

ation, a Great Lakes area club that provides field training opportunities.

Paul and Lynn helped export the first American Water Spaniels to the Czech Republic in 1995. In five years, seven American Water Spaniels from three kennels including Little Brownies Kennel made their way into the Czech Republic. Paul and Lynn visited in 1996 and again in 2000, and Paul started a similar breeding program in Finland. Little Brownies Kennel pups also excel in Canada.

In the United States, the breed population is holding fairly stable with about 170 AKC registrations per year.

“When we first got into the breed, they were registering about 300 per year,” Lynn says.

“For the last six years the number has stabilized,” Paul says.

Still, many of the notable American Water Spaniel kennels are starting to fade away, the Morrises say.

“Eventually, Little Brownies Kennel will go away, too,” Paul says. But for now, with eight affectionate American Water Spaniels on board, life is very good at Little Brownies Kennel. ■