Lure Coursing: Where It All Began

Introduction

By Volma Baur

I believe that many people lure coursing today have no idea of how lure coursing came about. Here is a very interesting history of how lure coursing began. It is a letter by Lyle Gillette to AKC, published in ASPA's Fan Magazine, then republished as an article titled WHERE IT ALL BEGAN.

In the letter, it explains why they got lure coursing going, why they formed ASPA, and the beginning. There was a group of Open Field people who wanted to get lure coursing as an AKC activity, and they checked with AKC who told them they had to have the activity going in many States, not just California. They couldn't get Open Field lure coursing going because many states have laws forbidding you to put dogs on live game. Illinois is one of them. There are just a few who allow it.

I have printed this whole article, but I found this letter which tells it so much better, which is from one of those who did it. Lyle Gillette was one of the group who perfected lure coursing, through many errors and improvements. You'll see that it was their objective for lure coursing to become an AKC activity and they needed to know what AKC needed in order for that to happen. The people in California were not enough, so they formed ASPA and got people from all over the U.S. involved. When it became apparent there was enough interest in 1991, AKC started lure coursing.

My husband once said a group of people who get all this going. He built many lure machines to get the lure going around pulleys, but the machines were quickly developed by many people. Finding someone to rester the course every time with a drag was hard. They even did relay teams to get the field restraining. My husband and I had a mud hole, and he had to do it very fast, and he taught others how to do it. Merv would be very tired by the end of the trail.

Then we went to Texas and they ran a continuous loop. Merv got a machine and planes on how to build one, and when we came home. Merv got it going in practice and tried crossing over and introduced it to the lure coursing community at our trial, and eventually everyone had a continuous loop. Merv and Bob Mason perfected running the lure by radio waves as Merv was an old amateur radio operator. Bob finished perfecting it after Merv died. Bob Mason did it at one trial in Oklahoma.

The following letter was written by ASPA President Lyle Gillette and sent to the AKC.

January 30, 1975
Field Trial Department, American Kennel Club
51 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10010

Re: Sighthound “Lure-Coursing”

Dear Sir:

Sixteen years ago another man and myself traveled with our Borzoi from the Santa Clara Valley in California to the flat, grazing lands in Central California, for the purpose of testing our hounds on the large and fast California hare. Our aim was to learn if our Borzoi, which bore the coveted “Borzoi Champion of Record” title, could also do the work they were bred to do - coursing game. After a few Texture Club testing, we learned they could indeed do very well.

This activity proved to be so exciting and exhilarating for us that we soon were able to get our Borzoi owners to do the same. It was so great that we felt it possible to hold some sponsored field trials, and before long the Borzoi Club of Northern California was undertaking these events.

I had had some experience with the Borzoi field trials, and after several seasons of courseing with the Borzoi group, I suggested to the Borzoi people that we pull together a conference of sighthound people to adopt a set of rules and procedures for coursing field trials. Based both on the Borzoi rules and those of the Pointer-Setter events. Lyle Gillette took up a correspondence with Mr. Nett at AKC on the question of their interest in such a project. After visiting the AKC office in the Spring of 1962 in New York, she was advised that the AKC was very much interested, but could not see how they, at that time, could become involved, since coursing then encompassed only a handful of us in California. But, Mr. Nett encouraged us to go on with our plans.

The foundation of ASPA has been demonstrated by our continuing growth, and the success of our National Specialty. Those who have been in ASPA know that those times of suffering, of being isolated from the rest of the AKC, have been the most enjoyable of all. It is the very fact that we are isolated that makes us want to do the very best we can. The fact that we are isolated gives us the freedom to do what we want without interference from the rest of the AKC.

We have been able to maintain our independence and to have our own code of rules and regulations. We have been able to hold our own meetings and have our own officers and to have our own sense of identity. We have been able to hold our own meetings and have our own officers and to have our own sense of identity. We have been able to hold our own meetings and have our own officers and to have our own sense of identity. We have been able to hold our own meetings and have our own officers and to have our own sense of identity.

The third convention mentioned above will be a two-day event, with delegates allocated to attend from all participating organizations. Only delegates who are members of each member club will vote. The other delegates will be enthusiastic, and must do agree with our policy that we must remain dedicated to the task of gaining AKC recognition of lure coursing as a field trial for the sighthound breeds. One of the propositions to be presented at our March convention will be authorizing all ASPA publications and actions forward to the AKC Field Trial Department. And to the AKC Executive Vice President. We, the ASPA, would like to invite an AKC representative of the Field Trial Department to visit our convention so you can get a first-hand feeling of how seriously we are pursuing our goals. Also, please be assured that any comments or suggestions you have will be appreciated by our Board of Directors.

We realize that our activity must become more sophisticated and that certain inequities will be addressed for some breeds, but we are in the business of giving a voice to those breeds who need it. We are trying to work with the AKC to make sure that they, too, are heard.

[Signature]

Lyle Gillette, President
American Sighthound Field Association

The Basenji Club of America Inc. BULLETIN 30
The Basenji Club of America Inc. BULLETIN 31