



Title: A Matter of Breeding: A Biting History of Pedigree Dogs and How the Quest for Status Has Harmed Man's Best Friend

Author: Michael Brandow

Description:

Why would anyone want a dog with a snout so deformed it can hardly breathe just because it vaguely resembles the ones who used to fight bulls in Jolly Old England? What's so alluring about a retriever with a pedigree that its owner can overlook the fact it's so hobbled by hip dysplasia that it can't even play fetch? Why is a pooch whose provenance is an imperial palace deemed superior to one from the local pound? What force is so powerful that it can compel people to go against all rationality and morality when selecting a pet? Why, good old-fashioned snobbery!

Michael Brandow examines this peculiarly popular form of elitism in his social history *A MATTER OF BREEDING: A Biting History of Pedigree Dogs and How the Quest for Status Has Harmed Man's Best Friend*. Equal parts amusing and horrifying, this biting critique shows what outrageous lengths humans have gone to, shaping dogs into almost unimaginable shapes and sizes, in order to increase their own social status. This obsession has had far-reaching consequences not only for our so-called best friend but also for us, as it preserves beliefs about racial purity and class that we're no longer supposed to have.

Reviews

Booklist (starred review):

As canine-culture expert Brandow says in his introduction to this sometimes scathing look at the cult of the pedigreed dog, not everything we do for our supposed best friends is in their own best interest. His background in journalism and dog care, and, with 10 years as a professional dog walker in New York, his knowledge of why we like pedigreed dogs come from both his years of observation and his research into the history of the dog fancy. In a wonderfully readable style anecdotal with a touch of sarcasm the author writes of the creation of breeds and of how they must conform to a mystical "type" that has been decided upon by their breeders. Being bred for their looks, and by definition inbred (a true "breed" is never crossbred with another as the resulting pups would not be purebred), most current breeds of dogs suffer from breed-specific maladies that often shorten the dogs' lives. This snarky look at the purebred-dog industry is a must-read for all dog lovers.

Kirkus Reviews:

A no-holds-barred defense of dogs that are the hapless victims of their clueless owners.

Mark Derr, author of *How the Dog Became the Dog*:

Michael Brandow's *A Matter of Breeding* is at once a keenly observed memoir of his days as a New York City dog walker, a thoroughly researched history of purebred dogs, and an often biting social critique of people, their dogs, and the world they have made for each other.

Alan M. Beck, Sc.D., Professor and Director of the Center for the Human-Animal Bond at Purdue University:

A Matter of Breeding addresses a critical but often ignored ethical issue: dog pedigrees. Brandow exposes the underbelly of the dog fancy industry, showing what outrageous lengths humans have gone to in shaping dogs into almost unimaginable shapes and sizes in order to increase their own social status. This book is not only incredibly important but is a delightful read with fascinating insights into the history and psychology of the pure bred dog world.

Betsy Banks Saul, founder of Petfinder.com:

If you're considering welcoming a dog (or two) into your family, read Michael Brandow's fascinating and eye-opening book before visiting a pet store or breeder. Brandow not only unearths the status driven history of so-called 'purebreds,' but exhorts us to love all dogs regardless of breed. A dog is a living, loving creature, not an accessory item and Brandow makes his case persuasively and with wit.

The Brian Lehrer Show:

Check out the segment [here](#).

Animal Radio:

Check out the segment [here](#).

Dogster.com:

Whether you agree with Brandow's anti-dog-show stance or not, the book offers an interesting look into the history of various breeds as well as how humankind has changed the way dogs look and live. As for any bias against purebred dogs themselves, the author doesn't care if your dog looks like the Westminster champ or the [Ryan Gosling's] mutt.

Marc Bekoff, The Dodo, Huffington Post, and Psychology Today:

It's an *essential* and incredibly well documented read for those who want to know more about how we have strongly, selfishly, and negatively affected the awesome beings whom many call their BFF...Mr. Brandow's book is a serious, significant, and most timely message that deserves a global audience. It really is *that* good.

Shelf Awareness:

A Matter of Breeding should be required reading before the purchase of any pure-bred dog.