

Session 07

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Basic Behaviour Trait Characterization

– creating a tool to select for temperament in dogs



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Content

Background: Dogs and dog breeding in Sweden

Breeding for temperament: Pros and cons with the
Dog Mentality Assessment (DMA)

Basic Behaviour Trait Characterization (BBTC) -
An attempt to create a better tool for selection

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Dogs in Sweden



- About 800,000 dogs \Rightarrow at least one dog in ~16% of households
- Almost all dogs used for company
- One fourth of Swedish dogs used for hunting/hunting trials
- Seldomly neutered

(Egenvall *et al* ,1999)

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Dogs in Sweden

Close to 70% of Swedish dogs registered in the
Swedish Kennel Club



Reasonably reliable pedigrees for a comparably
large proportion of the population



Good possibilities for genetic studies

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Dog Mentality Assessment (DMA) – Background

- The first, and (so far) most far-reaching, attempt to construct an objective method to be used in large scale to characterize behaviour in dogs for breeding purposes(?)
- Mainly aimed at working dogs breeds (German Shepherd most common followed by Rottweiler and Boxer)

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DMA – Implementation

- Standardized test battery containing 10 different test situations
- 33 behaviour reactions are scored 1-5 by certified judge



Previous studies on DMA:

DMA useful for selection of breeding animals to accomplish better working dogs as well as to counteract (some) unwanted everyday life characters...

(Sundgren; Svartberg 2002 & 2003;
Strandberg *et al* 2005; Saetre *et al* 2006;
Arvelius *et al* 2009)

...so, what's the problem?

The problems are:

1. Increasing understanding among breeders that temperament is important to ALL dogs → **Demand > Supply**
2. DMA mainly aimed at characterizing traits important to working dogs. However, most Swedish dogs are used for other purposes

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Aims with the Basic Behaviour Trait Characterization (BBTC):



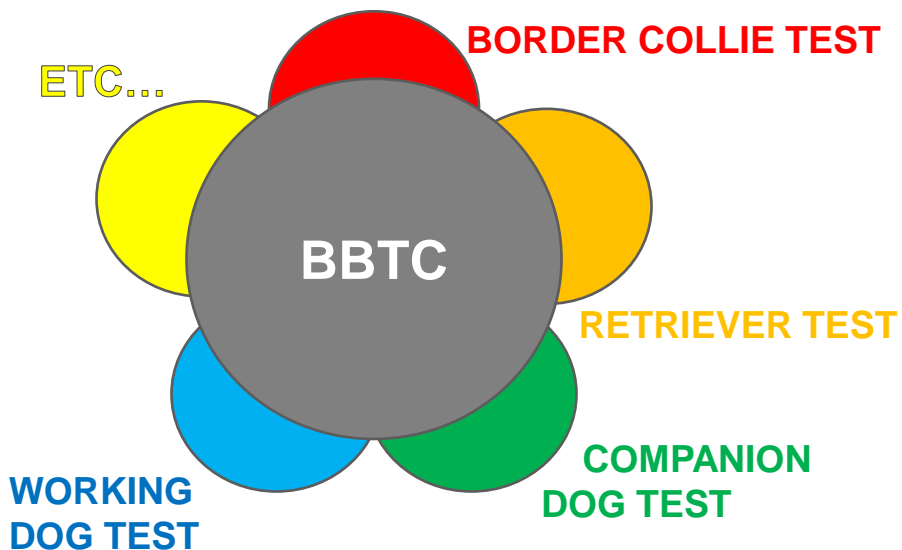
1. Predict every-day life behaviours important to ALL dogs
2. High heritabilities
3. Minimum resource-demanding

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Creating BBTC

- Year 2009:
 - Starting point = DMA
 - Analyses (in the light of the aims)
 - Create BBTC version 1:
 - Remove unnecessary test situations from the DMA
 - Make adjustments
 - Add missing situations
- 2009-12-31: Version 1 of the BBTC ready

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Creating BBTC

- Year 2010: Large-scale testing, analyses, adjustments
- 2010-12-31: Version 2 of the BBTC ready
- Year 2011: Circulation for comments. Adjustments
- 2012-01-01: BBTC launched
- 2012-2016: Analyses \implies identify important adjustments
- 2017-01-01: "Final" version of the BBTC launched

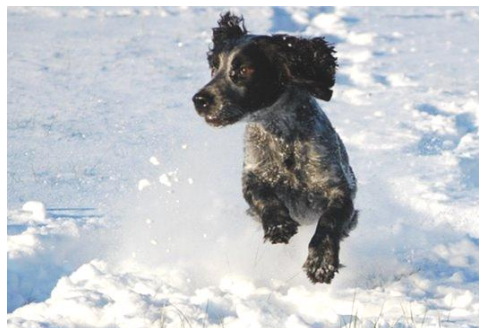
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Closing remark



- The DMA is, and the BBTC will hopefully become, a very useful tool that should be used to **complement** (rather than **replace**) hands-on breeder experience!

Thank you for your attention!



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