

# WHAT KIND OF NEWFOUNDLAND DO WE WANT TO LEAVE TO THE FUTURE?

## How to Remain True to Its Essence

Good afternoon, everyone.

First of all, I would like to thank the Italian Newfoundland Club for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to share some thoughts with you about a breed to which I have devoted a significant part of my life.

The title of this meeting refers to analysis, current issues and future perspectives.

And it was precisely the word *perspectives* that led me to focus on the future.

I am not here to give a lecture. We are among people who know this breed well. Some of us breed Newfoundland dogs. Others judge them. Others still live with them every day.

I would simply like to share my point of view: that of a breeder, an owner and, above all, someone who has spent many years observing this remarkable breed.

There is one question that has been on my mind quite often lately:

**What kind of Newfoundland do we want to leave to the future?**

Because every time we make a breeding decision, we are not simply deciding what kind of dog we want today. We are also deciding, at least in part, what kind of dog will exist tomorrow.

And I believe this responsibility deserves serious reflection.

I think I have a fairly clear idea of the kind of Newfoundland I would like to leave to future generations.

A typical, healthy, functional, balanced and unmistakable dog.

A dog capable of living happily within the modern family without losing the qualities for which the breed was developed.

A dog with the body to work and the temperament to live alongside human beings.

## WHERE DO WE START?

I would start with a statistic.

In 1996, more than 2,000 Newfoundland puppies were born in Italy.

By 2025, that figure had fallen to approximately 300 puppies a year.

That is an enormous decline.

A breed does not necessarily need large numbers to have a future. But when faced with figures like these, I believe we must ask ourselves a question:

Why?

And, more importantly, what can we do about it?

Let’s be honest: the Newfoundland is not an easy dog to live with.

We all know that.

It is large. It has a lot of coat. It drools. It needs space, time, attention and a certain level of financial commitment.

When people first meet one, their initial reaction is usually:

“What a magnificent dog!”

Then the questions begin.

“How much does it eat?”

“Does it drool a lot?”

“How much hair does it shed?”

“Where do you keep it?”

I have heard these questions for many years, and by now they almost make me smile.

Because the Newfoundland really is everything people see.

We should not try to turn it into an easier dog simply to make it more marketable.

We should explain why, despite all these challenges, living with one is so worthwhile.

Because if we remove everything that makes the Newfoundland demanding, we risk removing some of what makes it so special.

In more than thirty years of breeding and selection under my Starry Town kennel name, I have bred dogs that have achieved significant results.

These are achievements I am proud of, and they are an important part of my history.

But today, my measure of success is different.

Over time, I have come to understand that the true achievement of breeding is not simply what we see in the show ring.

**Breeding means learning to see beyond a dog's phenotype.**

It does not mean pursuing only physical qualities, but also preserving breed type, sound structure, functionality, quality of movement and, last but certainly not least, health and temperament.

Because the true result of our breeding decisions is what that dog demonstrates in everyday life.

After all, the dogs we breed will not remain with us forever.

They will go their own way.

They will become part of their families' lives.

And everything we have selected for them will continue to live on through those dogs, perhaps even through future generations.

When you begin to look at your work in this way, the way you look at a dog also changes.

After so many years, I can say that I have seen many things change: the dogs, the people, the way we breed and the way we communicate.

But one thing has never changed: the feeling I experience when I look at a Newfoundland that truly has the soul of a Newfoundland.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of getting to know this breed from two different perspectives: first as a breeder and, more recently, as a judge.

These are two very different experiences.

As a breeder, you learn to wait, to make plans, to change those plans, to make choices and, sometimes, to make mistakes.

Because breeding also means having the courage to acknowledge when a decision has not worked out.

As a judge, you observe, compare, assess and make decisions.

And these two experiences have helped me understand one thing even more clearly:

**Temperament is not just one of the Newfoundland's qualities. It is part of its identity.**

We may have a beautiful dog in front of us, with a powerful frame, a lovely head and fluid movement.

But if it lacks the temperament that defines the Newfoundland, we may have a beautiful dog, but we do not have the breed in its entirety.

And this is something we must never forget.

When I think about my own breeding programme, I realise that over the years I have tried to preserve the characteristics that, in my view, make the Newfoundland unmistakably itself.

Strength and solidity of structure, without sacrificing functionality.

A gentle expression.

Fluid and effective movement.

A balanced temperament.

Today, after so many years of breeding and selection, I feel that there is one aspect I consider even more important: **psychophysical balance.**

And here I would like to introduce a concept that is fundamental to me:

**A dog's well-being is not simply a characteristic. It is the ultimate goal.**

When we talk about animal welfare, we must not limit ourselves to health alone.

Health is a priority.

But well-being encompasses much more.

It means a dog that feels comfortable in its own body.

A dog that can move correctly, with a functional structure that allows it to breathe, move, rest and live without our excessive pursuit of a physical characteristic becoming a limitation for it.

But it also means a dog that feels comfortable in its own mind.

A dog that is balanced, calm and confident.

A dog that can live alongside people and face different situations without fear or instability.

A dog that expresses the natural gentleness that belongs to this breed.

Because we cannot separate beauty from functionality.

And we cannot separate functionality from the soul of the dog: its sensitivity, its genuine sweetness and its natural willingness to work with and alongside human beings.

These are qualities that cannot be fully appreciated simply by looking at a dog in the show ring. They become evident when we observe the dog living its everyday life.

That is why psychophysical balance has become so important in my breeding programme.

## THE SHOW RING AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SELECTION

Over the years, I have thought a great deal about the importance we sometimes attach to the results obtained in the show ring.

Judging matters.

It is a qualified assessment, a professional point of view and an opportunity to see our dogs through the eyes of experienced people.

But every judge interprets the breed standard from their own perspective.

That is why one judge’s opinion may differ from another’s.

And that is perfectly normal.

We should listen, discuss and have the humility to question our own choices.

But we should never allow a single result to determine the direction of our breeding programme.

**A judge should be a point of reference and a source of inspiration, not the architect of our breeding programme.**

Because breeding requires a broader, consistent and, above all, long-term vision.

We should not have to choose between beauty and temperament.

The Newfoundland must retain its breed type, its structure, its movement, its coat and all the characteristics that define its identity.

But these qualities must go hand in hand with a balanced temperament and sound functionality.

We should not have to choose which part of the Newfoundland to save.

We must work to ensure that none of its essential qualities is lost.

And this brings us to a key word: responsibility.

Whenever we look at one of our dogs, we should remember something very simple.

For its entire life, that dog depends on us.

And this should be at the heart of every decision we make concerning it.

That is why we need perseverance, patience and, above all, the courage to resist shortcuts.

We can all have dreams.

Show successes.

Rescue work qualifications.

Important matings.

But let us remember something.

A championship title eventually fades into the past.

A trophy will sooner or later gather dust.

A photograph will fade over the years.

But what we have selected remains within the breed.

And so our priority should be clear:

**The dog must come before everything else.**

Because the dog comes before the trophy.

## WE ARE ONLY ONE LINK IN THE CHAIN

We have all been incredibly fortunate.

We did not start from nothing.

Before us, there were people who devoted their lives to this breed.

We inherited bloodlines, experience, knowledge and a genetic heritage that we did not create ourselves.

We are simply one link in a chain.

Others built before us.

Others will continue after us.

And so we must ask ourselves:

What are we doing with what we have inherited?

Every mating is a decision.

Perhaps we should spend a little less time asking:

“Is this a beautiful dog?”

And a little more time asking:

“What can this dog contribute to the breed?”

“What can it pass on?”

“And what might I risk losing?”

Because our work is not simply about improvement.

It is also about having the ability to preserve what already works.

When we breed dogs, we make decisions that someone else, after us, will have to live with and manage.

And that is one of the greatest responsibilities a breeder can have.

## THE FUTURE ALSO DEPENDS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

I would now like to turn to an important subject: young people.

Because if we are only one link in the chain, I find myself wondering:

Who will come after us?

Will they want to breed dogs?

Will they want to learn?

To study pedigrees?

To face difficulties, make mistakes and start again?

Because breeding today is not easy.

It requires time, resources, sacrifice and an enormous amount of passion.

If that passion is not passed on, it risks fading away.

And I believe we also have a responsibility towards younger generations.

We must help them fall in love with this breed.

Not necessarily so that they will all become breeders, but so that they can discover this world, ask questions, deepen their knowledge of the breed and understand what selection really means.

We must stop waiting for young people to come to us.

We must be the ones who reach out to them.

Through photographs.

Through videos.

Through social media.

Through events.

But above all, through honesty.

Because a young person may fall in love with a photograph.

But genuine passion develops when they discover a story.

The Newfoundland may be demanding to manage, but it is extraordinarily easy to love.

We should learn to tell the Newfoundland’s story better.

If we show a dog lying on a sofa, people will see a huge dog.

If we show it working in the water, they will begin to understand something about its history.

If we talk about its temperament, they will understand what makes it different.

If we explain its original purpose, they will understand why it was selected in a particular way.

And if we tell the story of the work behind a good dog, perhaps people will begin to understand that a dog cannot be chosen simply by looking at a photograph.

But we must also be honest.

We must explain what living with a Newfoundland really means.

Because anyone who chooses a Newfoundland should understand, fully and clearly, what they are choosing.

And we must remember that every one of us has a role to play.

The judge.

The breeder.

The exhibitor.

The owner.

We are all ambassadors for the breed.

When we go out with our Newfoundland, someone may be seeing one for the very first time.

And even the way we handle our dog tells a story.

A Newfoundland that is clean, well-groomed, calm and well-socialised.

And, why not, smelling lovely, too.

The coat and the drool are part of the package.

The bad smell is not!

## HOW CAN WE GIVE THE NEWFOUNDLAND A FUTURE?

Certainly not by simply breeding more puppies.

The breed needs to be valued, understood, respected and better known.

Because knowledge creates value.

Value creates awareness.

And what we understand, we are better equipped to protect.

We must aim to breed for life, not just for the show ring.

And when we are forced to choose, we must put health and temperament ahead of aesthetics.

Perhaps, then, the question should not be:

“How can we sell more Newfoundlands?”

But rather:

“How can we help more people fall in love with the Newfoundland?”

These are two very different things.

Perhaps the Newfoundland does not need to become a breed for everyone.

And perhaps we should not even try to make it one.

Because, in the end, our task is not simply to leave behind good dogs.

It is to leave future generations with the desire to discover, respect and love this breed.

I would like to think that, many years from now, someone will still look at a Newfoundland and say:

“What a magnificent dog!”

And perhaps even think:

“I really want a Newfoundland!”

## WHAT WILL WE LEAVE BEHIND?

I would like to close with an image.

Imagine a child seeing a Newfoundland for the very first time.

The child knows nothing about the breed standard.

Knows nothing about dog shows.

Knows nothing about bloodlines.

The child simply sees a Newfoundland.

Walks towards it.

Places a hand on its head.

And smiles.

There it is.

Perhaps, deep down, everything we do begins right there.

With that sense of wonder.

And perhaps, twenty years from now, that child will become a breeder.

Or a judge.

Or simply an owner.

And perhaps one day, that young person will be standing here, on this very same stage, talking about this very same breed.

And they will tell the audience that they discovered the Newfoundland thanks to one of us.

So there is only one question left to ask:

**Will that child still find the Newfoundland we have known?**

My answer, without hesitation, is yes.

But hope alone is not enough. We must work to make it happen.

We must preserve what we have inherited.

We must put the well-being of our dogs ahead of our own ambitions.

And we must make sure that someone, somewhere, will want to become part of this story.

Because, in the end, nobody will ask us how many trophies we won.

Nobody will ask us how many titles we achieved.

We will be asked something far more important:

**What did we leave behind?**

And I would like to think that, many years from now, that child will still be able to walk up to a Newfoundland, place a hand on its head…

and smile.

Because that would mean we had done our job well.

Thank you.