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# Breeder Spotlight: Lynn and Jim Caswell of Wavemaker Staffordshire Bull Terriers

Hilarie Erb | January 03, 2018



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Lynn and Jim Caswell of Grayson, Ga., own, show, and breed [Staffordshire Bull Terriers](#). They travel around the country promoting health, exercise, and the breed standard, with a focus on the total dog: temperament, structure, movement, and type. The Caswells have been involved with this breed for 14 years and are also heavily involved in Stafford rescue and the promotion of health testing in the breed. They began a nonprofit 501(c)(3) called The Stafford Knot Inc. with this purpose in mind and to educate the public about the breed.

The Caswells published an online magazine for nearly nine years and now offer articles in an online searchable database. Stafford fanciers and historians submit articles, and others come from old publications. They cover every topic imaginable. Jim and Lynn helped produce Illustrated breed standards, available in several formats, and they recently began a Staffordshire Bull Terrier mentoring program.

#### **AKC: How did you get started in breeding dogs?**

**Lynn:** We began in the breed with zero interest in breeding; purchasing our first as a pet and performance dog. But after eight years or so, we decided that it would be important to take what knowledge we had gained from overseas and apply it here in the United States. The breed here seemed to be a wild multitude of types and was differing greatly from region to region. We did not breed a litter until we had our third Stafford, as we strongly felt it took that long to know enough to begin.

An advertisement for AKC Marketplace and Rover.com. The AKC Marketplace logo is on the left, featuring the AKC logo and the text "Marketplace". Below it, the Rover.com logo is shown with the tagline "Brought to you by THE DOG PEOPLE". To the right, the text "Dog Walks When You Need Them" is displayed in large, bold, white letters on a green grass background. A small image of a dog on a leash is visible on the right side of the text.

Working together with a small group of like-minded Stafford breeders, we strive to produce fully health-tested, well-rounded, and "typey" Staffords that exemplify what we consider to be close examples of the written breed standard in body, mind, and work ethic. We look for overall balance, based upon what we have seen in our mentors' homes, with the attention to a lack of exaggeration in any direction. Of course, it's not like there is a vending machine to spit out exactly what you put in, but after not only studying pedigrees thoroughly, visiting the United Kingdom (U.K.) several times and Australia, and getting our hands on as many dogs as possible, we feel we have a fairly good idea of what we are seeking to produce. To us, the most important part of a successful program is working together with people we feel have equal interest in preserving the breed in health, type, and temperament.

#### **AKC: What is the most important thing to know about your breed?**

**Lynn:** The Stafford is not the breed for everyone. Breed-specific legislation is alive and well, and our breed is considered a banned breed when it is enacted. Staffords are not human aggressive at all, but can be problematic with other animals in the wrong hands.

Staffords are wonderful dogs; however, they can be a handful. They work best for trainers who use [positive reinforcement](#) training methods and lots of praise, and given interesting fun tasks to keep their terrier minds busy. They do not always get along with other dogs or cats after they reach

maturity, which is something many breeders fail to tell new owners. Staffords should never be dog park dogs.

Staffords can also be hilarious clowns, always making owners laugh, even when they have been quite naughty. They are extremely loving with people and are not a kennel or backyard type of dog. They require a soft spot in your home and lots of quality time with their people.



#### **AKC: How has AKC Marketplace helped you find puppy buyers?**

**Lynn:** [AKC Marketplace](#) offers us a chance to educate people seeking the breed. Many people contact us through the AKC Marketplace wanting a Stafford simply based upon looks or size alone. Most have never met a Stafford in person. The AKC Marketplace allows us a chance to talk with people and send them information to read about the breed, where to attend shows or performance events, and to see if this truly is the right breed for them.

#### **AKC: What is your favorite question to ask of potential puppy buyers?**

**Lynn:** How do you feel about never being in a room alone, having a Velcro dog attached to you at all times, and giving up all personal space? I also tell people that they do shed, make crazy noises, and bounce. You must be mindful of your [dog's body language](#), cautious of over stimulation or heatstroke, teach them to swim with a quality float coat at a young age, and never put them into a situation where they could get into trouble at any time.

## AKC: What are the main qualities you look for in potential owners?

**Lynn:** We look for owners who are already active in dogs or, if not yet experienced, then willing to remain in touch with us and allow us to mentor them. Wavemaker Stafford owners are family to us. We enjoy their experiences with their Staffords and are there for them for the lifetime of their dog and beyond. Our contract states if at any time they should need to re-home their Stafford, it comes back to us, no questions asked and into welcome arms. We also prefer naturally rearing homes who are willing to follow or learn the established protocols we use. We want our Staffords to be in permanent, loving, active homes, and to have plenty of time with people.



## AKC: What is the best advice you would give to novice breeders?

**Lynn:** Take your time, keep your ears and minds open, get your hands on as many Staffords as you possibly can, and don't listen to hearsay or gossip. Study the breed in as much detail as you can. Find mentors willing to work with your needs and desires, with kindness, patience, and experience, but also with a stern ethic and high morals. Do your homework and don't expect to take shortcuts and have instant success. A good breeding program is often the result of making mistakes, owning those mistakes, and learning from them. Be ditchers of your mistakes with the end goal of

have instant success. A good breeding program is often the result of making mistakes, owning those mistakes, changing paths, and starting again. Don't shy away from working with others who share your ideal picture of what this breed should be. Breeding can be heartbreaking and difficult, so why go at it alone? Love the dogs you produce for what they are as dogs and not objects. Find enjoyment in their presence and in their "Staffordness."

### **AKC: Do your dogs participate in AKC sports?**

**Lynn:** Absolutely they do! Our breed standard calls for "a foremost all-purpose dog," and they are required in the standard to be "active and agile," meaning they must be capable of more than simply walking in a left-hand circle on weekends. We bred the first [AKC Coursing Ability Excellent \(CAX\)](#) Stafford, own the oldest CAX Stafford, and the top two Staffords in the Lap Dog division of the North America Diving Dogs (NADD). Most are involved in some type of performance other than lure, dock diving, or conformation, such as agility, obedience, rally, and more. Our Staffords learn to swim as babies and enjoy boating, the beach, disc, hiking, camping, biking, and fetch when not competing in [AKC events](#).



## AKC: What do you like best about breeding dogs?

**Lynn:** We don't breed often, so when we do breed a litter, it's well planned and all health testing has been done. We take a long time deciding which pairs we hope will produce the soundest offspring possible. At times, it can be so stressful, sometimes heartbreaking, and always expensive! We often use imported semen from the U.K. or Australia, therefore the process can cost many thousands. I would have to say it's enjoyable taking our time getting to know people who are interested in getting a dog from us. By the time puppies arrive, these people are like extended family to us.

The close second would be following enrichment programs with our puppies, such as Puppy Culture, Early Neurological Stimulation (ENS), Early Scent Introduction (ESI), and Avidog. These programs have made a huge difference in the lives of each puppy we have produced and in the bond between the puppy and their new owner. I would also be remiss if I neglected to mention, as a photographer, my absolute favorite part of having puppies, and dogs in general, is that I do weekly photo shoots and share them with people who follow us. It's a current addiction for me.

## AKC: Do you have a favorite breeding story?

**Lynn:** I have two favorite and related breeding stories. The first one involves importation of semen from a veteran U.K. champion that was lost in transit twice! We ended up doing two artificial inseminations from two collections, and neither time thought we would have success. In fact, my reproductive vet was so sure no puppies would result from these attempts that she didn't charge us for the implants. When we saw the little dots on the ultrasound screen one month later, we were cautiously optimistic. When the two puppies were born, both were blue, which was a total surprise to us as both parents are brindle.

Blue is an allowed color in the standard, but we just did not expect it. We kept the bitch, and she has turned out to be the winningest blue Stafford in the history of the breed worldwide, and she is also a medical alert dog. She is so very important to us and holds a special place in our hearts and home. She has been shown in the U.K., as well, and is well known worldwide as "The Purple Puppy." Her brother is in a fantastic home and is just as special.



The second breeding story is when we traveled with her more than 2,800 miles to breed her to a dog in Victoria, Canada. It was such a positive experience, and we made friends for life with the stud dog owners, enjoying a gorgeous week of exploration of this beautiful part of Canada. The resulting pups from that litter (all brindle) went on to all be successes on their own and be adored by some exceptional owners.

To learn more about Wavemaker Staffordshire Terriers, [click here](#).