



THE OKAVANGO WART DOG



National DOG report from *Kim Meyer*
on safari in a remote area of Botswana.

“Dumelang,” as they say in Setswana, from your intrepid reporter on safari in darkest Africa. I’ve returned for the first time in 15 years, mainly to catch up with my long-lost sister Sandi and her family in Botswana. But of course I had dogs on my mind too. Your readers may be interested in what we’ve discovered.

Once I’d met Ben, Sandi’s very special Ridgeback, I began to experience familiar cravings. I couldn’t stop thinking about a return to exhibiting. And Ben would probably do pretty well in the Oz showing. Then again I thought of the high standard of the breed there and decided there was no point in reinventing the wheel. (Besides, it was made clear to me that fratricide could be arranged at short notice if I even thought of pinching Ben.)

So I thought instead of all those wonderful Aussie Basenjjs - far too much competition to join them, but a light went on and I knew what to do.



**MBIS All African Ch & Chobe Rooting Ch
Kalahorror Pi G’Zars on Stapleton**

(Junior Handlers will note my traditional exhibiting outfit: cool camouflage khakis suitable for desert shows and thongs, of course, are the new Reeboks.)

As with the Ridgeback, one of the breeds that contributed to the evolution of the Okavango Wart Dog, a pragmatic approach was used regarding the breed standard. It seemed silly to invent a whole new standard when there were plenty of good ones about, so likely phrases were cobbled together from various existing standards. Allow me to share with you some of the breed features that are apparent in the photos.

The head is long and stopless with a slight roman profile and punishing jaw indicating the Afghan-Bull Terrier cross that revolutionised the breed in its early days. It has sufficient room between its rose ears for the much-valued lozenge wart. Judges should be cavalier about disqualifying any exhibit that does not carry this unique breed characteristic or risk themselves being considered a proper charlie.

It has a mean varminty glint in its narrow slitty eyes and a pronounced snout with broad open nostrils. These are essential in its natural desert environment, where the Okavango Wart Dog is used to root out truffles, roots and other underground food sources. Any specimen of this all-purpose breed failing to find such food is usually culled, smoked and itself eaten, the texture and taste said to be reminiscent of bacon. This unique characteristic makes it an extremely economical breed to keep.

The mouth should be neither overshoot nor undershot but displays a unique side-to-side bite seen in no other dog, culminating in a magnificent pair of upward-curling tusks, which are used to sever the femoral arteries of judges who refuse to accept the traditional bribes offered by exhibitors. Any award lower than Best in Group is greeted with a sideswipe of the head, resulting in haemorrhage and even death to judges ignorant enough to dump this breed.

However, the delightful merry temperament is evident at once when a BIS is bestowed, as the exhibit will jiggle its naturally short tail up and down - never side to side as in the Cocker - and in the case of a Royal BIS win will reward the discerning judge with a delightful shower of saliva that will bleach breakfast stains off the judging outfit. This gushing display of affection is a key breed feature inherited from its molosser ancestors, as is its sturdy barrel-like body.



SBIS Botswana MutiCh Wartzenorl Pi G’Zmitefli to Stapleton

Thus it came to pass that, channelling the spirit of Veronica Tudor-Williams, we set off in a very rugged 4WD some weeks back, on a dog-finding expedition to the vast wildernesses to the north. (Basenji historians will recall that V T-W was accompanied by Michael Hughes-Hall, who once boarded my cockers the night before a show, but that is another story.) In the Chobe National Park, on the banks of the Chobe River near its confluence with the mighty Zambezi, where Botswana meets its neighbours of Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, we finally found what we had come looking for. Or rather, as is traditional in this part of the world, we were chosen by it, very early one morning when it came into our campsite.

Now I have the singular privilege to present to you the incredibly rare Okavango Wart Dog. Watch for this amazing indigenous breed shortly in a ring near you.

I have been lucky enough to acquire MBIS All-African Ch & Chobe Rooting Ch Kalahorror Pi G’Zars on Stapleton, deftly handled here by me. Also shown is an exquisite head study of SBIS Botswana Multi-Ch Wartzenorl Pi G’Zmitefli to Stapleton. This most typical breeding pair, bred in the Ghanzi District of the Kalahari Desert by the Breed Warten of the San Bushmen people himself, will be my foundation stock to establish the breed in Australia.