



Jerry Kolter and his wife, Betsy Danielson, are pictured with Northwoods Led Zeppelin.



A top English Setter competitor on the horseback shooting dog circuit is Ridge Creek Cody, the 2012 National Amateur Pheasant Shooting Dog Champion.

## NORTHWOODS' *Magic Touch*

Eight years ago, Jerry Kolter and his wife, Betsy Danielson, were city dwellers. Today, they own Northwoods Bird Dogs in rural Minnesota, a prominent breeding and training kennel and home to some of the top English Setters and Pointers in the country.

Though Jerry and Betsy compete with their dogs in walking stakes, one male English Setter, who they co-bred with Paul Hauge of Centuria, Wis., had enough power to compete on the horseback shooting dog circuit. Owned by Larry Brutger of St. Cloud, Minn., and handled by professional handler Shawn Kinkelaar, 2X-CH/RU-CH Ridge Creek

Cody won the prestigious Elwin G. Smith Shooting Dog Award in 2012 as the top English Setter in the country. The 4-year-old had begun to stand out in 2011, when he placed third in the U.S. Quail Shooting Dog Futurity as one of the few English Setters in a Pointer-dominated field.

Jerry trains his dogs for walking stakes and horseback trials almost identically, though it takes a dog with greater endurance to do well in horseback stakes. "The pace and ground covered in horseback stakes is twice that of walking stakes," Jerry explains. "As a result, a dog that competes in horseback trials needs to be more athletic, stronger, faster and mentally and physically tougher."

Living in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area for more



than 30 years, the couple was craving a more tranquil lifestyle. Jerry worked as a software developer, while Betsy was an information technology specialist. When they began the kennel in 2002 as a hobby, Betsy resumed her previous career as a landscape designer. In 2005, they sold their house and moved to Sandstone, Minn., a small town 90 miles north of the Twin Cities, and established Northwoods as a full-time business.

"Our longtime dream was to start our own kennel," Betsy recalls. "We wanted a simpler lifestyle, more privacy and the ability to see the stars at night."

The couple met in 1993, when a friend introduced them. They had mutual interests. Betsy worked for Pheasants Forever, the largest nonprofit organization in the country dedicated to upland habitat conservation, and Jerry was an avid field trial competitor.

While dating, Jerry and Betsy began competing in field trials with a female Pointer, the future 2X-CH Dance Smartly. In 1995, with Jerry handling "Dancer" and Betsy scouting, they won the Minnesota Grouse Dog Championship. Betsy, too, caught the bug for field trials. Two years later, they were married.

A three-time Minnesota/Wisconsin *Pro Plan* Cover Shooting Dog of the Year and invitee to the Grand National Grouse and Woodcock Invitational, Dancer became their foundation female Pointer. Jerry and Betsy use their Pointers to evaluate the training of their English Setters.

"Pointers dominate at the highest level of pointing dog competition, so we compare our Pointers to our English Setters in day-to-day training. That keeps us



Jerry practices steady to wing with Northwoods Porter.

realistic about the quality of our setters," Jerry says.

They began breeding bird dogs in 1995. An outstanding female, 4X-CH/4X-RU-CH Blue Streak, received her Champion and Runner-Up Champion titles all on wild birds, winning prestigious competitions such as the Pennsylvania Grouse and Wisconsin Cover Dog championships in 2001. "Streak" was the top English Setter cover dog and the recipient of the Michael Seminatore Setter Cover Dog Award in 2002. That same year, she won the William Harnden Foster Award, which recognizes the top cover dog of any breed. Placing at the Minnesota Grouse Dog Championship in 2001 and 2002, Streak finished her career in 2005 as the Runner-Up Champion of the Grand National Grouse Championship at 10 years of age.

Another prominent setter they've trained and handled for owner Hauge is Cody's dam, 2X-CH/4X-RU-CH Houston's Belle, one of the top point-earning grouse dogs from 2005 to 2008. "Belle" placed a record-setting three times in the Minnesota Grouse Dog Championship.

Jerry takes pleasure in breeding and developing bird dogs that he sells as hunting companions and field trial competitors. "Breeding dogs that fulfill people's dreams is incredibly satisfying," he says.

Northwoods produces four litters a year. The kennel, which has 20 indoor-outdoor runs, is adjacent to 2,000 acres abundant in native ruffed grouse and woodcock. It is the ideal setting for training bird dogs to hunt. All the dogs are fed *Purina Pro Plan* Sport Performance 30/20 Formula.

"We strive to produce all-around good dogs," Jerry says. "We want a calm dog with an even temperament and the physical ability to perform in the field."

This past March, they welcomed a litter of English Setter puppies out of Northwoods Chardonay, the winner of the 2011 Minnesota/Wisconsin *Pro Plan* Derby of the Year Award, who placed in every grouse trial she competed. The litter was their first sired by Cody.

As to their success, Betsy says, "Jerry has an innate ability to evaluate the whole dog and determine how to fit the individual pieces together. Breeding is part science and part magic." ■



Jerry positions Blue Riptide while teaching the dog to whoa.