

born to run... *free run, that is!*

When I drive into the city, my usual route through town takes me past an off-leash area for dogs. As off-leash parks go, I suppose it's as good as most, and it is well patronized, but as I watch the people out with their pets, I am invariably struck by its unsuitability as a place to exercise dogs such as Salukis. First, it's too small – it seems quite an expanse at first glance, but a Saluki running at cruising speed could get from one end of it to the other in the blink of an eye. It's also un-

fenced along the side facing the road. It always reminds me how lucky I am to live where I do, even though the days when I could simply open my back door and go for a walk with my hounds is long gone. The traffic on the road past my house has increased steadily over the years, and since the local elevator closed, the vehicles now include fast-moving semi-trailers hauling grain. Still, I can load the dogs in my car, leave the yard heading west, and less than five minutes later I will have reached a place where they can run free in comparative safety. People who live in cities or in other heavily populated areas aren't nearly so lucky. First they have to find somewhere to run their dogs, and then they have to get there. Chances are their travelling time will last longer than the run itself. However, they'll all tell you the results are worth it.

When people who have never owned a sighthound ask me about getting a Saluki, I tell them they must be prepared to give

their dog regular exercise, which must include occasional free running. When I say that, I am fudging it a bit, of course; Salukis are adaptable creatures, and if the need arises, most are able to adjust to a life spent for the most part moving from the couch to the yard and back again. The question is, however, why would you want to have a Saluki if you never had a chance to watch it run? They are beautiful creatures, yes, but their athleticism is an essential part of that beauty. Not only that, the fit Saluki's lithe musculature is wonderful to see. Some breeds are house pets, first and foremost. Salukis, on the other hand, are like the movies that simply have to be seen on the big screen if you're to feel their full impact. Renting the video (or even the DVD) just doesn't quite cut it.

Robbie was the Saluki club's 'Breedlines' columnist for Dogs in Canada for many years and wrote on a variety of subjects. This was first published in March 2005.

Saluki owners will go to great lengths to find safe running grounds for their hounds. Going that extra mile is always worth it!



BRANKA BRADIC