



INAUGURAL TRUFFLE DOG CHAMPIONSHIP WOOFs INTO LIFE THIS JANUARY

It may look like a Labradoodle, but the lagotto Romagnolo is actually an ancient dog breed, carefully selected and bred for its ability to sniff out truffles. Though rare, a handful of lagottos live in Eugene, and now they and other breeds have a chance to strut their stuff. For the first time ever, the Oregon Truffle Festival is holding The Joriad North American Truffle Dog Championship, a sporting event for dog lovers and truffle fans alike.

The Joriad, an event unique to the Oregon Truffle Festival, is named for Oregon's state soil, Jory, which provides favorable conditions in which truffles can grow. "It's a celebration of Oregon at its very roots," says Charles Lefevre, co-founder of the Oregon Truffle Festival, which is in its 10th year.

The competition will take place over two days, starting with qualifying trials open to nonprofessional truffle dogs of all breeds at the Oregon Horse Center. Dogs will sniff out truffle-scented targets, and the top 10 competitors will move on to the second day of the championship, when truffle dogs will scour the forests in a field trial.

PHOTO COURTESY: DAVID BARAJAS

In some ways, truffle dogs have helped boost the reputation of Oregon truffles, according to Lefevre. The festival promotes truffle dogs because they can only find truffles when they are ripe and releasing an aroma. This means that truffles found by dogs are in prime condition — the alternative method is raking the ground, which results in gathering both ripe and unripe truffles.

"The dogs' primary role is not to find the truffles, but to choose which truffles are ready to harvest," Lefevre says. "As a result of our using dogs, and chefs being impressed by the results, the price of Oregon truffles has gone from \$100 per pound to \$600 per pound for dog-hunted truffles over the life of the festival. Raked truffles bring in about \$200 per pound."

Any dog breed has the potential to become a truffle-hunting dog, Lefevre says, although some are better than others. The festival has long provided truffle-hunting classes for dogs, and Lefevre says that one year a pudgy miniature dachshund was the star performer. Lefevre's dog, a chocolate lagotto Romagnolo named Dante, learned to find truffles when he was only 10 weeks old by getting treats for sniffing out truffle oil-scented objects in Lefevre's backyard.

Lefevre says around 35 dogs will compete this year, and there's still time to register your greenhorn truffle dog at oregontrufflefestival.com. The qualifying competition on Wednesday, Jan. 21, is open to the public at the Oregon Horse Center, 90751 Prairie Road; tickets are \$15 and can be purchased online or at the door. Limited tickets are available for The Joriad Awards Gala and Dinner on Jan. 22; see the festival's website for more information. — Amy Schneider

SLANT

- We've **rant**ed against **sprawl** for decades and we will likely continue to do so *ad nauseam*. We are not against growth, per se. People have to live somewhere, and our population is growing for a number of reasons, mostly sex. But we see no reason to *encourage* growth (or sex) to line the pockets of land speculators and shoddy developers. As City Councilor Betty Taylor asks, "Who profits from these plans?" We'd rather see quality of life be our community priority instead of taxpayer-subsidized growth. Highly livable Portland has a much higher population density than Eugene, and yet we are preparing to expand our urban growth boundary once again, this time gobbling precious prime farmland. If we keep having sex, the fruits and vegetables of our loins will need that farmland.

That grow-or-die mentality permeates UO as well. **Absurd Ducks sports extravagance** is often excused by saying it attracts more students. The lavish Erb Memorial Union renovation is intended to do the same, but add the \$50-million cost to student debt. A better way to recruit better students would be to offer exceptional academics at a reasonable cost.

- **Silly climate-change deniers** still get an audience in *The Register-Guard* letters section, preaching misinformation. We're reminded of letters that used to run in newspapers saying beating kids is a good idea. Spare the rod, etc. Or letters saying a woman's place is in the home. Time to move on to more useful discussions.

- Makes us proud to read **McKenzie Funk's** article "The

Wreck of the Kulluk," the cover story in the Jan. 4 *New York Times* magazine section. A nationally known environmental writer, Funk grew up in Eugene, graduating from South Eugene High School. He lays out, sometimes in excruciating detail, how Shell Oil tried to drill in the Beaufort Sea but lost out to incompetence, the hostile Arctic environment and the economics of oil. This is a cautionary tale for Oregonians facing the transport of oil, gas and coal across this state.

- **Some Duck fluff** left over from the Rose Bowl: Oregon's much-loved Marcus Mariota and New York's much-loved Mario Cuomo sharing photos on the front page of *The New York Times*. The language against sexual violence, "No Means No," haplessly sharing the scene after a great display of athletic violence. Some agreement with Cardale Jones, the Ohio State quarterback who tweeted: "Why should we have to go to class if we came here to play football, we ain't come to play school classes are pointless." A certain pleasure that Alabama lost, even with \$7 million-a-year Coach Nick Saban, whose alums recently bought him a \$3-million house. And a suggestion: If you like to drive and shop at a quiet time, try 5:30 pm Monday, Jan. 12, when the Ducks are playing Ohio State in Dallas for the national championship.

