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Belgian Dogs & Malinois Worldwide

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To the President of the
Canine Control Council
of Queensland &
Registration Department

November 9, 2004.

Mrs Président

Re: Survey sent by Robert Cane to members of the BSDC of NSW - Intervariety matings

Some breeders have asked me to give my opinions on the document sent out to members of the BSDC of NSW. I have sent it to you also for your information, as the contents bring some more elements to the letter I sent on the 3rd November 2004.

Intervariety breeding is an interesting subject which presents however many and complex aspects. To be able to give circumstantial advice, we would need information, especially statistics about the quality, population and the composition of the Belgian Shepherd in Australia. The following comments, therefore, will be limited to generalities.

Does a recommendation from FCI about intervariety breeding exist?

Yes. The document "BREED INTERBREEDING" N° 83/2000 of the 22/11/2000 from FCI says :
"Where required for physical and/or mental health, breeds may be interbred under control of the respective national governing organisation. It is made clear that such activities are to be strictly controlled by the respective kennel clubs and should be permitted only if there is an urgent requirement to either correct severe health and/or temperament deficiencies in a breed which could not be corrected otherwise by selected breeding or appropriate breeding programs".

The last paragraph of the Belgian Shepherd Standard FCI adds that :

"Any matings between varieties are forbidden, except in exceptional circumstances, when this ban can be lifted by the appropriate and official breed councils (Text 1974, drawn up in Paris)".

The 'Survey' states *"Intervariety matings between the above Specific Varieties(*) is based upon the very strict standards laid down in Belgium and Europe. It is for this reason that only the combination of varieties outlined above can be used in Intervariety matings, in accordance with the FCI standards which we have adopted" (*)* (ie Groenendael to Tervueren, Malinois to Laekenois, Malinois to Tervueren).

The "survey" gives a 'very loose' interpretation of the meaning of the preceding two paragraphs. **No specific Intervariety breeding is designated as allowed or not allowed.** This responsibility is left under the consideration of each country. The rules must be adapted to the requirements of each country, as the necessities of Australia could well be different from a European country.

Where can information regarding Intervariety breeding be found?

It's in the history and the articles written by well experimented breeders (like Charles Hüge and F.-E. Verbanck) that we can find the answer to this important question. If we take the example of

Tervueren x Malinois, in 1920, just after the War 1914-1918, **dogs of all admitted colours (black, fawn, ...)** and **with the same coat texture**, were allowed to be cross-bred. The cross-breeding between short and rough hair was admitted. The other cross-breeds were forbidden. Therefore, the intervariety breeding of Tervueren to Malinois was NOT allowed.

And what about today? Extreme caution is still recommended for allowing such an intervariety breeding. Why? First, there always remains the risk producing mi-long hair (and the disadvantages bound to it.) Secondly, the Tervueren especially (which is no longer a smaller variety since the 70's) is affected by sterility problems in Europe. By intervariety breeding, it may have been transmitted to some Groenendael! There is also the potential risk of this problem in Australia if there has been European Imports. If the Malinois can bring positive characteristics to the long hair, the reverse is not so true of the long coat. Many long coats lack stop, when a moderate stop is a characteristic of the Belgian Shepherd (minimal stop is a Collie Characteristic!) **There would have to be many solid arguments to allow any intervariety breeding of Tervueren x Malinois, even Tervueren x Groenendael, for exceptional approval.**

Intervariety breeding between Malinois x Laekenois is a case which has to be treated with less severity. Why? Because the rough coat, to the contrary of the smooth long coat or short, **is a mixed and nonstable coat**. To maintain the mixed coat, it is necessary to have recourse, at a given time, to the short coated variety. It is also a variety small in numbers with a very poor genetic pool.

In France, an intervariety breeding of Groenendael x Laekenois was tested with success. In Australia, the same mating, but nonintentional, also happened. I hope a commission of competent people will set their heart to following this litter until the adult age. A detailed report should be kept, studying all the pups of this litter on every point (mental and physical health, structure, conformity to the standard, texture of hair, furnishing, charbonné, contribution to the genetic pool, etc.). This scientific work and its publication would increase our knowledge on Intervariety breeding. It would make an very interesting work!

Is the selection in Europe very strictly monitored ?

This "survey" states that the selection in Europe is very strictly monitored. I don't know on what the author of this "survey" based this assertion ! I really believe it is exactly the opposite.

Intervariety breeding has to remain an exception. These records have to be treated case by case by a team composed of people (genetician, judge (non breeder) and club delegates) well-known for their competence. Make a commission with only breeders, which means breeders who will inspect others breeders, as suggest in the 'survey', is the most certain way to lead a war between the breeders. It's a complete lack of human psychology and deontology.

Strange survey !

Best regards,

Jean-Marie Vanbutsele
Président
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