

THE BELGIAN SHEPHERD DOG
FOUR VARIETIES BUT A SINGLE BREED
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The origins of the Belgian Shepherd date back for more than one hundred years. Mr Beernaert (first minister under King Leopole II) had spent many years learning about the shepherd dogs in Belgium in order to ascertain if there existed a distinct type of breed belonging to Belgium. If there was indeed a breed, distinct only to Belgium this breed would become the National Shepherding breed for his country. Acquiring assistance in his search from other enthusiasts, one of these, Professor Reul, came up with the idea of writing to all the veterinary doctors in each of the nine provinces.

This idea was eagerly adopted, and they began by writing to all the veterinary doctors in Brabant. They were asked to invite their clients to bring along their dogs, on Sunday November 15 at 10 am, to the Brussels Veterinary School. 117 dogs were present on the day. Mr Reul, Mr Beernaert and Mr Jacques presided at this first gathering.

All the Collie dogs or dogs with mixed Collie blood, cattle herders and the sheepdogs from Brie, Picardie were set aside, in order to draw a comparison. The inspection took less than one hour, however it was evident that there existed several types. From these types, one was judged to be the most beautiful. The dogs were divided into three hair types, described at the time as semi-long hair, wire hair and short hair. It was agreed it would indeed be possible to fix a defined Belgian type from the dogs presented on that day, yet all also agreed no final decision would be taken until eight other such gatherings were made, in the remaining eight provinces.

The following year, on May 1st and 2nd 1892, the first specialty show took place, held in the new slaughter house of Cureghem - Brussels. This show was jointly organised by the Collie Club, and the Club du Chien de Berger Belge. The Belgian Shepherds were represented by 28 long-hairs, 14 wire-hairs, and 19 short-hairs. Mr Charles, Mr Van der Snicht and Mr Reul were selected as the judges of this historic event - The Belgian Shepherd had been born. It should be noted, the varieties at this time were but three - long, short and wire. Colour restrictions did not exist, type and conformation, being the most important. The winner of the long-hair variety, Duc II owned by Mr Meul was a brown/brindle.

HOW THE VARIETIES EVOLVED AND WERE NAMED

Groenendael - (Black long-haired) Picard D'Uccle (male) and Petite (female) are considered to be the foundation pair for this variety. On May 1st 1893, a litter was produced from this pair. This litter included Duc de Groenendael. The influence of this dog on the breed was to become very significant. Duc de Groenendael mated long-hairs of all colours. His union with the fawn, Miss (Danhieux), produced Milsart, considered to be the prototype for the long-hair fawn.

In 1898 Mr Louis Huygebaert suggested naming the long-haired blacks "Groenendael", thus honouring Mr Nicholas Rose, owner of the chateau, restaurant, and the affix - de Groenendael, the same year the long-haired blacks competed in a separate ring from the long-hairs of other colours. 1899 saw the name Groenendael appear in the official catalogue for the first time, the names of the other varieties were to follow.

Laekenois - (Rough hair fawn) This variety received it's name from the Royal Domicile of Laeken, where the shepherd/breeder J B Janssen resided. Vos of Laeken, the foundation stud, is as important in the rough as in the short-coat varieties. Vos was the grandsire of Dewet and great grandsire of Tjop, two Malinois that had a great influence on the development of this variety. Though other colours of rough-haired are recorded, including ash grey, brindle and even black, none were ever called Laeken, for this name was given to the fawn colour. Other important ancestors include the females Liske, Pouts and Moor, the males Bazoef and Boer Sus. However this variety never really flourished in the country of origin, and found friends in Holland, perhaps because of the Dutch

Shepherd. Without the Dutch in assistance this variety may will have disappeared, it is still rare today.

Malinois - (Short-hair fawn) This variety took it's name from the town of Malines or Mechelnx. The name Malinois appeared for the first time along with the Groenendael at the same show in 1899. This variety was for many years the most popular in Belgium, due to it's great working ability, notably in field trials and defence. As in the case of the Laeken, other colours of short hairs are recorded, all shades of grey, brindle and black were admitted at various stages of development. These other colours however never were called Malinois in Belgium.

Important early ancestors are Samlo, father of Tomy. Tomy, through his dam Diane, has the Laeken Vos I as his grandsire. Tjop, son of Tomy x Cora, was said to be very well constructed but with no mask. Mastock, owned by Professor Reul. Samlo, a brown brindle, was awarded joint first place at the 1894 specialty show in the short-hair variety. Today the Malinois is still regarded as the real worker of the Belgian Shepherd, and has many admirers around the world in trials and defence work.

Tervueren - (Fawn or Grey long-hair) The Tervueren was named after the town of Tervuren, but this name came from the Kennel Club Belge, a professional dog body not recognised by the Societe Royale de St Hubert (S R S H). The name Tervueren never appeared in the stud books of St Hubert until 1952, and then only in parenthesis, after the term "a poil long fauve" (long hair fawn). On the other hand, the French had classified all long-hairs that were not black, under the heading Tervueren up until 1950. In 1966 the F C I placed the long-hair fawn and the long-hair-other-than-fawn, into one category - long hair other than black. By 1975 the F C I renamed this variety to Tervueren thus including all the gamut of colours from grey to fawn including the brindle.

Important early ancestors were Tom and Poes (Poes was said to be tail-less) for their union produced Miss (Danhieux) born in 1895 and known as the matriarch of this variety. Miss was mated to both Picard D'Uccle and son Duc de Groenendael. When mated to Duc de Groenendael, she gave birth to Milsart, prized for his conformation, rich fawn colour and overlay. Milsart was intensely inbred with, in an effort, (by some) to breed only fawn offspring. Their efforts failed as other colours continued to appear. After a short time the production of the long hair other than black almost came to a standstill, as no Belgian Kennel set about a long term breeding programme.

It wasn't until the birth of the brothers Willy and Witan de la Garde Noir on 14/03/1948 did some resurgence begin. Willy and Witan were French bred from Groenendael parents. There is every reason to accept the Tervueren owes it's success today to French breeders. Belgian breeders for one reason or another, never really seemed to favour this variety. The Tervueren today in Belgium has a thriving population, but this has been achieved, due to the QUALITY and QUANTITY produced by French kennels since the birth of Willy and Witan de la Garde Noir.

Bibliography - Le Berger Belge Anthology.