

Many of today's breeds originated in Europe. They were principally developed in Great Britain, Germany and France, but it would be hard to find any European country without a national dog breed. Meet the Europeans will explore the history of breeds on an old continent full of fanciers.

Meet The Europeans...

text and illustrations by RIA HÖRTER

Part 1 - The Italians Bergamasco • Bolognese • Bracco Italiano

Greek and Roman Monuments

Italy is situated in southern Europe, between Spain on the west, the coast of Croatia on the east, and Austria and Switzerland to the north. About 61 million people live in this country, which has been described many times as "the boot of Europe." Italy is surrounded by the Mediterranean and Adriatic Sea and is a popular holiday destination, not only for its shores, but for its many Greek and Roman monuments.

Italy is the native country of thirteen FCI-recognized breeds: the Cane da Pastore Bergamasco, Bolognese, Bracco Italiano, Cane Corso Italiano, Cirneco dell'Etna, Maltese, Cane da Pastore Maremmano (Maremma Sheepdog), Lagotto Romagnolo, Mastino Napoletano (Neapolitan Mastiff), Spin-



Bracco Italiano



A Bolognese
Detail from
The Embarkation for
Cythera Island, 1717



Bergamasco

one Italiano, Segugio Italiano (rough-haired and short-haired), Volpino Italiano and Whippet. More breeds (six, to be exact) that are not yet recognized – the Calabrese Shepherd or Cane da Pastore Calabrese; the Pastore Italiano (Italian Shepherd); Lupo Italiano (Italian Wolf); Cane Pecoraio Siciliano; Segugio Carnico and Segugio di Cravin – are outside the scope of this series.

I have visited Italy many times, traveling from Genoa in the north to the islands of Sicily in the south, and have been privileged to see the *segugi* (hounds) hunting in Tuscany, the Maremma guarding sheep in the Abruzzo mountains, and the Cirnechi on the slopes of Mount Etna.

Cane Da Pastore Bergamasco

The Cane da Pastore Bergamasco – also called the Alpine Sheepdog or Northern Italian Sheepdog – was developed in the Italian Alps around the city of Bergamo in Lombardy, where it was used as a herding dog. This ancient Alpine breed is now universally accepted as having come from Asia across the mountains of Anatolia (Turkey), the Caucasus (Russia) and the Carpathian Mountains

*The history of working dogs in general...
...is wrapped in mist.*

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A Bergamasco Herding Sheep

(Central Europe) to the Italian Alps, and further on to the Spanish Pyrenees. The Bergamasco has a striking resemblance to, for example, the Hungarian Komondor and Puli; there must be an old relationship.

A variety of other breeds are almost certainly related to the Bergamasco. They all have thick, rough coats with tendencies to felt – for example, the Ovcharka (Russia), the Polish Lowland Sheepdog, the Briard (French Alps) and the Gos d'Atura Català (Catalonian Sheepdog) in the Spanish Pyrenees.

Both the Bergamasco and the Maremma are Italian sheepdog breeds (*cane da pastore*), but the difference between the two is that the Maremma is a mountain dog that works completely independently without a shepherd and will defend the flock against wild animals, such as wolves. The Bergamasco, on the other hand, is a sheepdog without the specific task of defense. Apart from being a companion dog, the Bergamasco is now also used as a guard dog by the Italian police and a rescue dog in the Italian Alps.

Loyal Assistants

The history of hunting dogs or terriers is usually well-documented; in general, they were owned by people rich enough to have books published or to commission paintings of the breeds. The history of working dogs in general, and of the Bergamasco in particular, is wrapped in mist. Books by dog writers such as Richard Stöbel (published 1904-05), Ludwig Beckmann (1895), J. Bungartz (1884), and compiler Walter Hutchinson (*Dog Encyclopaedia* ca. 1935) do not even mention the Bergamasco.

In *Tierleben der Schweizer Alpenwelt* (1853; *Animal Life in the Swiss Alps*), Friedrich von Tschudi wrote a description of “Bergamasker sheep.” Apart from the sheep, the author mentioned sheepdogs as “large dogs, with thin and long, woolly coats.”

About 40 years earlier, Joh. Jakob Römer and Heinrich Rudolph Schinz described the Bergamasca sheep and the dogs in *Naturgeschichte der in der Schweiz einheimischen Säugethiere*

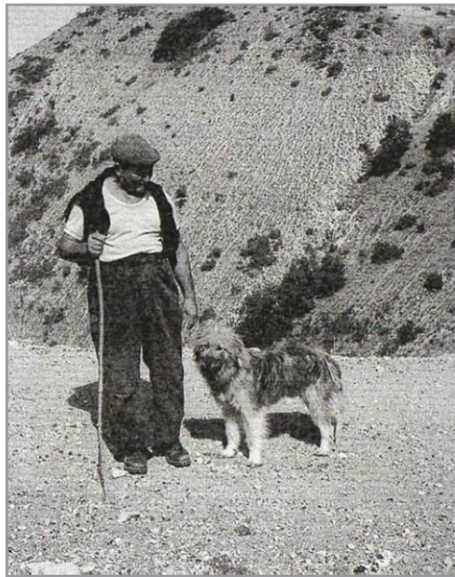
(*Natural History of Swiss Mammals*): “large dogs with long, woolly coats are the loyal assistants of the herdsman. But they are not suitable to fight with wolves and bears.”

Although an Italian breed, traces of the Bergamasco's history can be found on the other side of the border, in the Swiss Alps and in books written by Swiss authors.

Some historians state that the Bergamasco is a descendent of the French Briard [!]; others think the opposite. In my opinion, the Bergamasco evolved along with similar old herding breeds of mid-Europe, such as the Komondor and the Puli.

Intelligent Expression

The Italian Kennel Club (Ente Nazionale della Cinofilia Italiana) was founded in 1882. The Bergamasco was first entered in the Italian Studbook in 1898 (some say 1891). The dog writers mentioned above must have been aware of the breed. It is known



“The ancient dog breeds are magnificent because they have been preserved with as many features as possible untouched by human interference.”

(Maurizio Marziali, Centre for preservation breeding of Italian working dog breeds)

that in 1891, Max Hartenstein, a well-known breeder, dog writer and expert on sheepdogs, knew of the existence of a “Bergamo Sheep dog”. In a magazine for dog lovers he sighed: “How strange to miss the Bergamo Sheep dog at each Swiss dog show. My Swiss friends have told me interesting details about this breed. During my travels to Switzerland I met some good specimens in Chur, St. Moritz and in a guest house near Hospice Bernina. I was impressed by their strong and heavy bone and their intelligent expression. I wonder if there are already breed descriptions published. Who is the breeder or owner of these sheep dogs? Would it be possible to induce people [into] visiting a dog show with a couple of these dogs?” Bergamo sheep – with their typical floppy ears – were mentioned in 1570, and later in 1781, but the dogs had to wait until the late 19th century.

Sheep breeding was carried out on a large scale in the Bergamasco Valley. The dog was essential to shepherds driving flocks during the seasonal movement between the Alpine pastures and the plains of the Po Valley. Occasionally, flocks and

dogs crossed the border into Switzerland.

At the end of the 19th century, the border between Italy and Switzerland was closed due to a cattle plague. During World War II (1940-45), Switzerland remained neutral while Italy entered on the side of Nazi Germany, which made it difficult if not impossible to cross the border with flocks and dogs.

Alpino

From being a working dog, the Bergamasco became a companion dog. The first breeder who bred systematically and entered his dogs in the stud book was the Italian farmer Piero (or Pietro) Rota. It is said that he got his first Bergamascos – a male and a

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female – in the late 1940s or early '50s from a herdsman's litter. The dog became the legendary Alpino, who is considered to be the ancestor of the pedigree Bergamascos.

When Rota was sent to Africa during the Second World War, Alpino – more dead than alive – is said to have walked to the train station every day to wait for his return. Rumor has it that the dog died on the station platform. He was a good specimen of the breed, although heavy, and was the point of reference for the draft of the breed standard that became official in 1958.

After the war, only a few dogs were entered in the Italian stud book: two in 1948, three in 1949 and five in 1952. The Bergamasco was in danger of becoming extinct and a breeding program was started with the few dogs left. The Marquis Paolo Cornaggia Medici, who had been interested in the breed before the war, wrote a draft of the standard in 1950. Some other

breeders, among them Isaia Bramani from Bergamo (Kennel Brahama), the above-mentioned Pietro Rota (Kennel Valle Imagna) and Baron Annibale Guidobono Cavalchini (Kennel Valle Scrivia) saved the breed. The Società Amatori del Cane da Pastore Bergamasco, founded in 1949, was officially recognized in 1956. The '50s and '60s saw more and more interest in the breed; after some discussion it was decided to keep the name as Cane da Pastore Bergamasco.

Hair Hair Everywhere

The breed's most obvious feature is its hair. The color varies from dark-grey to beige. The standard requires the coat to be: "Very abundant and very long, varies depending on the region of the



Female Bergamasco in dreadlock coat
(Photo: Marinus Nijhoff)



Old photograph of a male Bergamasco sheep



A Bergamasco in full coat

body. Rather harsh (similar to goat hair) with wavy floccs on the front part of the body, while from the middle of the chest region to the rear it is woolly and forms broad strands of varied length depending on the age of the dog; the woolly coat does not moult, and traps the undercoat, which is quite long and soft, forming mats of felted hair which are very protective. The floccs start from the topline falling down the sides of the body. The hair on the head is less harsh and falls over the face. The hair on the ears is slightly wavy and soft forming

pointed fringes at the tip. The hair on the limbs must be evenly distributed all over with soft floccs on the forelegs and matted flock on the hind legs. The coat is soft in puppies and the floccs begin to form at 12-15 months. Their length depends on the age hence young dogs must not be penalized for a coat which has not yet lengthened. In old dogs, too thick and long a coat that hampers normal movement and compromises the dog's welfare should be avoided. The coat should be cared for and kept clean, avoiding in particular matted floccs on the beard, muzzle and ear flaps."

The FCI standard is at:

fci.be/Nomenclature/Standards/194g01-en.pdf

In Short: The Bergamasco In America

Established in 1996, the Bergamasco Sheepdog Club of America (BSCA) is the first official U.S. club for breeding and showing, and providing information about the breed. Only a handful of breeders are approved by the BSCA.

The first dogs came to America in the mid-1990s and, thanks to the guidance of geneticist Dr. Maria Andreoli (1927-2005), several kennels were able to import the best types from Italy, Sweden, Switzerland and Great Britain. Dr. Andreoli created the Dell Albera bloodline in the early 1960s. Her dogs can be found in 15 European countries, Australia, the U.S. and Canada. In 2000, she founded the International Bergamasco Sheepdog Association (IBSA). For more than 40 years she analyzed the wide-

scale historical evolution of the breed. More breed information is at: bergamascosa.com and internationalbergamascosheepdogassociation.com

The Bergamasco gained full AKC recognition in the Herding Group in 2015.

Bolognese

Popular As Gifts

The Bolognese is one of the Bichon breeds – small dogs originating in Mediterranean countries. The others are: Maltese, Havanese (Bichon Havanais), Bichon Frise (or Bichon

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Ténériffe), Coton de Tulear and Lowchen. They are not related to the Toy breeds of the Far East, and are classified by the FCI in Group 9, Companion and Toy dogs.

The FCI standard can be found at:
fci.be/Nomenclature/Standards/196g09-en.pdf

The origin and history of the Bolognese is often confused with that of the Maltese, because their distant ancestors are the same little dogs, already mentioned in Latin by Aristotle (384-322 BC) as *canes Melitenses* (dogs of Malta). In the middle of the sixth century, the breed was very popular among Italian and European aristocrats.

The Bolognese was named after Bologna in northern Italy, an ancient city already in existence under the Etruscans, Celts and Romans.

The distinctive single coat has no undercoat and falls in loose open ringlets/flocks all over the body, with shorter hair on the face. The hair's texture is woolly, as opposed to silky, and is never



A Bolognese from the Bellissibolo Kennel in Hungary tries the agility track.

trimmed or clipped unless for pets. The hair sheds little, but requires regular combing to prevent matting.

Bolognese were popular as gifts. Cosimo de Medici (1389-1464) brought no fewer than eight to Brussels as gifts to as many Belgian noblemen. About a hundred years later, Felipe II, King of Spain (1556-98), received two Bolognese as a gift from the Duke d'Este. He wrote to the Duke, saying, "These little dogs are the most royal gifts one can give to an emperor."

Aristocracy

The Bolognese was popular among artists, and can be seen in Flemish tapestry work from as far back as the 17th century. In 1529, the Venetian painter Titian (ca. 1488-1576) immortalized Federico II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, with his beloved Bolognese. The Duke married in 1531 so it could be that



*The Bolognese is a lovely companion dog.
The coat requires daily brushing
to protect it from matting.
The coat is not meant to be shaved or trimmed.*



*The Brabo Show in Belgium - 2013
A De la Cour des Doges Bolognese wins BOB*

the portrait was meant to show him as an agreeable marriage prospect for his intended bride. The dog symbolizes fidelity.

The breed is also seen in paintings by the Spanish artist Francisco de Goya (1746-1828) and the French painter Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721). The Empress Catherine the Great of Russia (1729-96), Empress Maria-Theresa of Austria (1717-80), and Madame de Pompadour (1721-64) were some of the breed's famous owners. There is a fine and well-known painting of the Duchess of Alba by Francisco de Goya (1795).

Although an Italian breed, the Bolognese is more popular in Belgium, for example, than in its homeland. After the Second World War, C.F. Casabella of San Remo on the Liguria coast sought to "restore the old Bolognese." The Maltese and Poodle were used for this restoration.

The term "old" is relative. In 1817, Dr. Walther described a "dog with long, soft hair, usually white, seldom brown or black. The head is strong and [has] broad hanging ears, covered with

long hair and mostly speckled." The Bolognese breed standard is almost identical to that of the Bichon Frise. In 1914, the well-known Dutch dog writer L. Seegers described the Bolognese, Maltese and Havanese under the same breed standard. Although there are many similarities to the other Bichon breeds, the Bolognese is a distinctive breed in its own right. In most descriptions, the Bolognese is seen as an ancient breed of noble origin, it's roots with the Italian aristocracy.

Upper Class

It may have had noble owners and been portrayed by famous artists throughout the centuries, but the Bolognese was also used as a mouser and was kept on ships to hunt rats and mice. It is believed that in Roman times, some of these little white dogs made their way to Bologna in Northern Italy. They

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The breed is immortalized in Titian's painting (ca. 1529) of Frederico II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua. (Museo del Prado, Madrid)

lived with upper-class families and at the royal courts of Spain, Belgium, Austria and Italy. The last king of Italy, Umberto II, gave his wife, Princess Marie José of Belgium, two Bolognese as a birthday present.

It wasn't until the latter part of the 20th century that the breed was brought into Britain, other European countries, and the United States. They were exhibited at Crufts for the first time in 2002.

Today, there are two bloodlines: Italian and Russian. The latter is quite surprising. After the retreat of Napoleon's army from Russia in 1812, the Bolognese and Bichons Frise that had been left behind were bred into a unique breed called the Franzuskaya Bolonka – *Franzuskaya* meaning "French," because the French soldiers had taken their dogs with them into the war.

After World War II the French Bolonka was bred with Poodles and small silky-coated terriers such as the Yorkshire Terrier, to produce a small dog with a multi-colored, long, wavy coat, called the Russkaya Tsvetnaya Bolonka or Multicolored Bichon.

The Bolonka breeds have been unknown outside Germany and Russia until recently. The Russkaya Tsvetnaya Bolonka is recognized by the Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen (VDH – German Kennel Club), and several other kennel clubs in Europe (Sweden, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Luxembourg), and the Franzuskaya Bolonka is recognized in Germany, but neither Bolonka breed has been accepted by the FCI.

The Bolognese In America

In America, the Bolognese is a rare breed. Although not fully recognized by the American Kennel Club, they have been listed in its Foundation Stock Service® since 1999. The AKC-approved American Bolognese Club –

americanbologneseclub.com – is seeking full recognition.

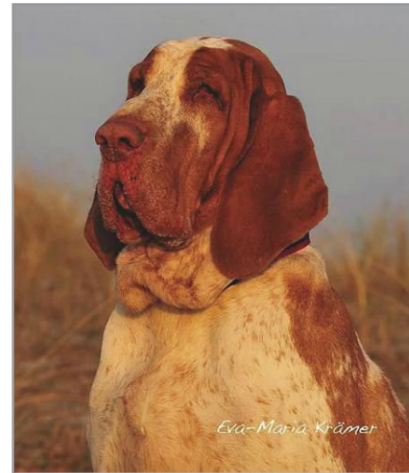
The Tsvetnaya Bolonka has been in the AKC's Foundation Stock Service® since 2015. The Russian Tsvetnaya Bolonka Club of America is the AKC-approved club:

tsvetnayabolonkaclub.homestead.com.

Bracco Italiano (Italian Pointer)

Egyptian Hound

A hunt-point-retrieve (HPR) gun dog, the Bracco Italiano is mentioned in writings of the fourth and fifth centuries. The breed became widespread during the Renaissance when hunting feathered game was a highly regarded and exclusive sport of the Italian aristocracy.



The breed's origins are unclear but it is believed to have been developed from the Egyptian hound and the Molossus or Persian Mastiff. (Photo: Eva-Maria Krämer)

So prized was the breed, it was considered a suitable gift for royalty; records show that the French court received chestnut Bracchi as a gift in 1527.

The breed's origins are unclear, but it is believed to have been developed from the Egyptian hound and the Molossus or Persian Mastiff. Most dog writers agree that the Bracco Italiano could be the oldest pointing dog in Europe.

Others state that crossbreeding took place between the Segugio Italiano (Italian Hound) and Asiatic Molossers.

As early as the Middle Ages, the Bracco was valued as an all-

round working dog, suitable for hunting various prey, but particularly for falconry and hunting with nets. As was the Bolognese, the Bracco was popular at various European royal courts and with the aristocracy. He was bred by noble families such as the Medici and the Gonzaga.

There used to be two different types: the Bracco Lombardo and the Bracco Piemonte. The names derive from northern Italian provinces. The Bracco Lombardo has a brown coat and a heavier



The Bracco Italiano has a distinctive head. (Photo: Wikipedia)

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build than the orange-white Piedmont variety. In 1949, both types were combined under the same breed standard.

Frescoes from the 14th century point to the Italian Pointer's timelessness in both morphology and hunting ability. The Italian Renaissance, from the 14th to 16th century, is seen as the breed's zenith.



Fernando Delor De Ferrabouc

At the end of the 19th century, Italian hunters were turning to imported breeds, and the Bracco Italiano nearly vanished. Thanks to Fernando Delor de Ferrabouc (1838-1913) – a founder of the Italian Kennel Club who also established the club's magazine – breeding programs were established in the 1880s and the breed was rebuilt. Delor de Ferrabouc, whose kennel established in 1882 still exists, judged at dog shows and in the field and was a successful breeder of Braccos, Spinones, pointers and setters.

Others, such as the Ciceri family, also played an important role in the breed's history. Luigi Ciceri bred orange Braccos at his Kennel Dell'Adda, while another family member, Paolo Ciceri, bred chestnut-brown dogs at his Dei Ronchi Kennel. Dogs from their kennels were much sought.

Training Camps

The late-19th and early-20th centuries saw a decline in breed numbers, but due to the enthusiasm of breeder Ferdinando Delor de Ferrabouc, the Bracco was saved from extinction. In 1949, the breed standard that had been written by Delor de Ferrabouc was approved by the Italian Kennel Club. The Società Amatori Bracco Italiano (SABI) was founded in the same year: ilbraccoitaliano.org/en/

In Italy, the Bracco is bred almost exclusively for hunting partridge, pheasant and woodcock. In other European countries – for example, Scandinavia and Holland – the breed is a companion dog, show dog and working dog on a smaller scale.

In its homeland, there are professional trainers for the Bracco. Sometimes the dogs live in training camps for a few years, before returning to their owners or breeders. The training is expensive but

necessary if the dogs are to compete in working championships. Over the years, hunters have selected the Bracco for its great ability and fast, wide trot, and as a natural retriever.

Ideal Hunting Dog

Originally, the breed was used to drive birds into nets, but as hunting methods changed and with the development of guns, the Bracco's working style has adapted. The Working (*Pastrone*) Standard, drawn up in 1937, beautifully describes the physical and mental working style of the Bracco.

The FCI standard describes an ideal hunting dog and companion: "Of strong and harmonious construction, powerful appearance. The preferred subjects are those with lean limbs, well-developed muscles, well-defined lines with a markedly sculpted head and a very obvious lower orbital chiselling, elements which all contribute to give distinction to this breed.

Tough and adapted to all types of hunting, reliable, endowed with an excellent ability to understand, docile and easy to train."

The FCI standard can be found at: fci.be/Nomenclature/Standards/202g07-en.pdf



Annamaria Manfroni - 1912.

Two Braccos typical for the beginning of the 20th century.

has a lot of information about the breed in the States – thebraccoclub.org. There is also the Bracco Italiano Society of America Inc.: braccosociety.com/

The Bracco In The States

Dogs from the Delor de Ferrabouc Kennel were exported to the United States in the late 1990s and the breed has been recorded in the AKC's Foundation Stock Service® since 2001. The Bracco Italiano Club of America, founded in 2007,

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For more information visit: riahorter.com

Attempts were made to find the names of the photographers. Unfortunately, we did not always succeed. Please send a message to the author (riahorter.com) if you think you are the owner of a copyright.



Two hunting dogs tied to a tree by Jacopo Bassano (ca. 1510-92), shows beautifully the two types – Piemonte and Lombardo.