

DOGS *NOT* IN CANADA

THE CANADIAN KENNEL CLUB RECOGNIZES 164 BREEDS, BUT THERE ARE HUNDREDS MORE WORLDWIDE, SOME OF THEM RARELY SEEN OUTSIDE THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.

Markiesje



ORIGIN:

18th-century France, Belgium and the Netherlands

ORIGINAL PURPOSE:

Companion dog

DESCRIPTION:

A finely built black *Spioen*, elegant and alert. A small dog, but never dwarfish. The dog is proportionally built, the body slightly longer than tall. He is intelligent and has a kindly disposition, not showing aggression or nervousness. The skull is almost flat and in proportion to the body. The stop is clearly defined. The length of the muzzle is slightly shorter than that of the skull. The nostrils are well developed and always black and shining. The almond-shaped, dark-brown to black eyes are rather large, with a soft expression. The high-set triangular ears are medium in size and feathered. A scissor bit is required. The chest is well developed with round ribs (not barrel shaped) and the belly is slightly tucked up. The oval feet are rather long. The Markiesje tail is never carried above the back; a curled tail is most objectionable. The gait is quick and active, ground covering with drive from the rear. The coat is fine, soft and straight. Ears, tail, front legs and back are feathered. The colours are shining black or black with a white marking. White is allowed on the head, chest, feet and the end of the tail.

HEIGHT:

About 35 centimetres at the withers, dogs taller than bitches. In judging, size must never be a priority. Weight is not indicated in the breed standard.

INFORMATION:

www.markiesjesvereniging.nl (in Dutch) and *Dutch Breeds*, a book published in 2002 by the Dutch KC (in English).

MARKIESJE-MARQUISE-MARQUEUR

In writing about dogs not in Canada, it's always been possible to give an English translation of the breed's name. Unfortunately, that's not the case with the Markiesje, because this breed is recognized only nationally and not by the FCI. The name is pronounced "Markies." The Dutch suffix *je* means "small." Even in its home country, the Netherlands, fanciers have to guess where the name originated. There are a few possibilities. "Markiesje" may have derived from the Marquise de Pompadour in France (1721-64), who could have

possessed these little black dogs. Or, the dog's name could have a relation to a Dutch *markiesje*, which is a small, handled basket made of reed. Because the dog fits into it exactly, the dog came to be named after the basket. Lovely explanation, but is it true?

Although this dog has never been used as a tracking dog or gun dog, there could be a third possibility, because the French word for a pointing dog is *marqueur*. In Dutch, French and German paintings from the 17th and 18th centuries, one can see small black dogs, obviously related to the present Markiesje, but



Above: *A Young Girl or The Princess*, by Dutch painter Paulus Moreelse (1571-1638). (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)



Above, right: A photo taken around 1885 in the Netherlands. The lady on the left has a Markiesje on her lap.

also to the Dutch *Spioen* (Toy spaniel) and the French Papillon. The bitch 'Pom,' the ancestress of all present Markiesjes in the Netherlands, originated from France, so maybe there is a link with the French word *marqueur*.

MORE OR LESS OBSESSED

As in the history of other breeds, there is always someone to whom we owe the breed as it is today. That is certainly the case with the Markiesje. In 1963, a Dutch Phalène (drop-eared Papillon) breeder met a small dog belonging to her neighbour's mother. The owner called the dog a Markiesje. The breeder, Mia van Woerden, became more or less obsessed with discovering the dog's origin and if it belonged to a certain group of dogs and if so, in which country.

At the same time, the famous Dutch dog writer Toepoel mentioned the Markiesje in one of his books: "This dog has been known in our country from the 18th century. It is a well-known lady's dog like the King Charles Spaniel in England and the Papillon in Belgium. It is, however, a little larger and in appearance it remained closer to the *Spioen*. The colour is black with usually some white on the chest and feet. Although never purebred, one can see them everywhere." Toepoel predicted that "There is a possibility this breed can be restored."

RESTORING THE BREED

From the beginning, Mia van Woerden turned to the media to find dogs resembling the Markiesje she knew. She mainly used radio, newspapers and the dog press. There was a lot of response from people who owned



dogs as Mia described, and there was sufficient visual material, for example several paintings, to be able to re-create the breed. It is said that the Markiesje had belonged mainly to wealthy families and royalty, which could be the reason we have quite a few paintings of its ancestors.



As a result of Mia's investigations, the first litters of Markiesje look-alikes were born. The results, however, were disappointing. The gene pool was too small and the dogs far too big. A second attempt was made by using black-and-white Papillons from Sweden and England. Later, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel was used as well. Again the result was poor. The dogs did not resemble Mia's first love, the dog she had seen in 1963, and some hereditary diseases had cropped up.

In the '70s, a group of people formed around Mia with the common goal of restoring this breed so conscientiously depicted in old paintings. In 1977, Mieke van Ederen, a friend of Mia's, imported a small black Toy spaniel from France to the Netherlands. This was 'Pom' (born in 1977), probably out of a black Papillon and by an unknown dog. Mia was delighted with this bitch; it was exactly the type she was looking for. In 1980, Mieke imported two males (nephews of Pom) and in 1981, five puppies. She bred Pom, who whelped three litters, the first in 1979, producing a total of 12 puppies. Six of her offspring have been used for breeding. Pom died at the age of 17, a dignified 'mother of the breed.' Mieke van Ederen is still very much involved in the breed club and keeps a close eye on the breeding program.

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED

A breed club was established in June 1979 and recognized by the Dutch Kennel Club in 1985. The first breed standard was written in 1980, but wasn't approved by breed club members until 1987. The Markiesje was recognized by the Dutch KC in May 1999.

The first club show took place in 1987, with an entry of 38. Pom, then about 10 years old, was qualified as Excellent and her daughter 'Fleur' was Best Bitch and BB.

STRICT BREEDING PROGRAM

In the first years, the dogs varied in type, size and colour – in fact, they were all colours of the rainbow! However, thanks to some very dedicated fanciers and judges, the breed improved and gradually came to resemble the dog in the paintings. Such can be done only if there is a strict breeding program and painstaking registration of the litters. A report is still written about every litter and the breed is 'guarded' by qualified people.

In 1996, the Dutch KC opened a provisional stud book for the Markiesje; 139 dogs and bitches were entered and the Markiesje became eligible to be shown and qualified at national shows. A championship (CAC) cannot yet be won, but owners and breeders hope the Dutch KC will give permission for a CAC in 2006. About 1,050 Markiesjes have now been entered into the Dutch stud book; approximately 700 are still living. The stud book is still open to dogs without a pedigree but approved by judges.

Breeders and owners worked hard for more than 40 years to realize Mia van Woerden's dream: the restoration of a small, black, Toy, spaniel-like dog – the breed with a fascinating name. And although Mia has now moved to Australia, she will never be forgotten as the one who 'discovered' this breed.

DIFFERENT KIND OF SPORTS

Interest in the Markiesje in the Netherlands is substantial. The breed's size is its advantage and the Markiesje is popular in a number of sports, including agility, obedience and flyball. He is an excellent companion dog, and good with children. In 2004, a Markiesje won a competition among the nine native Dutch breeds.

The Markiesje is a friendly, happy and intelligent dog. The only thing he wants to do in life is please his owner. He is inquisitive and will bark when he thinks something is wrong. As a result of crossbreeding, colours other than solid black, and black with small white markings, still pop up, but cannot be registered.

THE FUTURE

Today, Markiesjes can be registered in the breed club's Markiesje register and the *Voorlopig* register (provisional stud book of the Dutch KC). In the near future, it will be admitted to the *Bijlagen* (Appendix) of the kennel club's stud book. The last step is the NHSB, the official stud book of the Dutch KC.

A retired bookseller and publisher, Ria Hörter is a contributing editor of De Hondenwereld, the national dog magazine of Holland.

PHOTO: JANNY OFFERENS