

## The Beauceron and Briard ~ A Comparison of the Breeds ~

The Briard was first registered in this country in 1922, but the Beauceron is just now taking its place as an AKC recognized breed.

The Briard and the Beauceron have a rich history in their native country of France. The Briard has been described as existing during the time of the Emperor Charlemagne. The Beauceron is described as early as 1587. In 1758, the French naturalist M. Buffon described and illustrated a dog much like a Beauceron or Briard. In 1809, the priest Abbe Rozier first described the differences in the Berger de la Brie (Briard), and Berger de la Beauce (Beauceron). By 1863, Pierre Megnin differentiated with accuracy the two types of these sheepdogs, one with a long coat (Briard), and the other with a short coat (Beauceron). A commission designated by the Club Francais du Chien de Berger worked to establish the first standards for the two breeds. The first standards for the are recorded as being written in 1897, according to Maurice Luquet in his book, *Les Chiens de Bergers Francais* (1970). The tie between the two breeds is often reflected in the art of the French animaliers--sculptures, medallions, and other artwork have been found to show both breeds depicted in the same piece. They were well-known subjects for these artists during the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century.

As early as the latter part of the 1700's, the Marquis de Lafayette, a Frenchman who fought in the War of Independence, brought dogs matching the description of the Briard and Beauceron to the US. Research shows that Thomas Jefferson had Briards in his possession. However, it was not until early in the 20th century that the Briard made his way into the hands of dog fanciers, who then established the breed long term on American soil, and resulted in the formation the Briard Club of America in 1928. The Beauceron remained known largely in France and Europe, numbers slowly gaining in the US

over the years through dedicated fanciers. The establishment of one club, The American Beauceron Club, has resulted in their acceptance as an AKC breed just this year, with their first date of eligibility for AKC competition as members of the herding group being June, 2007.

Both breeds have been noted throughout history to be excellent working dogs, be it as shepherd dogs, guard dogs, military dogs--they can excel in a multitude of tasks. Their working acumen was selected for and developed to be tending breeds who also had the ability to be guardians of their flocks. AKC herding judges originating from Briards have noted that there is a great deal of similarity in the working styles of the two breeds.

Aficionados of these two remarkable breeds have always had special devotion to them. French writer Colette was a lover of the Beauceron, and called him " The Country Gentleman " Briarders are familiar with the phrase coined by French actress Gaby Morley, who called the Briard " A heart wrapped in fur ". Without question, both breeds inspire great loyalty from their devotees.

As you become more familiar with both breeds, you will note the similarities as well as some significant differences between the Briard and the Beauceron, and greater understanding of the reverence their fanciers have for them.

## A Brief History of Spotted Eye and the Spotted(Merle/Harlequin) Coat

in the Beauceron and the Briard  
by Dianne Schoenberg(January, 2006)

The 1925 Briard standard contained disqualifications for " oeil vairon " and " robe danoisee ", which were translated to the AKC standard as " spotted eye " and spotted coat " respectively. This made me wonder as to what different connotations were implied by the words " vairon " and " danoisee ".

It turns out that the adjective " vairon " applies specifically to eyes and usually seems to be translated to " wall-eyes ". I had always thought that wall-eyes(in people)were eyes that pointed out to the side rather than straight ahead. And that turns out to be true. But there's an additional connotation in French--the word " vairon "when used as a noun translates to " minnow " and implies ' changing colors ". A partial translation of reference material is " Eyes that do not have the same color, or where the iris is depigmented and ringed with white..."Minnow " in this expression evokes a sense of " that which has an undecided color, variable, changing ".

But the 1925 standard does not disqualify " yeux vairon " (two eyes that aren't the same color), it disqualifies " oeil vairon " (one eye that isn't the same color)So it appears the intent " may " have been to disqualify any dog with an eye with color that is not consistent throughout. I looked through several other French standards and it appears that the frequently " oeile vairon " is permitted in dogs with merle or harlequin coloring, but not otherwise. So it MAY be that the founders intended this particular disqualification to aid in distinguishing between Beaucerons(a breed in which " yeux vairon " is permitted in harlequin/merle animals) and Briards (a breed in which harlequin/ merle is not permitted).

Also interesting is the fact that the current French standard does not mention " oeil vairon " but has replaced that term with " yeux disemble "(the official English version translates this as "dissimilar eyes "). To me, that would definitely mean a dog with two eyes of different colors, but not necessarily a dog with a spotted iris.

So now onto the phrase " robe danoisee ", which translates literally to " Danish coat ". Obviously, this has to be a colloquialism of some type because the founders couldn't be talking about a dog whose coat originated in Denmark! All the translations of the early standards that I have seen translate this as " spotted coat ". Franck Hayman, in " Le Berger de Brie (1983), refers to Chipette, one of the breed's foundation animals, as being " de couleur danoisee aux yeux vairons, possedant vraisemblablement du sang Beauceron " ( "of Danish color with spotted eyes, probably having Beauceron blood ". He also observes, while pondering the disqualifications in the 1925 standard " La robe danoisee ne confirme-t-elle pas la presence de lignees de berger de beauce dans notre race ? " (Doesn't the spotted coat confirm the presence of Beauceron blood in our breed? "

I still haven't been able to figure out WHY the term " Danish " came to mean " spotted " when applied to the color of a dog's coat, but I have been able to confirm that at one time it did. The breed we call the Great Dane is referred to in most of the world as the German Mastiff, and the French Magazine " Vos Chiens " says of that breed :

Aux XVIIIeme siecle, Buffon le baptise Grand Danois(la robe tachee se disait " danoise "), ce qui fit croire qu'il venait du Danemark. (In the 17th century, Buffon baptized it the Great Dane(the spotted coat was said to be " Danish ", which made it appear it came from Denmark.)

The " spotted " color that appears in great Danes is of course what

we refer to as harlequin. Continuing to research this, the following information on German dog breeds revealed : " En 1938, apparait le terme " arlequin " pour definir sa robe la plus connue du public, un fond blanc avec taches noires non regulieres et aux contours dechiquetes. Un type de robe qui n'existe dans aucune autre race de chien. Ce nom vient d'Arlequin, le personnage de la Comedie italienne dont le manteau est fait d'un assemblage de plusieurs tissus differents. La robe " arlequin " a remplace l'ancienne appellation de " danoisee " . (In 1938, the term " harlequin " appeared to describe the coat most familiar to the public, a white background with irregular black patches with jagged contours. This type of coat doesn't appear in any other breed of dog. The name comes from Harlequin, a character from Italian comedy whose costume is made of many different fabrics. " Harlequin " coat has replaced the older name " Danish ")

But, of course, there " is " another breed that comes in harlequin....our cousin the Beauceron. While the irregular patches of color of the Beauceron appear on a blue background and not white as described above, the official French standard does describe the accepted color as "arlequin ".

So it seems very likely that the original disqualification for " robe danoisee "(spotted coat) was intended to eliminate dogs(in the Briard) with patchy blue-merle coat patterns, thereby helping separate our two otherwise closely-related breeds.

## Briard and Beauceron

" Les Chiens de Berger Francais " ,  
author Maurice Luquet, edition 1970  
Translated by Odile Smith

### General Classification of the shepherding dogs:

In 1897, Cornevin established a methodical classification based on external characteristics: body proportions, size, ears type and coat. In our French shepherds, he distinguishes in the category of the medium type dogs with erect ears, of good size, the berger de Brie, with long hair forming locks and without wooly undercoat, from the Beauceron, with hard coat and no down(undercoat). He specifically notes the Bas-Rouge variety.

Professor Deschambre recognizes the following breeds of French shepherds:

a) short hair: Beauceron, called Bas-Rouge when he is black with red legs, Berger des Alpes, often black, Berger de Languedoc, de la Crau, des Guarrigues and the Louver du Sud-Ouest(bouviere)

b) medium hair: old French bouviere, Langres, Picards, bouviere des Flandres or Paret, Bouviere de Rouler, Bouvier belge, bouvier du berry and bouvier des Ardennes

c) Long hair except on the head and legs : bouvier de Normandy, berger d'auvergne(grey-blue), berger du berry, berger des Pyrenees, labrits, farou de bourdeaux, etc.

d) long hair all over the body : Briard in France. Some are found in Egypt, descendants from those brought over during the Crusades. In Central Africa, totally white ones can be found.

Later in his book " Le Chien " , he gives a complete classification based on the silhouette of the dog, the shape of the head, the nature of the extremities, the body proportions, the size and weight and the coat. Using these characteristics, he defines 3 main groups of head

types: the " rectilignes ", the convexilignes ", and the concavilignes " . The Briard is classified as a rectigligne, with a well-marked stop and parallel skull line and muzzle line. The Beauceron and the Picard are rated convexiligne with a barely marked stop and a rounder skull line and dropping tip of the nose.(.....)

## The Beauceron

### Morphology and Classification

First Cornevin classified them as a mesomorph, or medium type of dogs, with erect ears and hard coat. Later Pierre Megnin classifies the Beauceron as a lupoid, category of dogs with a head shape fitting within a horizontal pyramid, erect ears, long and narrow muzzle, tight lips, with the upper lip not falling below the lower jaw.(....)Deschambres classifies the Beauceron as a convex type, where the profile of the head is convex with a barely noticeable stop, rounded skull and dropping muzzle. Pointy head, tight lips and short hair define, according to Deschambre, a convexiligne, medioligne(meaning medium proportions)eumetric(meaning weight between 30-35 kg)dog with short hair.

The SCC(Societe Central Canine-equivalent to AKC) places the Beauceron in the 1st group, shepherd dogs. The morphology of the Beauceron has been described and officially set by the breed club in the breed standard. Before going into the details of the standard, let's paint the portrait of this beautiful dog. The berger de beauce, also called the Beauceron or bas-rouge is a dog of harmonious proportions, that can be classified in the lupoid group with the proportion of a medioligne, on the large size of 65-70 cm for the males and 63-68 cm for the females, with short hair. It is a powerful dog, with strong bones, giving the impression of a well-built dog. He must be well-muscled, but with no heaviness nor fat. The head is fairly long and must be well-proportioned in respect to the body. The skull can be

almost flat or convex, with well marked occipital bone. The stop has a mild slope. The skull length is equal to the muzzle length. The muzzle is powerful, with the upper lip covering the lower lip. It cannot be narrow or pointy. Scissor bite with complete dentition is required. The eye sits horizontally, is oval in shape and of medium size. It must be black or very dark brown. For dogs with a lighter color of coat a slightly lighter eye color is tolerated and in the harlequin variety, vairon (wall-eye) is acceptable. The look must be frank, serious, and depict the attentiveness of the dog. The ear is normally a drop ear, but it must be set high on the head. In general, the Beaucerons are presented with cropped ears, erect and parallel, facing forward when the dog is in attention. The body gives the impression of a strong, well-built dog. It is attached to the head by a trunk shape neck of medium length, well muscled and without any skin wrinkles on the shoulders. The chest is broad, with moderately rounded ribs, deep, reaching the elbow. This is important to allow good pulmonary capacity, necessary for the hard field work. The back is flat, very slightly sloped down from the shoulders to the croup. The loin is fairly wide and well muscled. The croup is slightly sloped and very well muscled as well. On all angles, the alignment of the feet and legs must be correct. The front assembly has a long shoulder blade, well angled, with both arms (upper and lower) being well muscled. The front feet have well arched toes, tight together, creating a round foot, with large cushions. The face forward and do not toe in nor out. The elbows are tucked in along the chest. The croup is followed by the thigh which is vertical, with the hock placed past the end of the croup and well opened. The rear toes are a little longer than the front ones,, creating an oval foot. There are two extra toes, located on the inside part of the rear leg, called dew claws. The tail must be carried low when standing still, not deviated from the axel of the body and terminated with an opened crochet. In motion, the tail is carried higher, but never to go above the topline. The coat is a very important component of the Beauceron. It is made of a flat coat, coarse to the touch, thick and short (2.5 to 4

cm on the back). The shepherds call it a " battant " coat. On the head, and the end of the legs, the coat is much shorter. On the other end, it is denser on the buttock area, forming long feathers that are also found on the tail. The most common color is the black and red(bas-rouge variety), with clear demarcations between the two colors. The red is found on the legs, muzzle, above the eyes and around the anus. It must be a deep, rich red. Few black chabonnures accepted on the legs. A second variety, called harlequin, presents grey spots not very well delimited in the black part of the coat. These grey spots can be even a pale yellow. The tricolor variety is fairly rare. A small white spot on the chest is accepted in all varieties.

The Berger de Beauce, besides his natural aptitude as a guardian and guide of the herds, is extremely intelligent and very obedient. He is very loyal and attached to his master, loving with his family and very aloof towards strangers with whom he will be very guarded. He has a tendency to mouth, and ability that is cultivated for various activities, and which, along with a great sense of smell and courage, makes him an excellent defense dog.

Le Berger de Brie(Briard)

Origins

(...)In 1863, at the first dog show in Paris, a bitch named Charmante was presented, resembling a Briard and placed first of the herding dogs.(...) in 1888, Pierre Megnin writes the Briard is a cross between the barbet and the Beauceron. He has the same proportions, came short erect ears, but a different coat since it is long and wooly, generally ardoise, or dirty black. It is only in 1897 that the first standard is established. During this period there have been two varieties: the wooly coat variety and the goat hair variety. Only the goat hair prevailed due to drawbacks of the wooly coat which mats so

easily causing skin problems.

## General Morphology

The Briard today is not as hirsute and coarse as it used to be(....)His size ranges from 62 to 68 cm for males and 54 to 64 cm for females(....)The Briard should not be cobby. It is rather built as a sub-long type, with a flat topline, not sagging, with a well descended chest and oval rib cage, strong loin and slightly sloped croup. The gut area is slightly lifted, not to the point of looking greyhound type. Shepherds say the Briards should display some guts. The legs, with good alignment front and rear, should not be too long. It is important that while the Briard not being too close to the ground, does not show too much " air under his belly ". The hock should not be too short. The rear legs have double dew claws. The feet are in between a cat foot and a rabbit foot, with black nails, tight toes and resistant cushions. The tail reaches the hock and finishes in a J crochet. Should not be deviated and never carried above the back. The coat is made of a long hair, flexous , dry to the touch, falling naturally on both sides of the body, with a minimum length of 7 cm and a diameter of 65 thousands of millimeters. All colors are accepted, except white. The darkest colors are preferred. Lighter colors are often linked to lighter eye colors. Most common colors are ardoise black and grey tawny. A few white hairs are allowed on the chest. The gait of the Briard is light and supple, occasionally pacing.

Despite its hirsute look, the Briard is among the most intelligent dogs, and the most loving. Very docile and loyal, he hides a golden heart under his rough outside. He loves his master and will defend him with vigor and bravery.