

Swiss Run Dogue De Bordeaux

Origin

The Dogue de Bordeaux is one of the most ancient of today's purebred dogs. It is similar to the Bullmastiff yet is centuries older. There are several theories about its true origin. One suggests that it is a descendant of the Tibetan Mastiff, who's origin can be traced back more than five thousand years, from Thibet to Mesopotamia and then to Ancient Greece (Molossus of Epirus), then Rome and from there to Gaule, making this journey by the side of merchants, conquerors and warriors. Another theory suggests that the Dogue is a direct descendant of Assyrian war dogs once owned by the King of Babylon and given as peace offerings to other members of royalty.

Legend claims such a gift was received by a king, who pitted the Dogue against another dog. The Dogue is said to have turned his nose up and walked away from his supposed adversary. For this it was deemed a coward and put to death. Upon hearing the news, the King of Babylonia sent a messenger with another Dogue and a message that read " Of course he would show no interest in fighting such a lowly animal. Pit this one against something a bit more worthy, perhaps a Lion or an Elephant". The receiving King took the challenge and pitted this Dogue against one of his prize Elephants. According to the legend, they had to pull it off of the Elephant or the Dogue would have surely killed it.

Yet another theory suggests that bones found in France predate all of this history and are indeed the bones of a Dogue de Bordeaux. This implies that the Dogue existed in France all along and is a descendant of the "Alano Dog", who was brought to Europe by the Alans, an Oriental tribe. The Alano is considered extinct today but fanciers are attempting to rebuild the breed. Although there are many differences in opinion as to the specific origin of the Dogue de Bordeaux, it is clearly one of the purest forms of the ancient mastiff type.

By the end of the middle ages, the Dogue was used to herd cattle and to protect them from wolves and bears, giving the Dogue its nickname "The Butcher's dog". They were prized as protectors by the noble and wealthy of France. Many perished with their masters during the French Revolution (1789) but the Dogues of the common man survived. In 1863 an exhibition was held at the "Jardin d' Acclimatation" in Paris, France. This is where the Dogue de Bordeaux was given the name of the capital of their region of origin. There were also two other variations of Dogue at the time, the Toulouse and the Paris. The Bordeaux today is a mixture of these three distinct types.

The Toulouse had many colors in its coat, a fawnish brindle perhaps. It had small bones and a longer body. The Paris dogs came with either a scissor bite or an undershot until a group of breeders agreed on the undershot bite. Cropped ears were standard but eventually became forbidden. Therefore the DDB breeds true to its "Genotype" but that is not necessarily its "Phenotype". Enthusiasts should be aware of and on the lookout for the occasional pup that appears with a recessive trait.

In 1895, John Proctor of Antwerp published his accounts of judging the Dogue de Bordeaux at a show, in an article "Fighting Dogs of the South of France", in the magazine "the Stock Keeper". In 1896, Pierre Meguin put together a synthesis of the best Dogues shown and known from 1863 to 1895 in a book he published "Le Dogue de Bordeaux", which featured a description and characteristics true to the B. In 1897, Henry de Bylants work "The Breed of Dogs" introduced the Breed Standard to the world. In 1910, J. Kunsler, Professor of Comparative Anatomy of the Science Facility of Bordeaux, published a "Critique Etude du Dogue de Bordeaux" (A Critical Study of the Dogue de Bordeaux).

Once known as the "French Fighting Dog", the Dogue de Bordeaux was used in combat against bulls, lions, wolves, and hyenas. It was also used as a utility guard and as a dog of war. Spanish officers took many of them along in their conquest of the New World. Although pitted against fierce adversaries most fights were bloodless knock-down point contests. The DDB's massive head and tremendous strength coupled with his notorious ability for getting beneath his opponent enabled him to topple nearly any size of animal. There was a bloody event between a legendary champion "Hercules" and a Jaguar. It took place in San Francisco around the turn of the century. It was a lengthy battle that went on for hours. Although Hercules inflicted serious injuries to the jaguar eventually he was killed. Those who witnessed the fight still declared it a draw. Fighting events were outlawed by 1912.

It was in the 1980's when the United States saw a small Dogue boom occur. In 1986 Touchstone released Turner and Hooch, showing a big messy slobbering Dogue, which was believed to be a Bullmastiff or mutt. In reality, it was the Dogue de Bordeaux.

The Dogue was brought in to the country mainly by dog brokers, and many people received below par stock. But thorough the years, the Americans have improved this stock, with selective and careful breeding, to have some of the finest Dogues in the world.

Today there are breeders of Dogue de Bordeaux that stretch across North America. One must be careful when purchasing a Dogue de Bordeaux, although they are considered a rare breed in the US & Canada, they carry a hefty price tag and are a favorite breed among the puppy millers.

The Dogue is not yet a recognized CKC breed, and they may be in the near future. Canadian Breeders are working together in an effort to gain CKC Recognition. They are recognized world wide by the FCI, UKC recognized breed, and recognized by the AKC in 2008.