



The Dutch Breeds

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All photos by Paula Heikkinen-Lehkonen and those with the handlers in National Costume taken at the World Show 2002 in Amsterdam.

If someone asks you to list the Dutch dog breeds, how many would you know? Would you have guessed that there are nine breeds? Actually eleven, if we consider the three coat varieties of the Dutch Shepherd as independent breeds. Most of the Dutch breeds are very rare, and you seldom see them outside of their native country. The World Show this year was an excellent opportunity to study these breeds, and they were presented to the international audience in a very impressive way on Sunday, the last day of the show, just before the Group finals.

The shepherds of the neighbouring countries, Germany and Belgium, are generally much better known in the dog world. The Dutch Shepherd is very similar to them, obviously related and descended from the same origins, but there are clear differences in the appearance to-day. In the past the country borders were not considered as barriers, and the appearance or colour had no importance for a working dog. Later on patriotism and national feelings became stronger, and so it became more significant to separate the breeds of each country and underline their differences.

The herding dogs

The Dutch Shepherd has been a multi-purpose dog in the farms, undemanding and adapted to harsh conditions. It has been used rather for guarding the sheep flocks than driving the animals. Nowadays it is a versatile working dog, and can be used for many duties, as it is obedient and docile, easy to be trained. It is less lively than its Belgian cousin, although active. The height at withers is 55-62 cm.

The Dutch Shepherd is always brindle in colour. Its body proportions are rectangular, it is longer than its height at the withers. Compared with the Belgian Shepherd, which is square and rather lightly built, the Dutch Shepherd is more sturdy and rustic, but not quite as strong as the German one. Like the Belgian Shepherd, the Dutch one has three coat types: the shorthaired, the longhaired and the wire-haired one.



Dutch Shepherds Long and Shorthaired

The coat of the shorthaired variety is rather hard and definitely double; it must not be too short. It is about the same type of coat as the Smooth Collie, with soft underwool and hard



Schapendoes



weather-resistant outer coat. The long-coated one has straight and harsh long outer coat and dense underwool. The wire-haired variety looks quite amusing with its shaggy and curly off-standing coat.

During recent years the Dutch Shepherd has gained some popularity in other European countries, especially in Scandinavia. Each coat variety is bred separately.

The Dutch Shepherd, like all the herding dogs, has a strong pack instinct and feeling of rank order. It is loyal one-man's or rather one family's dog. It has strong character, as in his original work, the fully-trained shepherd dog has to be quite independent and tough. Unlike the Border Collie, the Dutch Shepherd avoids eye contact with the sheep.

The other Dutch sheepdog, the Schapendoes, belongs to the group of European sheepdogs and is related to the Catalanian Gos d'Atura, Portuguese Serra des Aires sheepdog, the Bearded Collie and the PON (Polish Lowland). The name of the breed means something like "Sheep Poodle", hairy sheepdog. In Germany there used to be a similar breed called "Schafspudel". It is an ancient breed, although relatively newly recognised by the organised dog world.

The Schapendoes is smaller than the Dutch Shepherd, and always covered with abundant, long coat. During and after the wars the population became very sparse, and the breed was re-established by introducing some new blood, cross-breeding with other breeds following the lead of the remarkable Dutch cynologist Mr P M C Toepoel. The breed club was founded in 1947. The breed gained definite recognition in 1971.

All colours are allowed, although blue-grey and black are the most preferred. The height is 40-50 cm. The Schapendoes is a relatively light boned dog, definitely lighter than the PON for example, but his thick coat makes him look heavier than in reality. However, the dog must not look fragile and definitely not short-legged. The body is longer than its height, the ears hanging and the tail is long. The Schapendoes is very agile and lively, a "jolly jumper". He is very vocal, too, as he works barking. The breed is very suitable for many activities, like agility and flyball. It has been used as both drug sniffer and rescue dog, and has gained some popularity in the neighbouring countries during the last decades.

All exaggeration must be avoided when presenting the Schapendoes in the show ring. Of course the coat must be combed and clean, but it must never look like it has just come from the hairdresser's, but rather shaggy. The correct rough texture is dirt-resistant, and if bathed too often, it loses its natural qualities.

The wolf cross

There are two wolf crosses recognised by the FCI, the Saarloos Wolf Dog and the Czech Wolf Dog. When you see one of these, it may be quite difficult to tell which one it is, both are created by crossing German Shepherds with wolves. However, the history is slightly different.

The Dutch one, the Saarloos Wolf Dog got its name from its creator, Mr Leendert Saarloos, (1884-1969) who was not satisfied with the working abilities of the German Shepherds, and wanted to improve them by cross-breeding them with wolves. Saarloos knew that there has been some previous attempts of this kind in other countries without much success, but he believed in his mission. First he mated a European wolf