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Introduction of the Belgian Schipperke Dog into the United States

MAX A. BEEBLOSSOM

The Schipperke (pronounced Skipper-ke) is a small stubby, jet black dog which weighs about 12 to 20 pounds and stands to the mature height of 12 inches. Its small foxy head carries a pair of oval, dark brown eyes, which portray expression and inquisitiveness. Its nose is small and comes to a moderate stop. The fur covering its small erect ears, head and legs is smooth, but the abundant, dense, black fur which covers the rest of the body is coarse and harsh to the touch. At the front of the neck the hair forms a culotte or a cape-like effect. The dog's small, straight front legs support its thick, heavy set shoulders and short neck. The muscular hind-quarters have well developed thighs. Many of the dogs have no tail from birth but if the dog is born with a tail it is docked within 2 to 14 days.

Another characteristic is the dog's keen, lively, and questioning expression and it is continuously occupied with the happenings about it. The dog may be trained as a guard, or it may be just a good house dog.

This dog is often referred to as the "Skip." An unusual character is that the hair will not stick to clothing, upholstery, or other materials and will readily brush off. Through experiment, its hair has been proved to be smooth whereas the hair of the other dogs is covered with small sharp scales. In cross-section, straight hair is circular; wavy and curly hair is oval. In the center of each hair there is a medulla or pith, though it may not always be present in



some hair. It is composed of nucleated cells which contain pigment, fat and air spaces. The fibrous or cortex layer on the outside, also contains pigment and air spaces and the cuticle which is made up of overlapping scales.

Animal Body Hair:

Rabbit's hair has large scales.

Horse hair has almost a horny surface and is quite smooth.

Toy Terrier hair is short, coarse and scaled. It is of average diameter, .056 mm.

Scotty hair is short or of average length and has a large diameter, .064 mm. Its hair is very scaly and coarse.

Pekinese hair has the largest diameter, .112 mm.

Dachshund hair is very short, coarse and is also of average diameter, .073 mm.

Cocker Spaniel hair is long, fine and scaly, similar to that of human hair. Its hair is of average diameter, .052 mm.

Schipperke hair is short, coarse, smooth and is above average in diameter, .092 mm.

There are of course some variations in this breed as in others; such as light-colored eye, or the head being too narrow and elongated or too short. Some of the dogs have no culotte or mane; their coat may be spotted with white or the fur may be too long.

The Schipperke originated in Belgium, and the first Kennel Club was "The Royal Schipperke Club of Brussels," founded on Nov. 11, 1888, and is still in existence. According to its history from various Flemish towns, the breed has been in existence for considerably over 100 years. In its native land the Skip was often used as a guard on canal barges, and was often called "Little Skipper" or sometimes "Little Barge." The Skip is a close relative of the German Pomeranian dog.

The Skip was first imported from Belgium into England by Mr. J. M. Berrie in 1887. The first English Clubs were formed in 1890, shortly after the breed was introduced. Two other English Clubs, St. Hubert, and Northern, were formed later. These are all in existence today. For many years the Skip was entered in dog shows, but the breed was never recognized. Only through continuous showing did Frank Dole succeed in capturing recognition of this breed. In 1891, the dog was classified in the Kennel Club Register as a non-sporting dog although it has been said that this is a gun dog.

There is no exact record of when the first Skip was brought into the United States. However, the Schipperke Club of America was formed in 1929, on April 10, in New York City and since then there have been several clubs formed in various parts of the country. There were small kennels as early as 1910. Some present-day kennels are much larger.

Mrs. Rene Isler of Freeport, Illinois, brought her first Skip to this country, June 22, 1931. Her first litter was born, September 28, 1931.

It was through the kind cooperation of Mrs. Isler, a Skip kennel owner, that this paper was made possible.

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