



SCOTTISH TERRIER CLUB OF AMERICA

Scottish Terriers, Ewing, 1933

The article below from 1933 was written by one of the founders of Scottish Terriers in America and published at a time when black-colored Scotties began to be selectively bred for commercial reasons.

SCOTTISH TERRIERS

by **Fayette C. Ewing**, M.D., F.A.C.S., F.R.S.M. reprinted from the April, **1933** issue of *Kennel Review*

Commercialism is often contemptible, though it be indispensable to human progress. For a gain, even temporary gain, it parodies great poetry; degrades art in its manifold forms; defaces landscapes with ugly signboards; and would prostitute to its purposes God's most majestic handiwork - Niagara Falls, if given its way. So it seeks to make the Scottie black, taking advantage of fads, fancies and foolishness to destroy one of the chief charms of a breed that nature gave variety of color to in the course of long years of adaption to work and environment. This to satisfy an itching palm.

The makers of the Standard, who knew the breed before its show-days and worked it in the scrubby undergrowth, the heather, when it went to earth and dug foxes and varmints from the cairns, saw that it was brindle and grey and red, because of its work which invoked those natural influences that develop the protective coloring in animals. The polar bear becomes white; quail, snipe, and such birds that hug the earth are colored like it. The ptarmigan, chameleon-like changes its color in a season; it is brown in the summertime, mottled brown and white in the early winter, and when the snow covers the earth the bird is clothed in the same white. Nature did not violate her rule in coloring Scottish Terriers; it is a very old breed, some claim dating back hundreds of years, which did its work in obscurity in the segregated hills and islands of Northern Scotland. Very likely crosses of blacks and whites cropped in here and there to mar the purity of an established breed, and both black and white were unnatural colors.

Thirty-six years ago, when I revived an abortive attempt by a few prominent fanciers to popularize the breed in America now and then an almost-white Scottie would be born from brindle parents and by inbreeding and selection from these came the present West Highland White Terriers which first appeared on the bench as White Scottish Terriers, then as Roseneath Terriers, and finally they were standardized into the West Highland White Terrier. The maker the Standard recognizing the fact that blacks, an also unnatural color cropped out now and then, placed it second to last as a choice of color with wheaten and sandies last. Black-brindles, or steel-grey, red and brown brindles followed, and all in front of the blacks.

Just how the stupid popularity of the blacks came about I do not know, but it has been said - *vanitas vanitatum* - that it arose in the vanity of women who wished a contrast, a background as it were, to their beauty, even as some beautiful and delicate types of girls affect bulldogs with similar intent.

Commercialism, short-sighted and avaricious in this case, seized the opportunity to encourage the idea that blacks were to be desired and probably the very fact that it was an unnatural color, and not so common as the brindles, added to the attraction. At any rate, commercial breeders soon began inbreeding blacks to blacks and advertising lines of black champions in their offerings until the fallacious idea was well disseminated among buyers.

Now, we have advertisers exploiting blacks as if that color counted more than points or pedigree. Let me say to my readers that whenever an advertiser offer you blacks as if he were giving you some special value in a Scottish Terrier he is doing it on the basis of either ignorance or duplicity, more likely the latter; furthermore, he is playing upon your ignorance of the real values in the Scottish terrier.

"There was never a good Scottie with a bad color" is an ancient axiom and the Standard sets only 2-1/2 points in 100 on color valuation. It is a negligible thing in a show ring. No judge who knows his business, knows the breed, its traditions and the Standard would consider it in making up a final judgment, because the standard valuation is too small to figure in the decision. Yet a movie magnate from Hollywood wrote me that a California judge gave as his reason for putting one dog over another the fact that it was black.

Some old English poet said: "Variety is the spice of life that gives it all its flavor." and from the sentimental side, it would be a sad thing to rob the Scottish Terrier of its variety of coloring, to damn it with everlasting darkness, with the monotony thereof. We cannot all have the same tastes; let those who desire have their blacks, but do not encourage the belief that black has inherent virtues that will increase that desire.

The cold facts of the case are that black is not only an unnatural color, but that it has inherent objections, instead of virtues. Inbreeding of blacks to blacks produces disfiguring brown patches; the brilliancy disappears and there is a tendency to take on slatey-bluish tones. Black coats are usually less hard than the brindles, with less undercoat, and some have even gone so far as to say that blacks are less intelligent, but I think this untenable. However, it is enough to say that it tends to the defects previously enumerated and that it is hard to get a black coat without grey hairs, which increase with the years, and when a black dog takes on a grey face it becomes very objectionable.

The greatest kennels, where money is spent to produce the best, do not advertise black as a virtue; it is only the small breeder who, having nothing better to offer, takes advantage of the ignorance of purchasers. Those who have ideals for the future do not worry about color. And, after all, since commercialism will have its pound of flesh it would be well for it to consider the future and not kill the goose that lays the golden egg.

The Scottish Terrier is so inherently brindle that brindles, like the poor, will be with us through our own and our children's generation, and others to come. A classic English fiction writer wrote a great novel called "What Will He Do With It?" I ask you who are encouraging the demand for blacks and minimizing the value of brindles and destroying their every-day sales what will you do with it when, having made it almost impossible to get a corresponding price for a brindle, you have bred on of the greatest in the world in other essentials? You will be sick enough over your situation for, be sure that even as it is impossible not to have the Dominick coloring in chickens reproduced after generations of other crosses, so these brindles in all their varieties will reproduce themselves though you make the breed as black as Erebus. Atavism will see to that!