

The Modern Canaan Dog

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When Dvora ben Shaul learned of the appointment by the Association for the Preservation of Oriental Breeds of a committee to make a study of the Canaan, Dvora decided immediately to interview Professor Rudolphina Menzel. Most of the breeders and dog-fanciers in Israel think that the standards for recognition of the breed are too general. They think that the standards should be narrowed to exclude the Dingo Canaan and recognize only the Collie Canaan.

Dvora spoke to Professor Menzel in her comfortable, book-filled apartment at a home for the elderly in Haifa. It was a warm day so Dvora and the Professor decided to sit on the porch. From the porch the Professor pointed to some cats in the distance that regularly come to cry under her window. The two of them began discussing dogs in general, but the conversation dealt mostly with the status of the Canaan.

Dvora: If you wrote a new standard for the Canaan today would you leave it as it is, or would you make changes?

Prof. Menzel: (She thought for a brief moment and answered): The standard has been good and it still is. The representation of the breed is as it should be and not as it should be. I think that we need to do more for the type of Canaan we are looking for and less with the many Canaans that are of a less favorable type.

Dvora: What is the best type of Canaan, is there an ideal Canaan in your opinion?

Menzel: (She answered without the slightest hesitation): The Collie Canaan is the more highly developed type while the Dingo is a more primitive example of the breed. We have a rare and fascinating opportunity to witness two species of the same animal in two distinct stages of development and living side by side. Further, we must not forget that the Collie Canaan does not represent the last plateau of Canaan development. Due to the combined forces of man and nature acting upon them, other portions of this part of the family tree of dogs have indeed stopped developing. These dogs include the Saluki, Basenji, Australian Dingo and others. But the Canaan left alone to fend for itself by its own devices continues to develop.

Dvora: If this is so, what are your thoughts on the Dingo today? Should the Dingo be disqualified completely as a specie of the Canaan breed?

Menzel: In a sense, nature has already disqualified the Dingo. The moment that a more advanced specie appears, in this case the Collie Canaan, then nature has made its choice for us. That is, as the breed advanced, nature pushed the dingo aside. I personally think we should maintain absolute separation of the two species. Thus, the way would be clear for us to concentrate on the development of the Collie type, and it should also be clear for anyone who wished to develop the Dingo to do so. After all, though the Dingo is a more primitive specie than the Collie, it is still a true Canaan.

Dvora: It is said that when two Jews attend a meeting they will express three opinions. You will also find this true concerning the matter of the breeding of the Canaan dog. I wanted to hear your opinion about a few controversial points. For example, is the prick ear usually preferable to the button ear?

Menzel: In my opinion the prick ear is the ideal, but is also possible to accept the button ear.

Dvora: And color . . . a number of breeders refuse to recognize any Canaan that is tri-colored.

Menzel: To me all colors are acceptable if they are colors naturally found in the Canaan family. This omits gray which usually represents a mixing of the blood line with some other breed when gray appears on a Canaan one must be highly suspicious of its purity. In general, a tri-colored coloring is a Canaan is definitely acceptable in my opinion.

Dvora: And what about the matter of the tail? There are those who hold that the standard for the Canaan Tail should be that the tail must hang in a sickle-like shape, and only when the dog gets excited should the tail curl completely around over its back. And there are others who do not agree with this opinion.

Menzel: I never thought that a Canaan should carry its tail hanging. It is only permitted to do so with the condition that when it gets excited it curled its tail around over its back. It is better if the tail remains curled all the time.

Dvora: How will you go about transferring the emphasis on Canaans to the Collie species? After all, many people own Dingo Canaans and surely they will not look favorably upon the disqualification of their dogs?

Menzel: There is no need for this. We need only accentuate the Collie type. If after the mating of a Dingo and a Collie only the Collie puppies are raised especially for breeding, then after a short while all of the Canaans would be of the Collie type.

Dvora: In other words you simply suggest quickening the natural process of development of the breed by selective breeding and raising?

Menzel: It is only necessary to give nature a little push in the direction it is already heading.

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