

# THE PARSON RUSSELL TERRIER AT MEET THE BREEDS

BY JANINE ROSE

At the end of every January, our presence is requested at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York City, at AKC's Meet the Breeds. It is a full two-day schedule, where we tirelessly promote our breed, the Parson Russell Terrier (PRT). We get there on a Friday evening and set up all the props and decorations for the next day. The event starts at 9 am, but New Yorkers are resourceful folk, and usually there are early birds wandering around a few minutes after opening. The crowd intensifies as the day progresses.

We usually come with 4-5 mild-tempered Parsons, swapping out rested ones for the working ones needing a break, and we switch them out every hour or so. Just about everyone who stops at our booth wants to pet (what's not to love?) or ask many questions about the possibility of having one as a pet. I have heard just about every type of question, from "how long can they be left alone" to "how much exercise do they need," but the most-often asked question we get is: "WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A JACK RUSSELL AND A PARSON RUSSELL?" That is the one that requires the most time and patience.

In January of 1990, the breed was recognized on the 14" Standard in England by The Kennel Club as the Parson Jack Russell Terrier, a working variant of the Fox Terrier. The Parson Jack Russell Terrier Club of Great Britain (PJRTC) was composed of working terrier people who felt the breed was seriously endangered by the practices of those who advocated a 10" to 15" Standard, and they took the breed to Kennel Club recognition to protect the original Breed Standard.

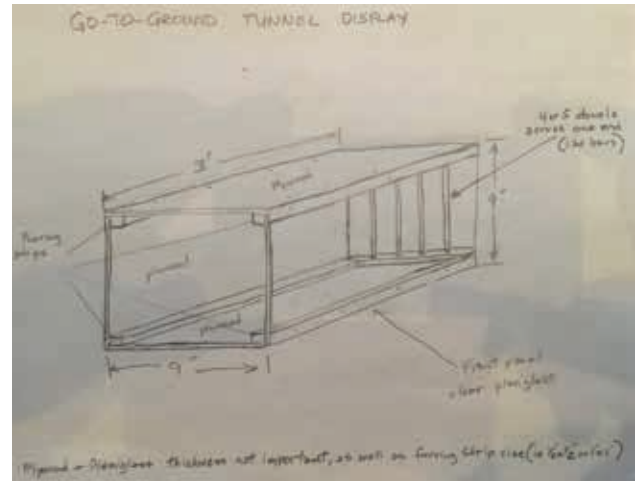
In July of 1997, the Board of Directors of the American Kennel Club unanimously accepted the Jack Russell Terrier into its registry, effective November 1, 1997. On January 1, 1998, the breed became eligible for competition in all AKC events, including Conformation participation in the Miscellaneous Class at all-breed shows. The breed was accepted into the AKC Terrier Group on April 1, 2000. On April 1, 2003, the name of the breed was changed from Jack Russell Terrier to Parson Russell Terrier to differentiate the true Parson-type terrier from little generic terriers casually referred to as a "Jack Russell." The Jack Russell Terrier Association of America club name was changed to Parson Russell Terrier Association of America (PRTAA). The Breed Standard was revised effective September 29, 2004.



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The Parson Russell Terrier is geared toward a more standardized look between 12-15 inches, with further standardization of color and coat. It is a working terrier that could perform the dual functions required of Rev. Russell's terriers, which was to follow the fox both above and below ground.

Jack Russells and Parson Russells of today are two distinct breeds. Their purpose has not changed, though; they are fearless hunters with a flexible chest that allows them to squeeze through narrow tunnel passages. At Meet the Breeds, we all do our best to explain their differences, but it can seem like a lot and so we shorten it up as much as possible with a quick summary—but it remains a source of confusion, nonetheless.



Among the props that we bring to the Javits Center, by far the favorite is the facsimile tunnel; a plywood tunnel with a plexiglass panel which closely follows the dimensions of a real fox hole/tunnel. Our Parsons love to go in it and demonstrate their flexibility. My boy loves it so much that he decided this was his go-to napping place, much to the delight of people passing by. We add moss, leaves, and even a plush fox at the end, which they love! What amazes people is when the Parsons turn around in such a narrow space.

Meet the Breeds is intended for breeders to share their enthusiasm and communicate the commitment needed to be a responsible PRT owner. Our dogs are very often misunderstood and can be cast aside for the wrong reasons. Terriers are not for everyone, and some misguided pet owners do not carefully consider the needs of these energetic hunters.

Attending Meet the Breeds is one of the most important things we can do for our dogs. We are committed to the preservation and conformity of our breed and will continue to be dutiful ambassadors for our friendly and functional Parson Russell Terriers. ■