

Chapter 10

The Beauceron

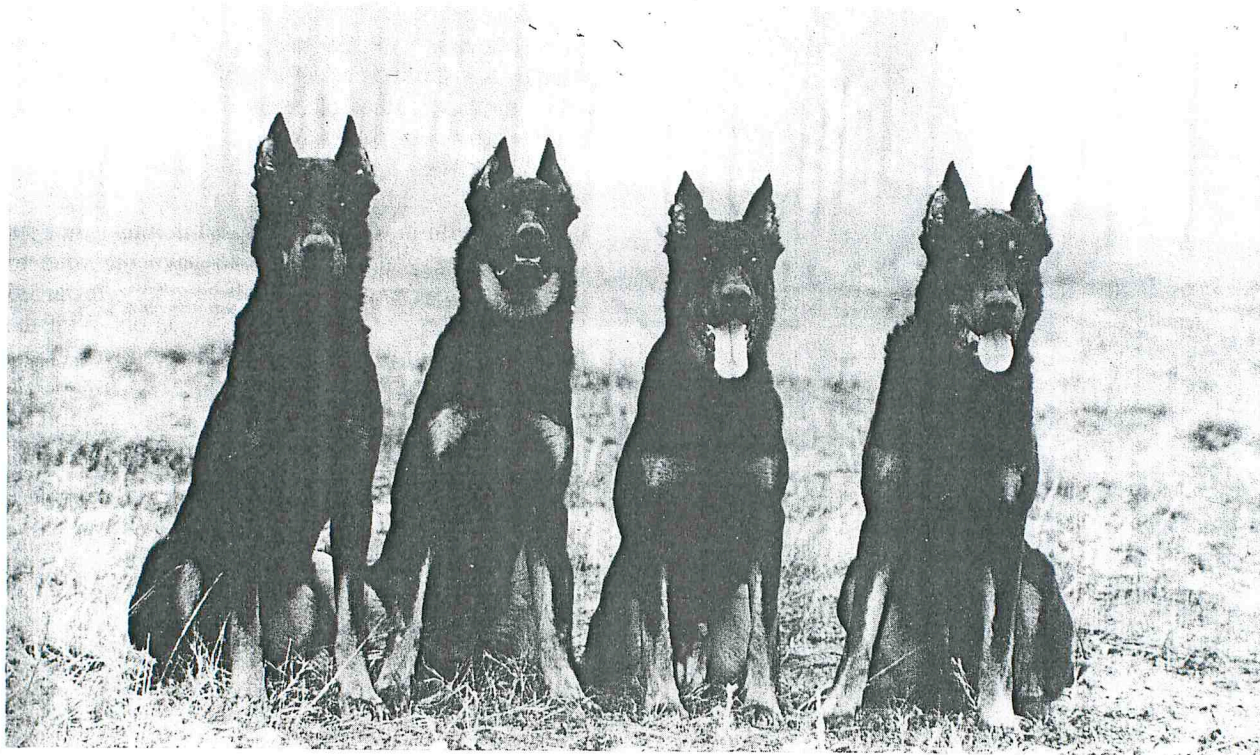
The Beauceron is a newcomer to this country. He has attracted much attention for his appearance, which, to the untrained eye, is reminiscent of a cross between a Doberman Pinscher and a German Shepherd. Those who are familiar with the breed say that the Beauceron has a kind heart, and the uncanny ability to sense his owners moods and desires. A loyal and unselfish breed, the Beauceron makes an ideal pet.

The Beauceron is a distinctly French breed, said to have been developed solely in that country, with no crosses to foreign breeds. Indeed, it is a very old working dog. Sheepherding breeds have long been known in France and are depicted in tapestries from the eighth century. Writings from the twelfth, fourteenth and sixteenth centuries mention herding dogs. It is thought that a passage in a manuscript, written in 1587, is the first specific mention of a dog of the Beauceron's description.

In France, the breed is called *Berger de la Beauce* (Shepherd of the Beauce). La Beauce is a plains region surrounding Paris, and is generally acknowledged as the cradle of the breed. The Beauceron shares a common heritage with his cousin the *Berger de la Brie*, recognized in this country as the Briard. While the two breeds appear quite different in appearance, both serve the same working functions. In the early days, the French farmer was not at all concerned with type. He cared only about practical working qualities, and the shepherd dogs were of an extremely diverse type. All fell under the general category of *chien de la plaine* or "dog of the plain." They could be found in all coat colors and coat lengths. While hunting dogs

were highly esteemed in those days, the French accorded little consideration to these rough and rugged working dogs. In those very early years, the Beauceron and the Briard served more as livestock guardians, defending the animals from predators, such as wolves and human poachers. With the advent of the French Revolution, their function changed. The land was no longer strictly in the hands of the nobility, but was divided among the people, resulting in more farmers on smaller holdings. The Beauceron and the Briard became herding dogs whose work was essential, for those early French farms were not fenced. Undoubtedly, they also doubled as watchdogs for their masters' homes.

In 1809, a priest, Abbé Rozier, wrote an article on these French herding dogs. It was he who first described the differences and used the terms *Berger de la Brie* and *Berger de la Beauce*. He described the Beauce as a shorthaired, mastiff-like dog, and said that the Brie was a longhaired dog of different type. According to French writings, during the late years of the 19th century, there was a meeting of cattle and sheep breeders. It was there that the decision was made to name the longhaired dogs after the area of Brie and the shorthaired types after the Beauce region. Both breeds still varied greatly in type. In 1900, the Beauceron was first exhibited at a show. The first Beauceron champion, a bitch named Bergere, bears little resemblance to the breed known today. She was said to have been semi-longhaired. Indeed, we are told that the coats were often longer than today's standard allows, the muzzles were thinner and the size was significantly smaller. The tan markings on the



A quartet of outstanding Beaucerons, from left to right, Champion Quiche de la Beauté Rustique, Champion Taquine de la Beauté Rustique, Champion Myra de la Sylvade, Champion Quito de la Beauté Rustique. All are owned by Mrs. Truus Manders, of Holland.

double dewclaws can take only a mention." There is a curious, somewhat superstitious, tradition attached to the presence of double dewclaws. Old time ranchers believed that you could select a good working pup from a litter by picking the one with these double appendages. Indeed, this contention may have led to the establishment of this trait in the first place. Some old timers believe that the double dewclaws allow the Beauceron to more easily climb onto the backs of the sheep. Others point out that there is little muscular control in the dewclaws, and that other breeds, such as the Australian Kelpie, are very adept without benefit of double dewclaws. There was, in the past, a heated debate on this subject, when the Federation Cynologique Internationale proposed eliminating this requirement. The parent club, in France, firmly held that without double dewclaws the dog could not be considered a Beauceron.

The lovely harlequin Beauceron almost became extinct, but French breeders, most notably, Mme. L. Delaire, of *Kennel de la Horde Noire*, have dedicated themselves to reviving the harlequin. The coat color most closely resembles that of a dappled Dachshund or a merle Great Dane. The harlequin is required to have the rich tan or red markings found

on the black and tan Beauceron, and these are said to be difficult to achieve. It is generally conceded that it is much more difficult to breed a superior harlequin. To help the situation, the French Kennel Club decided to allow harlequins to compete as a separate variety. However, in all other countries black and tans and harlequins are shown together.

"The intelligence, the obedience, and the activity of the Beauce are proverbial," wrote Boulet d'Elbouef. "He is also a faithful guard and a brave defender, and his herding instinct seems to be inborn, transmitted from his ancestors through the centuries." Enthusiastic Beauceron owners would certainly agree. Indeed, the Beauceron makes a wonderful family companion. The breed is intelligent and loyal, and enjoys pleasing his master. He takes his guarding duties seriously and is not prone to wandering away from home. The breed is naturally somewhat wary of strangers, and it is important to thoroughly socialize your new Beauceron puppy.

The Beauceron is an eager and willing worker, but he performs best when he is trained by his owner. While professional trainers can achieve adequate results, it is with the guidance and encouragement of his loving owner that the

A Celebration of Rare Breeds



Champion Myra de la Sylvade, obedience champion of all breeds, in 1980 and 1981. Owned by Mrs Truus Manders, of Holland.

Beauceron becomes a superior working dog. Be prepared to vary your training procedure and keep the work fun. The Beauceron is eager to learn, but does not respond well to harsh discipline. Praise or a disapproving word are more effective. This breed has an excellent memory and training is not likely to be forgotten. The Beauceron is very independent in temperament and does not have a "slave's soul." He is more likely to view himself as your partner and your friend, than merely as a dog to be ordered around.

Mrs. Truus Manders, of Holland, believes in keeping Beauceron training fun. "A well trained dog should have a lot of fun in his work," Mrs. Manders says. She has owned Beaucerons for the last thirteen years and was instrumental in the formation of the Netherlands Beauceron Club. Recently an Australian Shepherd joined the Manders household. "I take my dogs everywhere," Truus says, "even to the city and on holiday. They are very used to this. In Holland, many Beaucerons live in cities." Mrs. Manders is concerned by some of the advertisements she has seen for the breed, in American dog magazines. "I saw an advertisement for aggressive Beauceron. These people should hang their heads in shame. A good Beauceron is not aggressive. He is fearless, but very sociable with people and dogs. In Holland, we have a nature test. Before any Beauceron is allowed to be bred he must pass this

test. Aggressive or timid dogs are never bred." Mrs. Manders advises that, if at all possible, you should see the parents of a puppy before you make your purchase. Steer clear of any puppies whose parents are shy or aggressive.

The Beauceron, with his sharp looks and wonderful working abilities, is sure to attract more attention in this country. While this is not the breed for everyone, those who have the time to devote to this French native will be amply rewarded with a wonderful and loyal companion. With the close companionship of those he loves, the Beauceron becomes a devoted and loyal friend. He wants only to be by your side. We will certainly be seeing more of this outstanding dog at upcoming rare breed events.



Champion Quiche de la Beauté Rustique was Holland's obedience champion in 1982, 1983 and 1984. Owned by Mrs. Truus Manders, of Holland.

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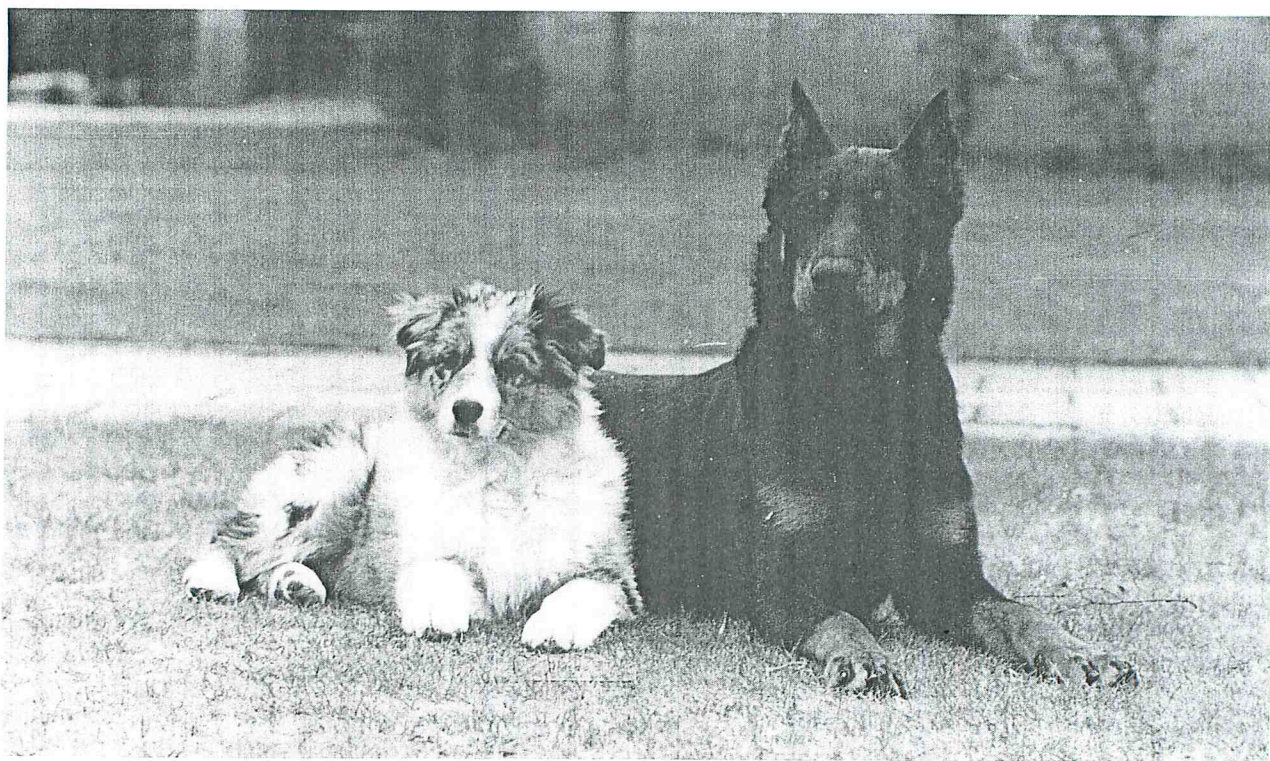
feet may also have extended higher up on the leg, and this may have given rise to the early breed nickname of "Red Stockings."

In the 1900's, more attention has been paid to Beauceron breeding. A club, The Friends of the Beauceron, was established in 1911. In 1927, the first book devoted exclusively to the Beauceron, was written by Monsieur A. Siraudin. This book is still held in such esteem that it is considered, by many, to be the "Beauceron Bible." During both World Wars, Beaucerons earned respect as military dogs. They were applauded for their strength, and machine gun ammunition belts were often wrapped around their sturdy bodies, to be carried to gun emplacements. With their intelligence, they were often used as messenger and sentry dogs. Incredible stories have been told about their powers of observation and perception.

The Beauceron is still best known in his native France. In 1984, approximately 3,200 Beaucerons were born. Although still used for herding, the breed is most often used in police work, and serves in the canine units of both the French army and police. The breed has spread to other European countries, although it has not yet achieved the popularity enjoyed in France. There is growing interest in the Beauceron in Belgium, where approximately 20

litters are registered annually. Holland is home to about 350 Beaucerons, and there are about 30 more in Germany. The Beauceron is a newcomer to the United States, where many Americans caught their first glimpse of the breed in the James Bond film, "Moonraker."

The Beauceron is a large, powerful dog that bears some resemblance to the Doberman Pinscher. Males stand 25-27 1/2 inches at the shoulder, while females measure 24-26 3/4 inches. They have broad, deep chests and straight backs, and should always be robust and well muscled. The coat is short and dense, and along the back bone should measure about 1-1 1/2 inches in length. Beaucerons have longer feathering on their tails and the backs of their thighs. The Beauceron comes in two color patterns: the common black and tan, and the rare harlequin. While the nose is always black, eye color corresponds to coat color. A small spot of white is permitted on the chest, but even this is considered a fault. The standard allows for both cropped and uncropped ears, although there is a decided preference for clipped ears. One of the essential breed characteristics, and a topic of endless debate in Beauceron circles, is the standard's call for rear double dewclaws. The standard states, "Dogs otherwise well qualified as to type but lacking



Prepwash Decidedly, a three month old Australian Shepherd puppy, relaxes with the Beauceron, Altesse de la Beauté Rustique. Both are owned by Truus Manders, of Holland.