

The Norwegian Hound; "Dunker"

The Norwegian "Dunker hound" was established as a race in 1902, when the first club for hare-hound enthusiasts was instituted in Norway ("Spezialklub for Norske Harehunde"). At that time the country had a rather big population of hounds for hunting hares. The most of these ones were of German origin, but they might also have blood from English, Swiss and French hounds.

A find in a grave shows that there has existed a hare hound in Norway in the middle ages. But we think that, what we may call "the classic sport of hare-hunting" was introduced in Norway by German miners, and by officers who made service in the Norwegian army from the middle of the seventeenth century. But the golden age of hare hunting in Norway was in the nineteenth century, and since that time it has been great interest for that sport. It may perhaps also be of interest to tell that hare shooting has been a sport for common people in this country. Before the war it was an almost a free activity in many rural districts.

The "Dunker hound" has got its name from Wilhelm Dunker (1807-60). He was an officer like his father who had come to Norway from Germany before 1700. Wilhelm Dunker grew up in a milieu of officers that were very engaged with hare hunting and breeding of hare-hounds. In 1826 he got his famous hound "Alarm", a blue marbled hound (Norwegian: 'droplet') with walled eyes. "Alarm" was the result of a mating between a grey-marbled bitch and an almost white male, called "Hvide Musik" (White Music). The owner of "Hvide Musik" was another officer, "Jacob Krefting" (later general), who had got this hound from some gypsies. It was of unknown origin. However, "Hvide Musik" proved to be an excellent hare-hound, but wolves killed him when he was few years old.

"Alarm" lived until ca. 1838, and he became father of many hounds with the same characteristic colour. These hounds became very popular, and they were called "dunkers" (Norwegian: "dunkere") after their originator.

Wilhelm Dunker lived at many places in the southern part of Norway, and he was a breeder of "dunkere" ('dunkers') until his death in 1860. He had a good reputation as breeder, but we do not know any details of his breeding or names of others of his hounds than "Alarm".

Originally most Norwegian hare-hounds were black with brown and white markings (like hare-hounds in Sweden and Finland now a days), and the dappled (blue marbled) colour was brought into the Norwegian hare-hound population by "Hvide Musik" and Wilhelm Dunker's Alarm. In 1902 these "dunker" hounds were dominating in Norway, and they held their position until the nineteen seventies, when they got competition from hare-hounds from Finland, where they had succeeded to create very good hounds. At that time there could be registered about 700 puppies a year, but the "dunker" race was then of poorer quality. At the present time the quality is good, but now less than 200 puppies are registered every year.

In the starting point the founders of "Spezialklub for Norske Harehunde" had intended to establish a club only for systematic breeding of "dunker" hounds. But as there also was another man who had got his name connected to a special type of hare-hounds, "H. F. Hygen" (1808-97), they decided to establish two races. The other one was called "Hygen hound" after his originator. These hounds were red and white, some ones also black with red and white marks. But there were three times as many "dunkers" as "hygen hounds" in Norway, and later this difference continued.

However, because H. F. Hygen became a very old man, we know much about him and his breeding. Nevertheless there are few of these hounds now.

Many tests for hare-hounds are arranged in Norway, Sweden and Finland every year in the hunting-season between September and February.

The "Dunker" has taken part in the European championship for hare-hounds (beagles), and in 2000 it won the championship. In other years it has also been well placed.

The "Dunker" has also a good reputation for being a calm and kind family dog with good nerves. It lies in its bed the whole daylong.

Dappled (blue marbled) is mentioned as the typical "dunker colour". But half of the "dunkers" are black with pale fawn and white markings, In a "dunker" litter half of the puppies may be dappled and the other half black, because dappled hounds usually are mated with black ones and vice versa. A mating between two dappled ones may give some puppies that are almost white, which one wants to avoid. But you may also get black puppies when both parents are dappled.

"The Dunker" is of medium size (ideal size for males is 53 cm and for bitches 50 cm), distinctly rectangular, powerfully built, but should not appear heavy. Should convey the impression of endurance. (Quoted from the standard) The head or else characterizes the type, which is rather long (shall not be carried highly) with a well-developed and square muzzle. The head must never be wedge-shaped. Characteristic is also the look ("dunkerblikket") in the rather big, dark brown eyes with black eye lines. But some hounds may have one dark brown and one walleye, or a part of the eye may be walled. The nose shall always be black. (See moreover the standard!).

Today we have a special club for taking care of the race ("Dunkerringen", established in 1986). It has about 700 members, and we publish a magazine twice a year. This is very popular.

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