

Division At Last

May 1, 2008 by AKC Gazette Breed Columnist • Categories: Breed Columns, History

The ballots were counted on November 26th and the year's had it at last. After no less than five previous votes over the years the Norwich and Norfolk Terrier Club has finally decided to divide into two separate breed clubs—a landmark event. Of the 436 members who cast ballots, 298 (68.3 %) voted to divide, while 138 voted “no.” According to the NNTC Constitution, a two-thirds majority of those voting was needed for passage (66.7%).

By this writing, nominating committees for the two new boards will have been recruited. The nominating committees' slates must then be in the hands of all members twelve weeks prior to the annual meeting (October 3rd) This timetable means that the slates must be in Corresponding Secretary Louise Leone's hands by the end of June.

According to Barbara Miller, it will then be up to the new Boards to scrutinize and then make any changes to their constitutions. But until then, the current NNTC Constitution will continue as the working template. Barbara anticipates that the new clubs will be in place within a year.

Division has been the result of much hard effort by many so perhaps this is a good place to reprise some of the history leading up to this milestone. In the early days, the appellation was simply the Norwich Terrier Club. Before Norfolks became their own breed the abbreviation D.E. was appended to designate the drop eared variety. But many members wished for more recognition—and their own separate classes at shows.

Mr. Philip “Tiny” Fell as the NTC Delegate to the AKC pressed for separation of the breeds. Under his leadership, this finally occurred in January, 1979, fifteen years after the British Norfolk Terrier Club was formed in 1964. The US club felt at the time that there were not enough members to support two separate clubs so the AKC permitted the two breeds to shelter under the same umbrella. This was not a sentiment shared by all members however.

Joan R. Read, prominent breeder and former president of the NTC, was determined that Norfolks have “a room of their own.” So a year later Joan and fellow aficionados, (notably Barbara Fournier and Jane Anderson) formed ANTA, the American Norfolk Terrier Association, which has remained a separate club independent of the AKC ever since. Joan authored the definitive book, *The Norfolk Terrier* in 1989 (now in its third printing) and remained active in ANTA until her death in 1995. No doubt she would be saying, “Finally!”

It's been a long road. The first vote for division took place in 1983. Subsequent votes were held in 1993; 1996; 1998; 2001-2 and finally 2007's culminating referendum.

Long-time member Missy Wood noted, “the votes were usually brought to the membership by the membership rather than by Club leaders.” She recalled too that the early initiatives simply failed outright. In 1983, the NNTC Constitution required 2/3rds of Norwich members and 2/3rds of Norfolk members to be in favor of division for it pass.

Alison Freehling, current editor of the NNTC News, kindly looked up the vote count. “I did find in the Winter 1983 News (#46) the results of that division vote... Of the total 147 Norwich members voting,

108 (73%) were opposed to division; 39 (27%) were in favor. Of the 78 Norfolk members who voted, 61 (78%) opposed division and 17 (22%) were in favor. So division was very unpopular 25 years ago!”

A decade passed before the members were again asked to voice their opinions and again the initiative failed to garner even the popular vote. “...105 voted “Yes;” 108 voted “No.” So division still had a long way to go 15 years ago. At some point, members voted to change the NNTC Constitution to require a 2/3rds majority of those casting ballots rather than 2/3rds of each breed.” This was the crucial change which made the most recent affirmation possible.

Still the necessary two-thirds majority eluded proponents until the last referendum with more than twice as many members voting—a measure of both interest and a reflection of increased club membership.

Now it is time to draw on this equity as we form our new clubs and to implement the vision of those who have come before for the benefit of our respective breeds. And it is especially time to thank Barbara Miller, the current Board and all our past Presidents and Boards for all their hard work as we move forward with this challenging endeavor.

— Leandra Little, AKC Gazette Breed Columnist

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