

## Unwanted White — Part 1

February 1, 2009 by AKC Gazette Breed Columnist • Categories: Breed Columns

There it is, right out of the womb, that big streak of white blazing a trail down the chest. “Oh, no! Where did that come from?” Despite the passage in our breed standard that reads “white marks or patches are undesirable,” it does crop up. Sometimes white appears as a stripe on the head. More commonly it shows up as the thoracic “angel’s kiss” or “necktie.”

While it is rare, a pup can arrive having white in other places as well. Last year, one breeder was shocked to find a newborn marked like a Boston Terrier, with white around the neck, on the head, and on the paws and belly. Puppy X even had a white tip on his tail! Where could this have originated from?

Perhaps inspired by the work of Darwin, the late 1800s and the early 1900s were exciting times in dog breeding. The 1792 book *The Animal Kingdom, or Zoological System*, of the Celebrated Sir Charles Linnaeus (an English translation of *Systema Naturae*, published in Latin by Linnaeus in 1735), mentions just 37 dog breeds. In contrast, the 1904 book *Dogs of All Nations*, by Henri van Bylandt, lists over 300. The Norwich Terrier breed began to coalesce during this time, its freebooting origins a jumble.

Early breeders freely mixed terrier-type mongrels with established breeds. Marjorie Bunting wrote in her definitive book *The Norwich Terrier* that other genetic contributions to our breed were made by the Yorkshire Terrier, the Irish Terrier, “dogs of Wire-haired Fox Terrier type,” the Glen of Imaal Terrier, the Pekingese (“just once”), the Cairn Terrier, and the Bedlington Terrier.

There is even a 1906 photo of Ninety, “an all-white bitch, said to be the result of crossing a Dandie Dinmont and a Smooth Fox Terrier.” Ninety was bred to Rags, one of the cornerstones of our breed. Their offspring (always red) were then bred back to other small, red terriers as part of our foundation stock.

Mr. R. John “Jack” Read (who used the Horstead prefix), one of the early English fanciers and first president of the Norwich Terrier Club, had strong feelings about color, saying, “Genuine Norwich Terriers have always been red.” But apparently he was a man of his times in terms of doing crossbreeding. “I do not like white, and I should be very glad to see it disappear. The spots of white on some of my terriers come from the Bull Terrier with which I outcrossed for hardness in 1919.” He went on, “I did not, however, put a dog down for white on the chest. I certainly would do so if he had white legs.” It’s interesting to note that the Bull Terrier of his time was originally bred around 1830 by crossing the English Bulldog with the now-extinct White English Terrier.

So along with the white Ninety and the influence of the Smooth and Wire Fox terriers was a soupçon of Bull Terrier—all bringing along hard-to-erase genetic components of coat color. White must have turned up so commonly in the early years that it was a recognized, if unwanted, factor in the breed. In 1932, the first standard passed by the Kennel Club read, “Red (to include red wheaten), white on the throat and the chest being allowed.” The legacy of those early choices lives on.

Thanks very much to AKC Librarian Barbara Kolk for verifying some of the historical information in this column.

In Part Two, to appear in May, we'll take a look at the genetic underpinnings of white.

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