

The Beauceron

The Beauceron, also known as Berger de Beauce and Bas Rouge, is the largest of the French sheepdogs and was developed solely in France with no foreign crosses. The Beauceron is closely related to the longhaired Briard or Berger de Brie.

The first mention of a dog which matches the Beauceron's description is found in a manuscript dated 1587. In 1809 Abbé Rozier wrote an article on French herding dogs. It was he who first described the differences in type and used the terms Berger de la Brie for long coated dogs and Berger de la Beauce for short coated dogs. The name Beauceron was used for the first time by Pierre Megnin in his 1888 book on war dogs and the first Berger de Beauce was registered with the Societe Central Canine in September 1893. The French Club Les Amis du Beauceron (CAB), was founded in 1922 by Pierre Megnin and he together with Emmanuel Boulet developed the original breed standard for the Beauceron. The CAB has since guided the development of the breed in its native France, always keeping a watchful eye on the preservation of the breed's herding and working ability.

During the early part of the 19th century large flocks of sheep were common and the Beauceron was indispensable for the shepherds of France; two dogs were sufficient to tend to flocks of 200 to 300 head of sheep. Sheep production experienced a sharp decline during the later half of the 19th century and by the second half of the 20th century was only a phantom of its past. With the decline in sheep and advent of corralling them rather than moving them from graze to graze, sheepdogs became for the most part obsolete. In an effort to preserve and save the breed, the French breed club for the Beauceron, Club Les Amis du Beauceron (CAB), promoted the breed in other fields, specifically in the area of protection of home and family. The breed served valiantly during both World Wars as messenger and mine detection dogs and has

experienced a significant increase in popularity post World War II.



Today, the breed is still utilized as a herding dog, working both sheep and cattle, but is also used as a personal protection dog, for tracking, police and military service and Search and Rescue. Looking for a true athlete with a steady disposition, uncanny ability to focus on the task at hand, agility and obedience enthusiasts in Europe and in the United States have successfully turned to the Beauceron as a competition partner.

The Beauceron is a dog of substance, is an active and serious working dog, with exceptional endurance, keen intelligence and obedience. Loyal and strongly devoted to his master, he is also a faithful family companion. Since the Beauceron has a well developed guarding instinct and is naturally distrusting of strangers, he lends himself well as a protector of house and home. His build, bearing, frank and unwavering expression demand respect wherever he goes.

Although easily trainable and obedient, the Beauceron is not a dog for novice owners. These dogs have strong personalities and coupled with a strong need for both physical and mental outlets, this breed more often than not requires an experienced, dedicated and active owner. Under-stimulated dogs become difficult to live with and destructive. The decision of adding a Beauceron to ones household should be a well-contemplated one and although puppies are not readily available it is advisable to remain patient when selecting a breeder and puppy.

Today's Beaucerons physically bear little resemblance to the dogs of the late 19th century. The Beauceron of yesteryear was more petit in its build, with a shorter, hard and close lying outer coat. Next to black-and-rust and harlequins a variety of

coat colors existed, such as reds. Today's standard recognizes only black-and-tan and harlequin as coat colors and the breed has added substance to its build. Although heavier in build today, the breed remains a natural athlete, without bulk or heaviness, moving effortlessly and with a noble carriage.

The French writer Colette was a devotee of the breed and labeled the Beauceron "the country gentleman". She described them as "affectionate, playful, superb with children, absolutely and deeply attached to their masters. But at the same time, there is something mysterious about a Beauceron. They are like some people who don't talk much but have a strong presence. They have a dimension, a depth, I have not found in other dogs." This is the essence of the Beauceron, then and now.