

Inter-variety Breeding in Belgian Shepherd Dogs

The Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI), the Country of Origin and cynological organisations within other countries allow the inter-breeding of the different Belgian Shepherd Dog varieties under special circumstances. Although the FCI does not stipulate the criteria for inter-variety breeding nor does it define the exact nature of “special circumstances”, it does provide some guidance in this regard. It further provides for each country to determine and control its own criteria for such breeding.

Following discussions with several KUSA breeders of the Belgian Shepherd Dog and discussions within the Belgian Shepherd Dog Clubs affiliated to KUSA (Highveld Belgian Shepherd Club and Belgian Shepherd Dog Club of the Western Cape), the HBSDC has been investigating the possibility of bringing inter-variety breeding of Belgian Shepherd Dogs back to South Africa as a result of the shortage of bloodlines of some of these varieties within the country.

From this investigation, it is clear that the breed needs diversity in bloodlines sooner rather than later. There are several factors that make importation of new bloodlines prohibitive such as the current international exchange rates of the South African currency. There are also bloodlines within varieties already in the country that can positively contribute toward this goal making the choice more affordable.

Despite the requirement for such a programme, it is also evident from the investigation that such an exercise will need to be controlled to ensure deviations from the guidelines provided by organisations such as the FCI are not deviated from. These are outlines below:

Appointment of an Approval Panel

An approval panel should be appointed by the committees of the aforementioned clubs. The panel should comprise of two (2) members in good standing with both the Club and KUSA, who have a solid knowledge of the breed.

Such persons should also be Belgian Shepherd Dog breeders with a minimum of five (5) years, but preferable ten (10) or more years, breeding experience.

Should the panel not come to a consensus the club committees reserve the right to appoint two (2) more breeders who meet the requirements and or experienced KUSA All Breed Judges to mediate the matter.

The panel should ideally, but not necessarily, be made up from members and or breeders of the different varieties to ensure diverse representation.

Application for Approval

To ensure that such a programme is properly controlled and does not negatively affect the quality or standard of the breed, nor deviates from the goals and objectives thereof, breeders must be required to submit a letter of motivation to the panel stating the reasons for the proposed breeding of the prospective sire and dam.

The pedigree of both prospective sire and dam, clearly showing the variety of the dogs in their pedigrees.

Any health checks and temperaments test prescribed by KUSA at the time of such proposed mating must also be submitted along with the pedigree and letter of motivation.

Where Groenendael's are to be mated with any other variety, the prospective dog will require a DNA test for the mask gene.

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Permissible Matings

Although the FCI does not provide the criteria for inter-variety breeding of the Belgian Shepherd Dog, it does specify which varieties may be inter-bred. The proposal by the HBSDC aligns with this specification, as do many other countries where inter-variety breeding is practiced.

The four Belgian Shepherd Dog varieties are the Groenendael, Malinois, Laekenois and Tervueren. These varieties may only be inter-bred as follows:

- a) Groenendael to Tervueren
- b) Laekenois to Malinois and
- c) Malinois to Tervueren

No other combinations are allowed for inter-variety breeding.

Puppies resulting from inter-variety matings must be registered as the variety that their characteristics most closely resemble.

Should a previously mentioned puppy be earmarked for breeding, such breeding may only be to a Belgian Shepherd of the same variety as which the puppy is registered, and which is itself not an inter-variety offspring.

When registering an inter-variety puppy, the variety of the sire and dam must be included on the registration certificate and not only the words "Belgian Shepherd".

The above proposal is in alignment with and has been drafted using the guidelines provided by the FCI.