

GUNDOGS

The Magazine for Gundog Enthusiasts

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The Flatcoated Retriever

by The Hon. Mrs
Amelia Jessel

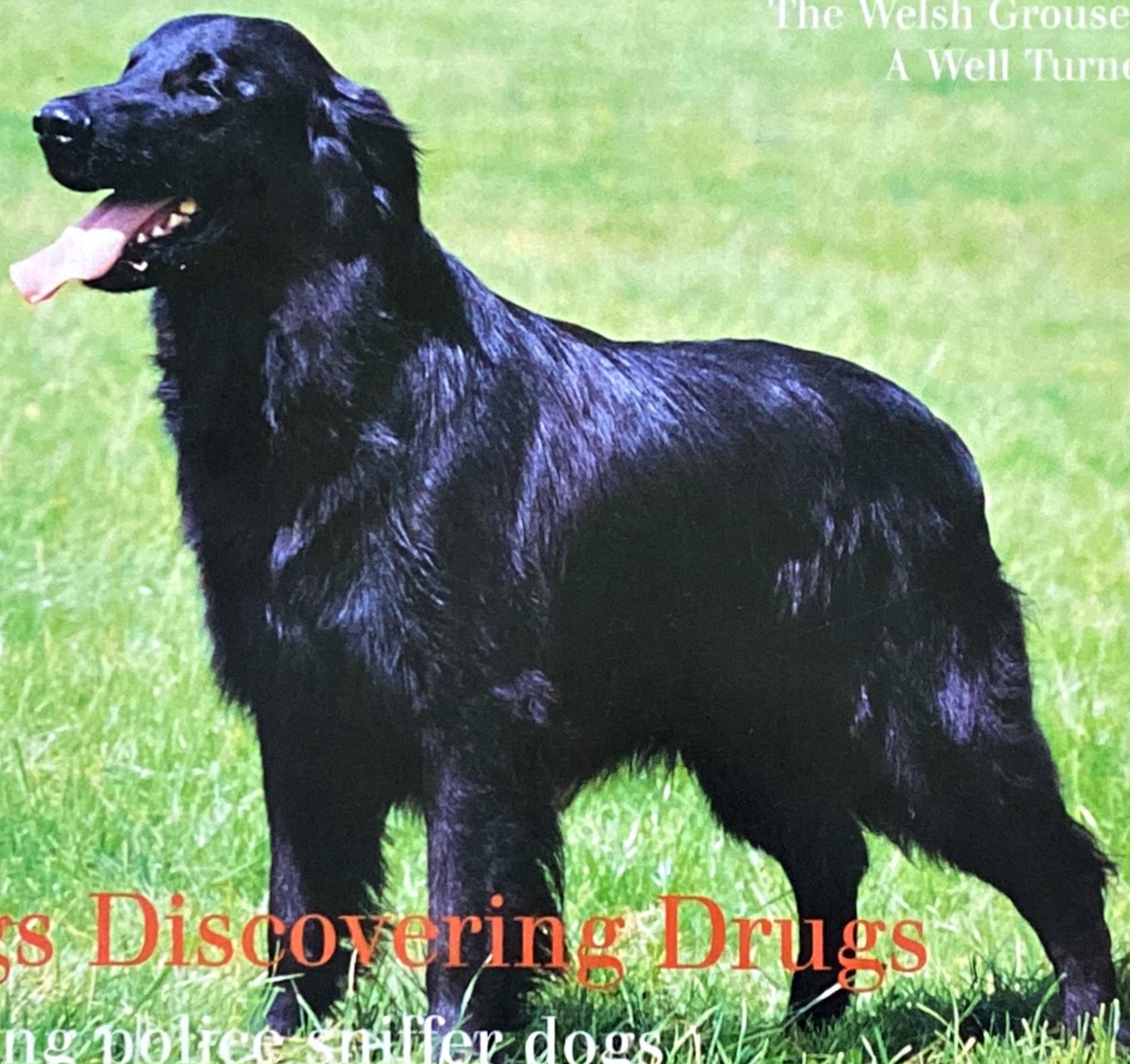
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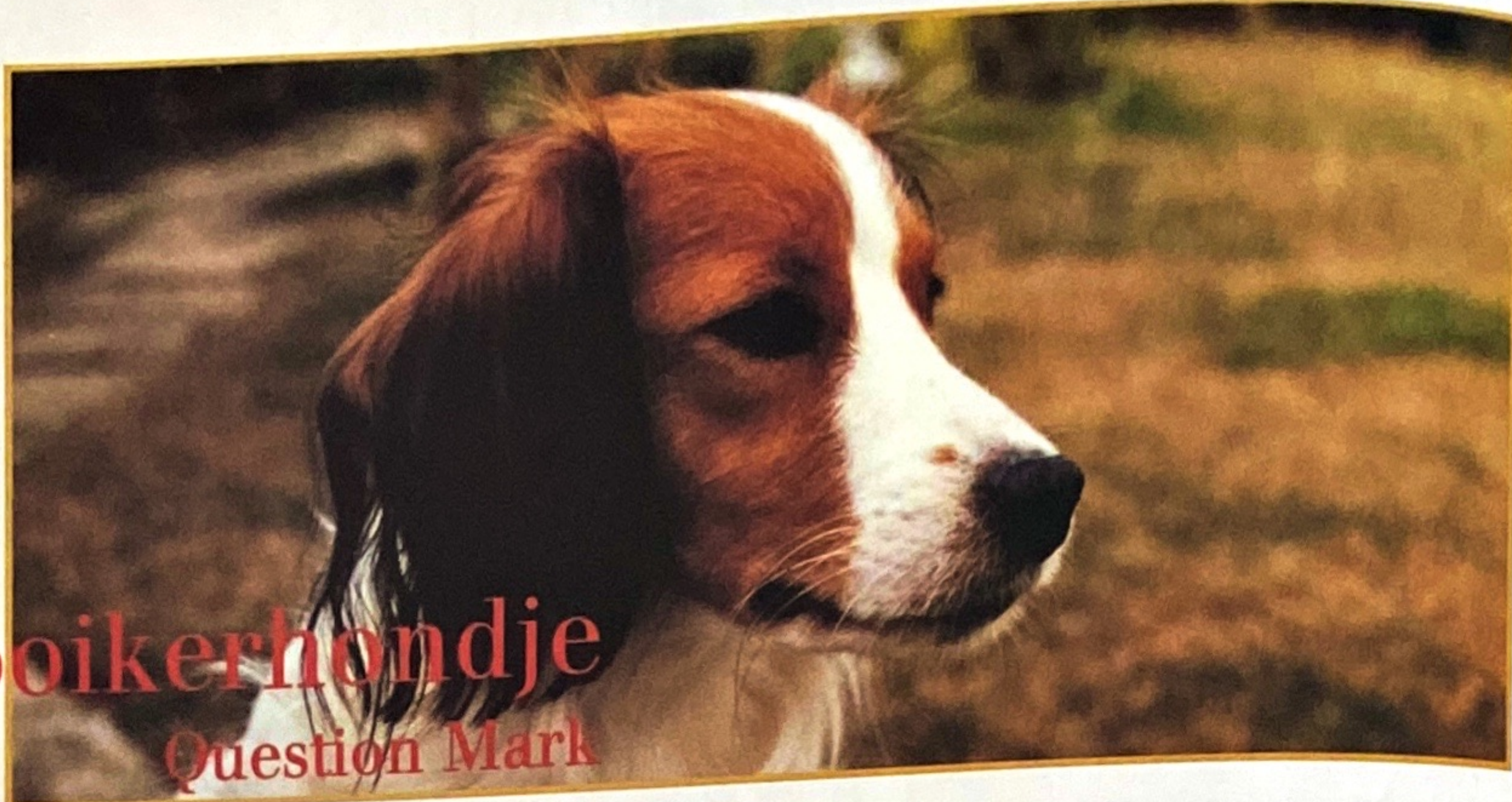
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Decoy Dogs

Right: Intelligent and biddable

Below: A medium sized dog with a waterproof coat.

Article and Photographs courtesy of Sue Singleton



The Kooikerhondje Question Mark

Is it sporting, spaniel or Hunt Point Retriever? The Kooikerhondje (pronounced koy-ker-hond-je) is classified by the Kennel Club as Import Register (Gundog Group) but it is uncertain what sub group they could enter for the purpose of gundog tests and field trials.

Origins Uncertain

This old Dutch breed was very popular during the 17th and 18th century in Holland, although, as with many breeds, the exact origins remain uncertain. Dogs of similar appearance have been portrayed by many notable Dutch artists, including Rembrandt and Vermeer. The Kooikerhondje was used to catch moles, rats and retrieve small birds, a keen and biddable hunter's dog. They were also used as family companions and guard dogs and Dutch history records that it was the warning bark of a Kooikerhondje that saved Prince William of Orange from assassination during his reign in the 16th century. A statue of the Prince and a spaniel type dog can be seen in Delft today.

At Work

The Federation Cynologique Internationale (F.C.I.) have placed the breed into Group 8, section 2 - flushing dogs, and

they are mainly used for duck decoys on the Continent. A decoy is a large tube made up from a series of rings covered in netting and getting progressively smaller, ending with a detachable net where the duck are caught once they have been driven through the tunnel. A series of overlapping screens are positioned on the outside of a curving channel leading to the decoy pool and the Kooikerhondje works in and out of the screens to attract the ducks' attention while the decoyman can remain unseen behind the screens. The ducks are attracted to the flash of red and white of the dog's coat as it darts into and out of sight, either by curiosity or for a natural gathering of numbers to protect against attack, the red colour being associated with a natural predator - the fox. When there

are sufficient duck gathered in the pool, the decoyman can get behind them to drive them down to the holding net. Although such work is limited, there are working Kooikerhondje used in present day decoys in England at wildfowl centres, the ducks being caught for the purpose of ringing and research by ornithologists.

Appearance and Abilities

Standing between 14" to 16", the Kooikerhondje has a medium length waterproof coat, the colour varying from orange to deep chestnut patches on a white background. They have a distinctive white blaze on the face and black tips to the ears.



They are excellent swimmers, will quarter and point and can retrieve small game which raises the question of into what category the Kooikerhondje should fit. Whilst similar in size to the spaniel group, they have working similarities to the Brittany which is classed as an HPR. A few enthusiasts who use their Kooikerhondje on shoots in the company of traditional gundogs describe the breed as a 'lightweight pointing spaniel', while others have taken up agility and obedience, but the majority are to be found alongside the other Import Register breeds in the show ring - including the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, a breed it frequently gets confused with. It is restricted in the show ring to Import classes only and cannot compete at Crufts.

Wide Enough Gene Pool

First registered in the UK in 1988, there were only 60 registrations by the end of 1994, and approximately 100 in the country today. Once they qualify to come off the Import Register and be fully registered, they will be classed as a Rare Breed still under the group of flushing dogs, which do not correspond with any gundog group in this country. There are no hard or fast rules to get a breed removed from the Import Register and each case is considered separately by the Kennel Club once the breed club feel they have a wide enough gene pool to make the breed self sufficient.

Close Links

Owners of these intelligent little dogs are catered for by the Kooikerhondje Club of Great Britain who organise events and Fun Days and close links are kept with Holland where Dutch breeders take an interest to see how the breed is progressing in this country. Hereditary problems of V. Willebrandt's disease, a blood disorder, and slipping patella are being addressed and breeders are importing dogs to improve breeding. In their native Holland, where the dogs tend to be larger and with shorter coats, the breed is being used less for working and becoming predominantly show.

An eager little worker with natural hunting ability, suitable in size and temperament to make a biddable family companion, the Kooikerhondje faces the uncertain question into which direction its working abilities will be channelled or will it suffer the same fate of so many imported breeds and be seen purely in the show ring?



The Toller
Don't knock it 'til you've tried it!

So, you're about to buy another gundog pup. You have decided to branch off from the over-subscribed world of Springers and Labradors. You like the German Shorthaired Pointer but you are unsure if their thin coats would be suited to your sub zero wild fowling jaunts. There are so many breeds to consider that your final decision is not easy. However, before you make your choice, take a close look at 'The Toller'.

The Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, or Toller, originated from the icy eastern coast of Canada where the pursuit of feather and fin has always been a primary occupation. The precise history is rather vague, but it is known that tolling dogs have been used since the mid-19th century throughout the land which surrounds the Gulf of St Lawrence. Some stories relay the tale that a Mr Allen created the breed by pairing a Flatcoated Retriever with a Labrador and later added blood from the Cocker Spaniel and Irish Setter. There is also proof that in 1902 a Mr Patillo used a tolling dog named Reddy which was the result of a union between an English Setter and an Irish Red Setter. Other tales state that small farm Collies often featured in the make-up of the early tolling dogs and there

is a strong resemblance between the Toller and the yellow-eyed Dartmoor Collie.

One aspect remains constant throughout and that is the necessity for a fox-like appearance. Wild fowl often display an uncontrollable curiosity - almost to the point of being aggressive - and have been known to mob a red fox prowling on the shore line. Early duck hunters exploited this tendency by using fox skin lures to entice or 'toll' the wild fowl into range of their nets, hunting bows, and, later, shotguns. Eventually the need for a fox-like dog was realised and the Toller was subsequently created.

Various nations used tolling dogs, although the most notable were certainly France and Canada - not surprising considering that links between these two lands goes back at least 450 years when Jacques Cartier claimed much of Canadian land for France.

The art of using a tolling dog is pretty universal and proceeds something like this. A large flock of fowl is spotted far out on an inland lake; the hunter takes cover behind some natural foliage or purpose-built hide and proceeds to 'play' with his Toller by throwing a small stick along the bank for

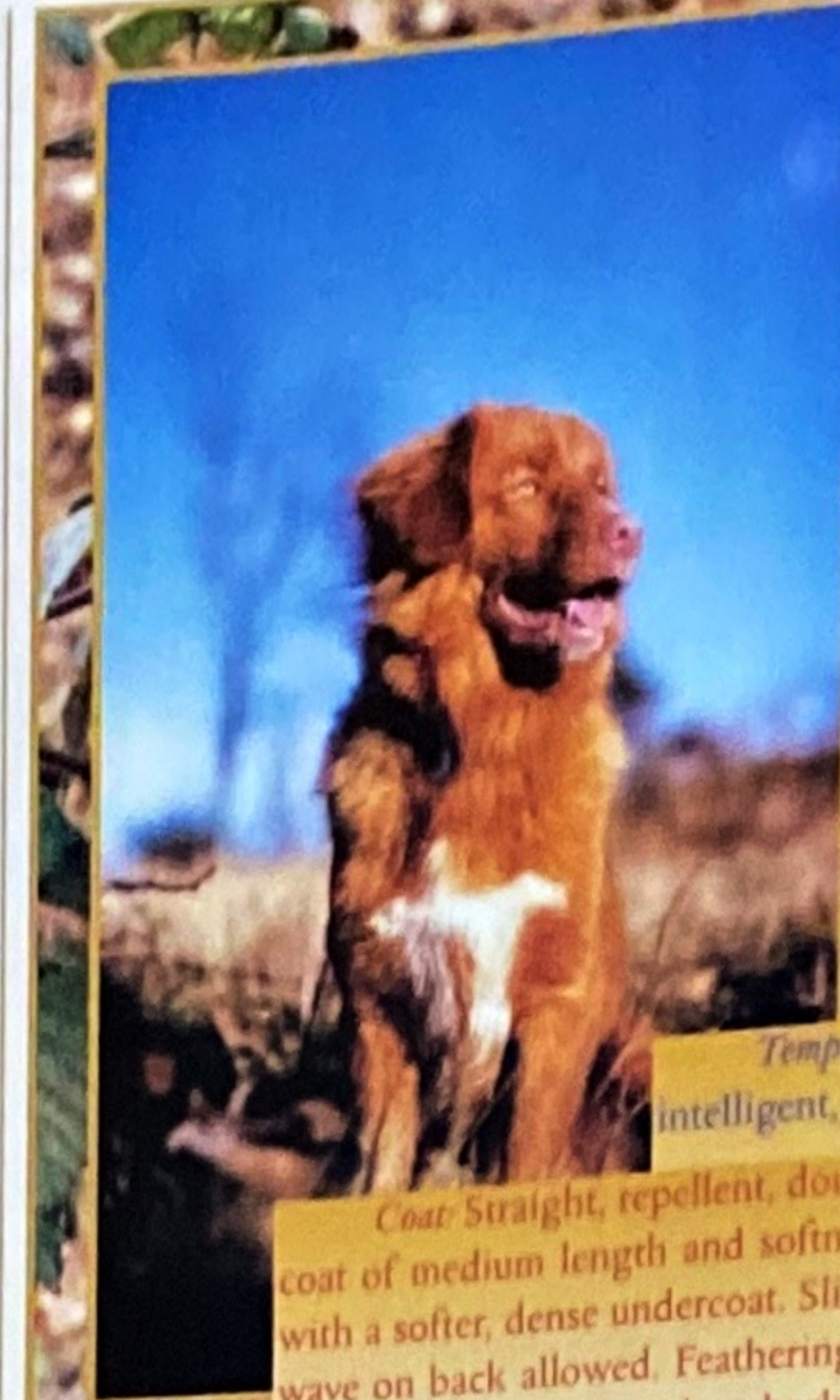
his dog to retrieve; the Toller eagerly returns the stick, awaiting the next retrieve, and the act is repeated until the ducks have noticed the constant bustle on the shore line; greatly upset by the dog's actions, the water fowl flock in to mob the intruder, moving closer until they unwittingly come within range of the concealed duck hunter; shots ring out and with a great clatter the fowl lift, leaving behind a number of dead for the tolling dog to retrieve.

The above gives the reader a glimpse of the early requirements of the Toller, yet over the years this breed has been used very successfully as a conventional gundog, flushing and retrieving a variety of game from snipe to pheasant.

Here in Britain the Toller is still considered a rare breed and its fate as a working dog is very much dependent on the attitude of the rather xenophobic British sportsman. However, there is hope for its continuance as a gundog. John Norris, a keen field sportsman who lives and works at Nacton in Suffolk, has dedicated a great deal of time to breeding and working Tollers and to promoting them as honest workers. Still to be convinced of the Toller's working ability, I accompanied John last season on a cock pheasant shoot and was very impressed by the keen working style displayed by two of his bitches. When joining the beating line it was immediately apparent that their small yet powerful frame (18"-20"/37-51 lbs) was a distinct advantage when powering through bramble and no cover proved too thorny for these tenacious little hunters. This gutsy temperament is very controllable and both dogs dropped nicely to flush, often gazing back at John for the next command. Equally suited to the peg, both bitches were calm and collected, but, at the same time, very attentive, accurately marking the shot game.

More recently I visited John with a friend and a potential puppy owner who was given a demonstration with dummies and cold game on what was probably one of the coldest days of the year. John's bitch Meg, who had been working on the local shoot the previous day, was put through her paces in a variety of lifelike situations. Once again, she found and retrieved from the cruelest of bramble cover with no ill effect and I was reminded of the breed's suitability as a questing dog. For steadiness, the bitch was made to retrieve from various situations while dummies and dead game were flung all around her. Again, she coped admirably.

As for hardiness, at the finale of the demo John tossed a dummy into the icy water of the decoy pond, Meg leaped in,



Interim Breed

Breed: Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever
Group: Gundog

General Appearance: Medium sized, compact, powerful, well muscled. A heavily feathered tail, constantly moving.

Characteristics: Jumps and plays to lure waterfowl into decoy. Retrieves dead and wounded birds. Strong swimmer.

Temperament: Kind, confident, intelligent, easy to train, playful.

Coat: Straight, repellent, double coat of medium length and softness, with a softer, dense undercoat. Slight wave on back allowed. Feathering at throat, behind ears and at back of thighs. Forelegs moderately feathered.

Colour: All shades of red or orange with lighter feathering under tail. White marks are permissible on the tip of tail, feet and chest, or as a blaze. Lack of white not to be penalised.

Size Ideal Height: Dogs 19-20" (48-51cm) Bitches 18-19" (45-48cm)

Feet: Medium size, round, tight. Toes well arched and strongly webbed. Pads thick, blending with coat colour. Dew claws should be removed.

Note: Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.



smashed through the ice and was soon back on shore with a nicely presented retrieve. A quick shake and she was ready for more, so John repeated the exercise and again the bitch obliged faultlessly.

As for the future, I can only reiterate that this largely depends upon the attitude of the shooting fraternity. With such an aesthetic appearance, the Toller has already caught the eye of the show enthusiasts;

ard



Head and Skull: Clean cut skull, slightly wedge shaped, broad, slightly rounded. Occiput not prominent. Cheeks flat. Moderate stop. Muzzle tapers from stop to nose. Nostrils well developed. Nose flesh coloured or black.

Eyes: Medium sized, almond shaped, well set apart. Alert expression. Brown to amber. Eye rims flesh coloured or black.

Ears: Triangular, medium size, set high and well back on skull. Base held very slightly erect; well feathered at back of fold, hair shorter at rounded tips.

Mouth: Jaw strong with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, i.e. upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws. Teeth sound and strong. Softness of mouth essential. Lips tight fitting flesh coloured or black.

Neck: Medium length, strongly muscled, well set on, no indication of throatiness.

Forequarters: Shoulders well laid back, muscular, medium length. Elbows close to body. Forelegs straight and strong. Pasterns strong, slightly sloping.

Body: Deep chested, ribs well sprung, brisket reaches to elbow. Back short, level topline. Loins strong and muscular. Moderate tuck up.

Hindquarters: Well muscled. Stifles well bent, hocks well let down turning neither in nor out.

Gait/Movement: Impression of power, springy, jaunty with good reach of forelegs and strong rear drive; parallel movement fore and aft. Single tracks at speed; head carried almost level with back.

Faults: Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree.

Tail: Set on, slightly sloping towards croup. Broad at base, well feathered, reaching the hock. Carried below level of back at rest; when alert, curves over, not touching back.

Breed Standard by courtesy of the Kennel Club

however, the potential as a useful working breed cannot be denied.

So, if you're looking for an all-round gundog, at home on the fore shore, sitting patiently at his master's peg or bustling

through undergrowth in search of rabbits, then the Toller should seriously be considered. But, don't take my word for it - go and see for yourselves.

Once again, a breed is indebted to its

devotees whose enthusiasm will carry the day and ensure the Toller's success. For more information on the Toller contact John Norris on 01473 659302 or Mrs Babs Harding (Hon. Sec. NSDTR Club) on 01633 400902. Ed. ■