

Article from "To Live in The countryside"

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## **The dog from the Danish Farm Land**

It is energetically barking. Eager, Bright and alert. Extremely intelligent, quick at learning and not very big. The white farmdog with the black, brown or red spots is as much of an inseparable part of the Danish farming land as the thatched roofs, ancient burial mounds, and a tractor pulling a plow with a white tail of seagulls behind it.

Up to about 40-50 years ago, the working people in the farming at almost any farm or ranch would have a usefull and fun partnership with the farmdog. Or the Ratdog, as it was called in the "talk of the town". It was to be found anywhere in the countryside of Denmark, Schlesvig-Holstein and Scania.

But with the termination of lots of smaller farms, a short period of decrease started for the farmdog. From sometime in the 50's the farmdogs had to yield to especially the dachshunds. And towards the end of the 80's the farmdog finally, after thorough preparations by the Danes and the Swedes in cooperation, was promoted to an individual breed under the new name, Danish-Swedish Farmdog. It is now winning back earlier time's grounds and spread, this partly caused by the lavish status as one of our newest breeds.

Lillian Christensen, who is the breed representative for as well herding-, cattle- and farmdogs in the Danish Kennel Club (without a specialty club) and who breeds farmdogs herself, explains the latest years of progress by, that a great part of the new owners knows the dog from their childhood: "Many people has had farmdogs as playpals as kids in the country side, either with their parents or when they were visiting or vacationing at a farm", she explains. "So when they are getting a dog, the choice of a farmdog comes easy to them".

### **Useful**

The farmdog has at all times been working for a living. It is agile and masterly at catching mice and rats in stable and barn on a share-basis with the farm's cats.

It also won't step back from actually diving into a fox's hole and face the fox.

Besides that, it has a great instinct for herding cattle, anyone who has seen a farmdog parttake in getting the cows to and from milking, will confirm this. There is most likely not to many who would genuintly fear a Danish-Swedish farmdog, it's too small for that, but it's a great guarddog anyhow, being that it'll bark instantly if something unusual is going on. And added to that, it's no bigger, that one can live with it inside in one's home. I.e. Christian The X's queen Alexandrine surrounded herself with the farmdogs in the first half of the century in the Royal Suites.

I actually can't think of anything that dog isn't good at, Lillian Christensen states. It's good at obedience-timing and scent tracking. The owner takes a walk in zig-zag across a grass field, and ½ hour later, the dog will follow the scent. In this manner the dog can also search for, and find, a lost object. For this kind of work the police usually uses Lab/retrievers and other larger dogs, she adds.

### **Brave resque dog**

By Svedala, south east of Malmo (Sweden), "Skraallan" resides. It is the only Danish-Swedish farmdog, who has passed the extremely hard test, that certifies it as an official Swedish resque dog.

The dog's owner, Pia Linell tells, that Skraallan is trained to search for distressed people in all possible situations. The demands to a resque dog is first of all for it to be brave and eager to do the job, and to possess a burning desire to accomplish. In short terms - that it cares for it's job.

During the entire carrer Pia Linell and Skraallan has been in sharp training twice a week. Skraallan has accomplished searching for distressed people lost in the woods and in the desert. It has prooved, that it is capable of working right up against fire, panic, noice from machines and 46 shots fired off right up close. Besides that it is trained to search at night, and it always tells, by barking loud, when and if it has a find. Finally it is used to working on top of glowing hot coals, wearing boots made of heat-repelling material. Skraallan is now retired.

## **In Circus**

The farmdog has also during the times showed it's supreme skills in more amusing surroundings. It's irrepressible habit of play and tricks and especially it's level of concentration, makes it the perfect cirkus artist. It has naturally taken part in clown's shows, and in the 1920's Ferdinand and Irene Benneweis, in Cirkus Benneweis (the largest Danish, both stationary AND travelling cirkus), had a dog show, where as many as 5 farmdogs participated, showing a long line of various tricks.

The newer dog sport, agility, is a perfect match for the farmdogs. Here it celebrates triumphs. Agility means something to the extend of speed and presence of mind in english, and is a obstacle race for dogs. The dogs have to run thru a course, where the obsticals are set up in various orders from time to time, so they won't get to know the route too well, because it has to be hard. AND it has to be done as fast as possible. The dogs have to jump over a rod, pass over a so-called A-jump, where the obstacle seen from the side is A-shaped, and they have to run thru a tunnel, made of a fabric "bag", and they have to do slalom and jump on top of a table and lay down still, before they can move on. And THEN they have to walk on a balance rod, along the top of a seesaw while it's moving, and they have to find their way thru a car tire.

## **The dog of The Vikings**

Much insinuates that the farmdog was one of the favorite dogs of The Vikings. There is a living isolated population of Danish-Swedish farmdogs on a location in The Normandie, which is the particular area in France, where most of the Danish vikings settled and took land. So they brought the dog from home. Besides, the archaeologists find from time to time bones from small dogs in their excavations from the Viking aera. They are almost positively from farmdogs.

All in all there has been a confounded confusion in regards to the names the farmdog has had. Since the farmdogs still wasn't a recognized breed, many preferred to call it a Smooth Haired Terrier, Danish Terrier or even Fuchsterrier or Fox Terrier....cause it all sounded better than Rat Dog. And when the Swedes tried to get the dog registered as an individual breed by the name, Scanian Country Terrier, the confusion was total. The need to map out the population of the farmdogs and to register them as an individual breed semt still more and more required.

## **The certification**

In 1985 The Danish Kennel Club's committee for national and forgotten breeds put out a "wanted" notice for small white and spotted dogs, matching a temporary description. They didn't really have any clear idea as to how many of the kind, that could still be around, but the result was overwhelming. The owners of several hundeds of dogs responded. After this they went thru a period of one and a half year of series of "certifications" thru-out the entire country, at locations the dogs were called to. All around in Gyms and small town city halls, the dogs were inspected and evaluated, and the end of it became that they were left with 130 approved dogs, and 23 pups of approved parents. All in all 153 farmdogs with shining new pedigrees. At the same time The Danes and The Swedes agreed to, that it more so was a type of the Pinchers, rather than a Terrier. This was how the name "Danish-Swedish Farmdog" was reached, and any and all talk about terriers died down from then on. From the time they started to register and issue pedigrees to the Danish-Swedish farmdogs, and up till today, close to 2000 dogs have been registered. Around the country of Denmark there still is quite a few farmdogs, which don't have pedigrees, even though they very easily could get one. The Farmdogs are a lifestrong tribe and also the single individuals has proved to be particulary resistant and tough. An age of 15-16 years is not uncommon for a Danish-Swedish farmdog, and as an exception to the rule of other breeds, there are no hereditary diseases, that are specific for the breed. In this way friends of the Danish-Swedish farmdog can face the future with comfort. The Farmdog is solidly planted in the picture of the Danish landscape.