



# **The AKC Takeover of Rare Breeds**

**by Robert Jay Russell, Ph.D. and Laurie Spalding**

Copyright ©Robert Jay Russell, Ph.D. and Laurie Spalding

***The AKC-FSS Program threatens to take over the registration business***

***that is traditionally the role of a rare breed Parent Club!***

**A Controversial Report**

The authors of the present article are officers of the Coton de Tulear Club of America, the CTCA. We are the world's oldest Coton club and have maintained an



accurate and detailed registry of this rare pure breed for nearly a quarter century. Neither we, our club, nor most people in the Coton community want to see our breed "go AKC." We are, unfortunately, engaged in a takeover battle that other rare pure breeds have waged before us.

**photo:** Dorothea WW of Alika Cotons, an adult Tri-color Coton de Tulear. For information about the breed, go to: **The Coton de Tulear Club of America's website.**

**THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB is America's largest all-breed registration company. The first mating records published by the AKC date from 1887. Today, the AKC's registry business registers 1.5 million dogs annually for more than \$35 million year. The corporation registers 140 dog breeds called "AKC recognized." Many more pure breeds -- perhaps as many as 400 non-AKC breeds -- exist that are not recognized by the AKC. These "non-recognized" breeds are called "rare breeds."**

In AKC lingo, the phrase "not recognized" means only one thing: "the AKC does not register dogs of this breed in its main registration system." The AKC has long wanted an orderly system to incorporate rare breeds into this registry. In recent years, attempts by the AKC to take over some rare breeds has resulted in bitter, costly, and long-standing battles. Many rare breed aficionados consider recognition of their breed by the AKC a very bad thing.

Some rare breed clubs have refused to merely hand over

their registries to the AKC and have kept their breeds out of the AKC. In turn, the AKC has welcomed such breeds when a few dissidents from the larger rare breed club, hoping to gain fame in the larger arena, bring a handful of dogs to the AKC and write a new standard. One such bitter takeover of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel is on-going. Thousands of Cavalier owners kept their dogs out of the AKC while a dozen people took their Cavs to the AKC, founded a new club, and wrote a new standard. The rare breed Cavalier club continued to thrive and to resist the takeover by the AKC in 1997.

Other rare breed clubs have fared similarly. The Australian Shepherd Club of America (ASCA) had registered 60,000 dogs and built a club of more than 4,000 members when the AKC tried to take over its lucrative registry. In 1985, by a vote of 2-to-1, the ASCA voted against AKC recognition for its breed. Yet in 1991, a mystery Australian Shepherd club appeared out of nowhere...

"AKC told the 4,000 members of the old club that they could either go along with the move by merging with the 133 members of the new club, or have the new organization become the breed's top dog in the eyes of the AKC. That would give the newcomers exclusive authority to draft show-dog standards... [The ASCA was] 'effectively annexed'...Ethel Conrad, president of the United States Border Collie Club, prefers another interpretation. 'The AKC raped the Aussie,' she says."

--Larry Shook, *"The Puppy Report: How to Select a Healthy, Happy Dog,"* Ballantine Books, New York, NY, 1992, page 42.

After gaining a significant number of registrations from the former ASCA Parent club, the AKC then announced that it will close the AKC Australian Shepherd registry to all future applications this year, further forcing the remaining ASCA members to choose either AKC paperwork or forever be banned from the AKC. The AKC practice of closing an AKC breed registry restricts a breed's gene pool, even preventing importations of stock from the breed's country of origin -- an extremely harmful practice.

Presently, the AKC is accepting the paperwork of 136 dissident Jack Russell Terrier fanciers over the protestations of the 9,000-member Jack Russell Terrier Club. This takeover is, like most of them, bitter.

## **A New Way to Take Over the Breed**

**RECOGNIZING THAT THESE BITTER, decidedly undemocratic takeover bids were harming the AKC's reputation and sapping its legal resources, a new, more subtle way to incorporate rare breeds even against the wishes of the rare breed's parent club was instituted by the AKC in 1995.(Click here to view a list of AKC-FSS Rare Breeds.)**

**The AKC claims that inclusion in the AKC-FSS program means "there must be some parent club that is organizing and working on having the breed recognized by the AKC." Yet, neither the Middle Asian Owtcharka, the Mi-Ki, or the Treeing Tennessee Brindle are listed by the AKC as having a representative parent club. Further, no one in the Coton de Tulear community of clubs claims they**

**sought AKC recognition for the breed as early as June 7th, 1996, when the Coton was incorporated by the AKC into its FSS program.**

**An AKC spokesperson suggests that a breed will remain "unrecognized" in the FSS registry database for about 2-3 years, with another 2-3 years in the AKC Miscellaneous Class before full AKC Recognition is granted. If so, then within the next half-dozen years, the AKC stands to fully take over more than two dozen rare breeds. That is a whopping 20% or more increase in the megacorporation's potential size, influence, and power in just a few years. If the AKC's FSS registry system becomes widely accepted, rare breed registries would largely disappear and their revenues would fall to the AKC. If the AKC's rare breed registry is successful, dog breeds in the US would fall into two categories: "AKC recognized breeds" and "AKC-FSS breeds."**

## **What is a Registry? Why Care?**

**OVER THE YEARS, many people inquiring about Cotons have said to us, "I just want a pet. I don't care about papers." We think they should. At its best, a registry is supposed to confirm that a particular dog is a member of the breed, and that it has a known set of ancestors. This is the information you obtain for your registration fee. An accurate pedigree is the *sine qua non* of a registry. Usually a three-generation pedigree is considered the minimum standard for a pedigree, albeit newly imported dogs from a country like Madagascar may**

**not have much depth to their native records. In such cases, people knowledgeable about the country of origin and the breed, and singularly concerned about the breed must make decisions about which native dogs should qualify for the registry. This is the sort of "custom registration work" that the AKC has never provided and cannot provide in the future.**

**A pedigree allows a breeder to determine a pup's degree of inbreeding. With additional information about each dog in the pedigree, a breeder or buyer can assess the probable health of a pup, and its probable genetic contribution to the next generation. An accurate registry is an essential tool for a breeder, it is the *raison d'etre* for a breed club, and it is a critical reassurance for a dog owner. It is, in fact, one of the only justifications for spending lots of dollars to obtain a purebred dog.**

## **Is the AKC-FSS a Registry?**

**THE AKC STATES EMPHATICALLY that the FSS is not a registry nor a registration service. Instead, AKC Officials call the FSS a "Foundation Stock Service" (the first use of that term in the dog fancy) which they claim is "nothing more than a record keeping system." As one official told us, "we [AKC] are maintaining the records for a rare breed club that may not want to do that. The AKC Registry," she continued, "is for AKC Recognized breeds. FSS breeds are not recognized by the AKC."**

**Yet, on close inspection, the differences between the**

**real AKC Registry and the AKC-FSS non-registry seem inconsequential! (Click here to view a comparison.)**

**Click here to go to PART 2.**



General Information

---

**Return to GENERAL INFO | Return to ARTICLES | TOP OF PAGE**