



The AKC Takeover of Rare Breeds

(Continued from Part 1)

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

Only As Good as the Weakest Link

Any registry is only as good as the paperwork it accepts to establish a dog within its own registry. The CTCA has always been very strict about what sorts of paperwork it will accept for the CTCA Registry. Naturally, we will accept Pet and Show puppies whose breedable quality (Show) parents hold CTCA Registrations and Pedigrees. We also accept Cotons who hold FCI -- Federation Cynologique Internationale -- pedigrees. And, of course, we accept Malagasy paperwork, although such paperwork often requires many confirming documents from the country of origin.

There are a half-dozen or more registry companies or clubs in the United States that will produce official-looking

pedigrees and registrations for a Coton de Tulear or any other rare breed. Many registry services require no confirming paperwork before issuing a pedigree. The CTCA has never accepted papers from any of these registries, including papers produced by the "FIC" (Federation of International Canines, not to be confused with the "FCI"). The FIC is the largest all-breed registration service in the United States (note: the AKC and UKC are two registry corporations that do not technically register all pure breeds).

A Conversation with the FIC

On July 2nd, Laurie Spalding (author), posing as someone who wanted to register a Coton without papers, called the Federation of International Canines (FIC) at their Alabama Headquarters. We transcribed the following conversation:

Laurie: "I have a puppy with no papers from Europe. I would like to register it."

FIC: "How old is the puppy?"

Laurie: "Six months."

FIC: "What kind of puppy is it?"

Laurie: "A Coton de Tulear."

FIC: "Does it have any previous registration?"

Laurie: "No, my sister brought it back from Europe with her."

FIC: "And it has no papers from the breeder?"

Laurie: "No, the breeder just told her it was a Coton."

FIC: "Well, we can register it, but for breeding purposes, it will have no pedigree."

Laurie: "But, how many people ask to see the pedigree anyhow?"

FIC: "Oh, almost all of them. I can send you the registration papers now, but your best bet would be to have your sister contact the breeder and ask them to send you a pedigree of the dog. It doesn't have to be verified or anything, just have her write down what the pedigree is. Then we can issue a pedigree as well as a registration."

Laurie: "Okay, then I'll ask my sister to check and see if she can find out anything. How much will this cost?"

FIC: "Twenty-five dollars."

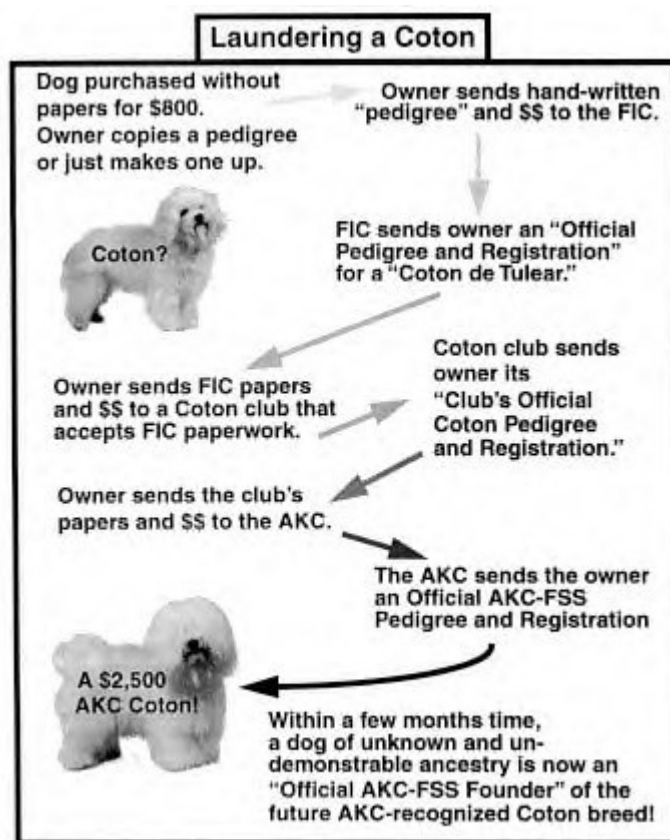
Laurie: "Thank you."

Because the FIC will register a dog as a Coton without confirming paperwork, and will even issue an official-looking pedigree on the owner's word alone, our club's registry has never accepted dogs who hold only FIC papers. It follows that our breed parent club, the CTCA, cannot accept registrations produced by other clubs or registry bodies that do accept FIC registrations.

Like the CTCA, the AKC-FSS does not accept papers produced by the FIC either. But, on July 1st, an AKC

spokesperson told us that the AKC-FSS does accept registrations from a recent Coton de Tulear show club that does use FIC pedigrees. Hence, at its base, the new AKC-FSS registry may contain dogs who are claimed to be Cotons on the basis of paperwork which requires no verifiable documentation.

Is this just a minor point? You be the judge. Consider a scenario for "laundering" a rare breed diagrammed here...



More Questions than Answers About the AKC-FSS

AKC-FSS registration of the Coton de Tulear began June 7, 1996. As of July 1st, 1997, the AKC-FSS Coton de Tulear database had 15 dogs in it. According to the AKC, only four of those dogs have complete, three-generation pedigrees--a

remarkable situation. The Coton de Tulear breed has been in North America since 1974. According to the FCI it has been in Europe since 1977 and now there are more than 14,500 Cotons on the European Continent. The CTCA has almost 600 Cotons in its registry with complete three-generation pedigrees. Why, then, do eleven of the 15 AKC-FSS dogs have such sketchy backgrounds?

According to an AKC spokesman, Cotons that are now called "Founding Stock" will become the basis for the AKC's Official Coton registry "some years from now." And, when the breed is recognized by the AKC, all those founding dogs who have incomplete or absent pedigrees will be "dropped from the AKC registry." It is important to note that the great grandchildren of these unpedigreed dogs will be considered full-blooded AKC Cotons, while their parent's, grandparents, and great-grandparents will be summarily removed from public view. This appears to be a blatant attempt to conceal the flawed base of the AKC registry; we do not know what other explanation could hold for this action.

In our opinion, the AKC-FSS registry is a tree whose roots are fatally flawed. It is remarkable how a registry system, designed by a corporation in this business for a century, could be so badly designed and so easily corrupted. The AKC-FSS gives rare breed clubs more reasons than ever to reject takeover bids by the AKC and to continue to maintain and improve their own registries.

Breeds Whose Autonomy is Threatened

At present, the AKC stands poised to take over nearly three dozen rare breeds. For some few rare breed aficionados, admittance to the AKC is "going bigtime." For most other fanciers, AKC recognition is a serious threat to the integrity and autonomy of the breed's registry, a serious threat to the breed's genetic health, an invitation to puppy mill the breed (produce huge quantities of AKC-papered dogs for the pet trade marketplace), and an effective end to a rare breed club's management of their breed.

If a rare breed "goes AKC-FSS," then several things will likely occur: (1) the breed will be split into two or more non-interbreeding populations, and; (2) the appearance of AKC-papered rare breeds in pet shops and animal shelters will soon follow. This is one of the saddest events to befall our own breed in almost a quarter of a century outside its native land.

Even with the unwanted advances of the AKC, rare breed parent clubs can maintain their own registries intact, rigorous, and separate from the AKC-FSS and the future AKC registry. Then as now, educated buyers will seek out rare breeds. Quality and integrity win out when coupled with determination. These considerations are merely a sign of the current times in the dog fancy, where "breed takeovers," unreliable pedigrees, and genetic ruination are seemingly synonymous with the AKC's recognition of a breed.

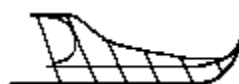
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I. S. A. Note: The Coton de Tulear may not be an historic sleddog breed, but this article describes a

danger that is real and present for ANY minority or rare breed! The Chinook, certainly, is at risk at this very moment, and who knows when AKC may feel ready for a "second wave" of takeovers that could conceivably include the Seppala Siberian Sleddog? Surely by now there should be no doubt that when a working breed enters the one-size-fits-all showdog system of the big national all-breed kennel clubs, it's the beginning of the end!

This article first appeared in the Coton de Tulear Club of America's *Coton de Tulear News*, Summer, 1997. Please direct comments about this article to: cotonnews@aol.com.

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