

= American Water Spaniel =

The American Water Spaniel , (often abbreviated to AWS) , is a breed of spaniel which is one of a small number of breeds originating in the United States . Developed in the state of Wisconsin during the 19th century from a number of other breeds , including the Irish and English Water Spaniels . The breed was saved by Dr. Fred J. Pfeifer , who set up the breed club and standard , and whose work led to recognition for the breed by the United Kennel Club , and later , the American Kennel Club . While they are the state dog of Wisconsin , they remain a rare breed .

They are medium @-@ sized dog , and have a double layered coat , which comes in a variety of brown related shades . A versatile hunting dog , they are also suitable for apartment life due to work by breeders to develop a breed with an even temperament . The AWS may have been involved in the development of the Boykin Spaniel .

= = History = =

Developed in the United States , the American Water Spaniel is the Wisconsin state dog . The breed originated in the areas along the Fox River and its tributary the Wolf River during the early 19th century . Hunters needed a dog that could work on both land and water , a versatile hunter skilled at bringing in a variety of game . Hunters also wanted a hunting dog compact enough to be transported in a small skiff , one that was able to withstand Wisconsin 's cold water temperatures . Breeds involved in the creation of the American Water Spaniel are thought to have included the English Water Spaniel , Irish Water Spaniel , Curly Coated Retriever , native Indian Dogs , the Poodle , and either the Sussex Spaniel or another type of field spaniel .

This little brown dog created was known at the time as the American Brown Spaniel , and weighed around 40 pounds (18 kg) . It had a thick curly coat that protected it from the cold temperatures of the water and winter . It was used to hunt waterfowl , Ruffed Grouse , Greater Prairie Chicken and a variety of fur ? bearing animals .

Over the years the numbers of the breed began to dwindle due both to a reduction in the duck population through those valley areas , and because of a switch in hunting ? from a means to gather food for survival to that of recreation . Additionally , following World War II , new types of dogs became available in Wisconsin such as setters , pointers and other spaniels , allowing additional specialization in hunting .

Dr. Fred J. Pfeifer , from New London , Wisconsin , set up Wolf River Kennels in order to save the breed . Numbers held by the kennel fluctuated but at times went up to 132 dogs . He advertised the dogs widely across the country , selling male dogs for \$ 25 and females dogs for \$ 20 . Part of a sales pitch that Pfeifer mailed to prospective dog owners read , " The American Brown Spaniel is distinctively an American production . Hunters have known this type for years and it was through their efforts that this dog was propagated For years we have bred only selective stock , breeding for gameness , stability , courage , intelligence , and beauty . They are dogs to admire and trust under all conditions whether in the home circle or in the field with the outdoor man . "

Due to Pfeifer 's work , the breed was recognized by the United Kennel Club (UKC) as the American Water Spaniel in 1920 , and by the Field Dog Stud Book in 1938 . Dr. Pfeifer 's own dog , named " Curly Pfeifer " was the first American Water Spaniel to be registered with UKC . John Scofield of Missouri and Thomas Brogdan of Rush Lake , Wisconsin worked together with the American Water Spaniel Club (AWSC) , gaining the breed recognition with the American Kennel Club (AKC) in 1940 . Prior to recognition by the AKC , the breed had not been shown in the show ring before .

The breed has links to the Boykin Spaniel , and is thought to have been the main breed used to develop the Boykin . The differences between the Boykin and the AWS are negligible with some dog historians suggesting that the original Boykin , called " Dumpy " , who was found on the streets of Spartanburg , South Carolina , was actually an American Water Spaniel who had been misplaced in transit . However the breed clubs for the Boykin do not agree with this account .

The breed was made the state dog of Wisconsin in 1985 . The American Water Spaniel remains a

rare breed . During 1998 only 233 puppies were registered with the AKC , with an estimated 3 @, @ 000 dogs in existence mostly around the Midwestern United States , in particular in Wisconsin , Minnesota and Michigan . In 2010 , the breed was ranked 143rd most popular breed in the United States , out of 167 breeds . This is a decrease since 2000 , when the breed was ranked 125th . The dogs are not classified specifically as either retrievers or as spaniels and so may not compete in AKC field trials , but may compete in AKC hunt tests (spaniel and retriever tests) and retriever hunting tests sponsored by the AWSC , the breed club in the United States . The American Water Spaniel Field Association was set up in 1993 by breed enthusiasts supporting AKC Spaniel classification and looking to provide field training opportunities to owners of the breed . In a vote held of members of the AWSC in 1999 , they chose to keep the breed unclassified .

= = Appearance = =

The limited popularity of the American Water Spaniel restricted development , resulting in the breed being relatively unchanged since its origins in the 19th century . They are a medium @-@ sized dog , with a curly liver , brown , or chocolate colored coat . The average height at the withers for the breed is 15 ? 18 inches (38 ? 46 cm) , and their weight around 25 ? 45 pounds (11 ? 20 kg) . They have similar features to the Irish Water Spaniel , but the Irish breed is larger at between 21 ? 24 inches (53 ? 61 cm) and weighing 55 ? 65 pounds (25 ? 29 kg) . The coat of the American Water Spaniel can fall in two different patterns , either tightly curled or in the " marcel pattern " where the fur falls in waves . Working and show lines have not diverged as with some other breeds of spaniel , and both appear the same , with show dogs of this breed being rare .

The coat has a coarse outside layer which keeps water away and protects the dog from foliage such as briars . The inside layer provides insulation to keep the dog warm . The coat has an oily feel to it , which gives off a " doggy smell " . The breed standard specifies color of the eyes should harmonize with the color of the coat , and should never be yellow . The skull is broad , and carries long , wide ears . The tail is not typically docked .

= = Temperament = =

In the field , the AWS is less exuberant than the English Springer Spaniel , but it is as skilled in retrieval as Labrador or Golden Retriever . It is versatile regardless of the type of terrain , and in the water it is not the fastest swimmer but has a high level of endurance . The breed is also good at agility and flyball , with the first of the breed receiving a flyball championship title in 1993 .

Members of the breed enjoy being the center of attention , and can be quite vocal at times . It is a one family dog , and will often bond with one particular individual . For many years the breed was " pack bred " , where they were allowed to live in a group . Since these times , breeders have been working to breed even tempered dogs that are suitable for both hunting and family life .

The AWS has a mind of its own at times and reaches peak performance with the owner who is dedicated to teaching the dog just what is expected of it . The breed takes well to training , and especially excels at training that offers some variety rather than routine training drills . However , members of the breed can may have issues with food possessiveness . They can be stubborn , and mentally are slow to mature from puppyhood . Some lines of the breed still retain dominant and aggressive temperaments ; other than these lines , the AWS gets on well with children and enjoys playing with them . Even though they were originally bred to hunt , due to their size , they are suitable for apartment living as long as they receive enough exercise .

= = Health = =

Pack breeding early in its development led to a level of genetic variation , so the hereditary conditions of more popular breeds are not common in the AWS . The breed however is known to suffer from eye issues including cataracts and progressive retinal atrophy . Inheritance is suspected in both conditions , with the average age of cataract onset at under one year old .

Additional concerns are hypothyroidism , allergies , epilepsy , diabetes and glandular disorders which may cause baldness . The hair loss occurs at around six months of age , affecting the neck , thighs and tail ; however the frequency has been reduced through work conducted by the breed clubs . Hip dysplasia is seen in around 8 @. @ 3 % of the breed , according to surveys conducted by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals over a twenty five @- @ year period between 1974 and 1999 . This was one of the lower results of the sporting breeds , with Greyhounds coming lowest with 3 @. @ 4 % , and the related Boykin Spaniel coming in second highest at 47 % . There was no evidence of elbow dysplasia found . The breed has an average life span of 10 ? 13 years .