

WHY THE MINI IS DIFFERENT ...

- 1) Miniature Bull Terriers have a different heritage - a distinctly different history.**
- 2) Miniature Bull Terriers had a different function.**
- 3) Miniature Bull Terriers have a different genetic make-up.**

EVIDENCE PRESENTED ...

The Show Record

Miniature Bull Terriers may have emerged from a common gene pool to the Standard Bull Terrier but this gene pool (from 1820 to 1890) is shared by Staffordshire Bull Terriers (along with Boston Bull Terriers, American Pit Bull Terriers and American Staffordshire Bull Terriers). A study of the Crufts Dog Show catalogues from 1887 to 1948 reveals interesting evidence of how Miniature Bull Terriers deviate from the other so-called 'bully breeds'. From 1887 to 1900, there were three categories of classes of Bull Terriers (not Toy) of 'Over 30lbs', 'Under 30lbs' and 'Any weight'. The vast majority of entries were in the first and the third categories. For example, in 1898, there were 12 entries in 'Over 30 lbs', 43 entries in 'Any weight' and only 3 entries in 'Under 30 lbs'. That year (1898), was the first year that the Toy Bull Terriers were shown separately (revealingly labelled as 'Terriers – Toy Bull') and their weight classes of 'Not exceeding 7lbs' and '7 to 10lbs' clearly distinguish them from what would become Miniature Bull Terriers. Although the weight category of 'Under 30lbs' existed, from 1901 to 1918 when the Miniature Bull Terrier was removed from the Kennel Club Breed Register, there was only a single entry in any class 'Bull Terriers - Under 30lbs' which occurred in 1910. This was not the case with the larger Bull Terriers which reached a high of 77 entries in Crufts, 1916, under judge, Mr Adair Dighton. These show records clearly illustrate that the Standard Bull Terrier was the showman in the ring and the Miniature Bull Terrier was not represented in the ring significantly for a good 50 years until 1948 when they were listed for the first time in a Crufts catalogue as the breed 'Miniature Bull Terrier'. (Although the Kennel Club had registered the breed again in 1939, the Second World War postponed Crufts Dog Shows until 1948 when 11 Miniature Bull Terrier entries launched the breed in the show ring).

The Working History

While there is some debate as to the heritage of the Bull Terrier as a fighting dog or fashion statement for the emerging elite of the late nineteenth century, the heritage of the Miniature Bull Terrier is clearly documented as one of a functional working terrier. When the breed was deregistered in 1918, there were many breeders who continued working with these small Bull Terriers in the countryside using them for sporting purposes, hunting and for going to ground. This is well-documented by writers of the period such as Darley Matheson, Pierce o'Conor and Captain Jocelyn Lucas. Miniature Bull Terriers were highly valued in cross-breeding to Hunt Terriers especially Sealyham Terriers to add strength of jaw and courage and determination of spirit. While the Standard Bull Terrier owned the show ring, the Miniature Bull Terrier was the landowners' gutsy, chosen companion for working the land.

The Genes

The Miniature Bull Terrier was genetically distinct from the Standard Bull Terrier from the late 19th Century until the beginning of the interbreeding programme many decades later. In fact, a study of genetic diversity in different dog breeds (Analysis of Genetic Variation in 28 Dog Breed Populations With 100 Microsatellite Markers by D. N. IRION, A. L. SCHAFFER, T. R. FAMULA, M. L. EGGLESTON, S. S. HUGHES, AND N. C. PEDERSEN published in *Journal of Heredity* 2003:94(1):81–87) supports this view. Among the 28 dog breeds, the Terriers were represented by both the Bull Terrier and the Miniature Bull Terrier, providing an opportunity to compare their genetic make-up. The scientists concluded – quote - *“As one would expect, heterozygosity (HB) and Hardy–Weinberg equilibrium tended to decrease as population size decreased and as length of time in a registry increased. Counterintuitive to this was the finding that the miniature bull terrier had a 22.5% higher HB value than the bull terrier. The miniature bull terrier originated from the bull terrier in the late 19th century and has a population size one tenth that of the bull terrier. In this case, it may indicate that outcrossing occurred in the miniature bull terrier or that the bull terrier experienced a genetic bottleneck since the two breeds diverged.”*- unquote. Since interbreeding has occurred since the re-registering of the Miniature Bull Terrier in 1939, it suggests that this increased genetic variation in Miniatures compared to Standards originated much earlier. I would suggest that this occurred from 1895, as it is a well-known fact that the lack of genetic diversity in the Bull Terrier has origins in the banning of ear-cropping at this time and the pursuit of erect ears achieved in the early 1900s. The absence of Primary Lens Luxation in the Bull Terrier population and its prevalence (nearly 65% of DNA-tested Miniature Bull Terriers as of May 2011, carry this aberrant gene) in the Miniature Bull Terrier population is further evidence of the genetic distinction between the two breeds.

The Classification of the Bull Terrier Breeds

The Bull Terrier was shown for the first time in 1862 in Birmingham in England. Twenty five years later, in 1887, the Bull Terrier Club was formed which represented dogs that would, in the future decades, separate into Bull Terriers, Miniature Bull Terriers and Staffordshire Bull terriers in the U.K. This happened when the Staffordshire Bull Terrier was recognised by the Kennel Club as a separate breed in 1935 and the Miniature Bull Terrier in 1939. This is still the situation in the U.K. In the United States, the American Kennel Club recognised the Bull Terrier as a breed in 1885 with the Miniature Bull Terrier (added alphabetically under 'M') as recently as 1991. The Canadian Kennel Club also recognises these as two distinct breeds. Until 2008, the FCI listed the Bull Terrier as breed number 77 with the Miniature Bull Terrier listed as a separate breed under number 417. I believe the reclassification to numbers 11A and 11B was an opportunistic move by the proposers to legitimise the unnecessary practice of interbreeding to improve the physical appearance of the Miniature Bull Terrier to more closely resemble its larger cousin. Interbreeding did little to reduce the occurrence of Primary Lens Luxation (supposedly the justification for the cross-breeding) it only threatened the very nature of the Miniature Bull Terrier with Miniatures and Standards currently indistinguishable in many countries which have used widespread interbreeding. Despite this general over-use of interbreeding, particularly in recent years, there are breeders in all parts of the world that can still trace their lines back to the original working Miniature Bull Terriers and it is these supporters of the breed who have always known, and who witness daily, the uniqueness and distinction of the Miniature Bull Terrier. It is not a “runty Bull Terrier” but a different breed with a different history, a different heritage, a different function and a different genetic make-up.

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