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Jörg Krämer

Great Pyrenees

From the Pyrenees to the Ruhr Valley

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Great Pyrenees

From the Pyrenees to the Ruhr Valley

A guidebook by Jörg Krämer

Cover picture: Bullwei from Rainbow Mountain

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Pyrenean mountain dog in the wild

Foreword

This book is written to be helpful to all people who, like me, have a soft spot for unusual but still family-friendly giants, but who often despair of a lack of information or get the wrong information when looking for "their" four-legged friend.

It shows the possibilities, but also the limits of a kind-fair dog attitude, gives the prospective customer valuable tips for buying and explains the importance about feeding and treatment of diseases.

Thus, this book is ideally suited to facilitate the young Pyrenean mountain dog's journey from breeder to new family.

Mathys- Pyrenean mountain dog in Canada





Having a rest.

I would like to say thank you to those who helped me to write and shape this book.

I would like to mention especially Marion and Stefan Ruhl, who are breeders,and who provided me with pictures, information and memories .Also Sylvie Lessard from Canada, who provided me with my favorite photo. I would also like to thank the French breeder Benoit Cockenpot who, by giving me his private copy of the book that he wrote about Pyrenean Mountain Dogs, gave me a deep insight into the French point of view about the gentle giants.

Special thanks to all those who help to give the Pyrenean Mountain Dog (Patou) the recognition it deserves.

Witten, summer 2025

Jörg Krämer

The Pyrenean Mountain Dog- A Brief Description

The Pyrenean Mountain Dog (Chien de montagne des Pyrénées), affectionately called Patou by the French, is a French dog breed recognized by the FCI.

He was originally bred to guard herds of cattle in the French Pyrenees, left to his own devices. It is from this task that the appearance and character of the Pyrenean Mountain Dog derives: an imposing physique coupled with irrepressible strength and lightning-quick reactions. A calm, balanced character with absolute loyalty to his family (herd), which he vehemently protects.

Patous are considred to be extremely fond of children.



The protective instinct is a prominent feature of these dogs. All these characteristics make Pyrenean Mountain Dogs perfect family dogs; Because of his size, protective instinct and insistence on independent decision-making combine to create the biggest problems with this breed.

It is often written that a Pyrenean mountain dog belongs only in the hands of an experienced dog owner. I do not share this opinion. On the contrary!

If an experienced dog owner tries to train a Patou in the same way as dogs of any other non-herd dog breed, he will inevitably fail.

He is not a "je veux plaisir dog" and will not obey blindly.

Therefore, it is important that the future owner intensively informs himself about this breed and its peculiarities.



Pyrenean mountain dog pack relaxing

History of the breed

According to current knowledge, it is true for all breeds that there is only one geographical origin. The latest study has refuted an earlier research finding that the modern dog emerged from two independent domestication processes.

The study suggests that all of today's dogs share a common origin and emerged from a unique domestication process of wolves 20,000 to 40,000 years ago.

However, the exact geographical origin of the domestic dogs could not be clarified conclusively so far.

The exact history of the origin of the Pyrenean Mountain Dogs is also not known. However, bone remains have been found that date back to the Bronze Age and correspond to this type of breed.





There are different theories about the ancestry of the Patous, which are more or less probable.

Shepherds, and nomads have not left written records about their animals. Sources about their ancestry are rare. Therefore, one helps oneself with logical conclusions.

One theory is that the Pyrenean Mountain Dog is descended from the Tibetan guard dog.

It is assumed that in Tibet with the domestication of the yak guard dogs were used and bred. This is at least questionable, because yaks are very well able to defend themselves and therefore do not depend on the protection of guard dogs. Also, there is only conjecture about the domestication of the yaks; cave paintings in

Mongolia suggest that this date is just under 2000 years before our era.

However, the first sheep probably already existed in Mesepotania 8,000 years before our era. If one were to assume that the Do-khyi theory is correct, the early shepherds would have managed without guard dogs for a good 6,000 years. Which is rather unlikely. Certainly, they would have developed other methods of herd protection.

Another theory is that the guard dogs are descended from the Molossians.

Against it speaks that basically it is doubted that these dogs existed at all in the province of Molotia and if they did, that it is much more probable that these fighting dogs for war descended from the guard dogs and not vice versa.

A third, and the most likely theory from a logical point of view, is that all guard dog breeds are descended from the early herding dogs of Mesopotamia.

When strong migrations of the growing peoples began in Babylon, the Pyrenees were also reached by one of the peoples. These people settled on both sides of the Pyrenees and they are probably the ancestors of the Basque people.

These people were accompanied by their herds, one of their few sources of livelihood, and huge dogs that protected the herds and also the people from the abundance of predators that existed in the Pyrenees.

Considering the great similarity with other breeds scattered through the rest of Europe, such as the Pastor of Poland, the Kuvasz of Hungary, or the Maremmana Abrucés of Italy, we could suppose, despite the great distance between them, that these early peoples and their dogs came from a common land, the so-called

2-stream country (between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers).

In the Catalan Pyrenees region of Cerdanya existed cities called Ur, Bor and Alpe. The ancient counterparts of these cities were located in Sumerian territory and Anatolia, todays Turkey. To this day, there are still almost identical guard dogs there.

Also Alexander the Great may have used such dogs for the protection of the camps of his armed forces. Which supports the idea of the origin of the dogs from Mesopotamia.

Nothing of this has been proven, these are merely well thought out theories which could explain the origin of the guard dogs.

Due to improved DNA techniques and further findings, many secrets will be revealed in the future. Nevertheless, some things will remain speculative.

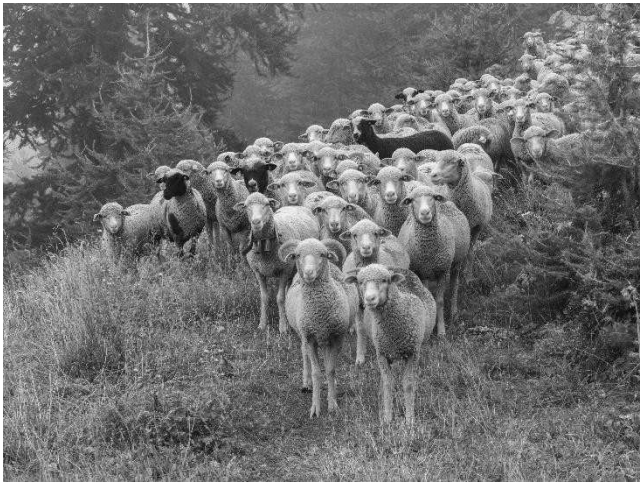
Let's stay with the travelling.

People have always been on the move. They were accompanied by their animals. Thus dog types, which never existed there, populated different countries and continents. They adapted themselves to the lokal conditions and mixed themselves with the dog races resident there. Thereby only the most resistant animals

survived, those who could cope best with the new living conditions.

Along with livestock farming, independent types of dogs developed throughout Europe and were used to protect herds.

These guard dogs have a similar basic pattern in type; strong, defensible and independent.



Numerous types were recognized as a breed, but many were not.

One of the recognized breeds is our Pyrenean Mountain Dog!

It is certain that there have been large guard dogs in France for over 1000 years. They were used in the Pyrenees to protect flocks of sheep from wolves and bears. During the 15th century, these dogs were increasingly used as guard dogs for castles and palaces, mainly in the south of France.The breed experienced a peak of popularity when King Louis the XIV, the "Sun King" brought the dogs to the capital and had them guard the Louvre.



Foix castle

When fishermen moved from Biscay to Newfoundland in 1662, they were accompanied by Pyrenean mountain dogs. Through various crossbreeding the Newfoundland breed was finally created there.

The first detailed written description of the breed can be found in Count von Bylandt's book from 1897. In 1907 the first breeding club was founded and 16 years later the official standard was registered in the Société Centrale Canine de France. In Germany, the Pyrenean Mountain Dog was first bred in 1937 by Prince Günter von Schönburg-Waldenburg in Saxony, but found little interest.

It was only with increasing travel to the Pyrenees that these dogs were remembered again, and since 1985 there has been a new upsurge in the breeding of Pyrenean Mountain Dogs.