

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCEDURE FOR THE RECOGNITION OF NEW BREEDS BY THE F.C.I.

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Regularly, the governing bodies of the F.C.I. draw our attention to the fact that the number of officially recognized breeds is too high and state their concern about new applications for recognition. We even sometimes hear that the recognition of new breeds should cease. This position is not acceptable because without a shadow of doubt there are populations of dogs not yet standardized and which merit, at least as much as those already recognized, to have their existence officialized. In addition, we have to consider that the official appearance of a new population is, by essence, enriching, especially for those already existing. Under these circumstances, the only way to avoid an inflation of the number of breeds is to enhance the concept of "variety" and to recognise, as varieties, as many new populations as possible.

Encouraging the recognition of new varieties, rather than that of new breeds, offers several advantages:

- it officializes the fact that objectively close populations can, nevertheless, be distinctly recognized;
- it offers more freedom in the management of political or human problems. Thus, it is of no importance that several national varieties are recognized as long as they officially belong to the same breed. In the event of disagreement between two groups of breeders, according recognition to each of "his/her" varieties could help in reaching a short-term solution to the problem while conserving the variability for the long-term
- it allows the populations which objectively exist, and with whom the breeders identify themselves, to be recognized even if they have little chance of, one day, satisfying the requirements for the recognition of a new breed.
- it helps the management of the inter-breed variability, a new variety being an official source for eventual out-crossing. On the other hand, if a variety disappears, either because of genetic errors or that it no longer interests anyone, the future of the breed to which it belonged is not jeopardized.
- Etc.

It appears to us that the recognition of a new breed by the F.C.I. should be a long procedure, which does not automatically succeed, but which should always include the official recognition, in one form or another, of the existence of the population concerned. This "long procedure" could comprise three phases: national recognition, application to the F.C.I. and emerging.

1) National Recognition

Each applicant population should be the object of a national recognition procedure, complying with requirements which are left to the appreciation of the national kennel club concerned. The latter maintains the stud book and authorizes the presentation of dogs at shows under the name of, for example, "regional type". The dogs are not judged nor do they enter competition but they may be presented in the ring accompanied by a commentary on their history and orientation. This phase lasts for as long as necessary to satisfy the demographic criteria required by the F.C.I. Advantage is taken of the time required to homogenize the type a little, promote the population, to validate the stud book and monitor the health of the dogs. If the population does not satisfy the F.C.I.'s demographic requirements, it can, after a lapse of time, gain access to national shows (to be defined) and judgement while conserving the name of "regional type".

2) Application to the F.C.I.

At this stage, the applicant population should satisfy the F.C.I requirements (drafting of a breed standard, verification of the existence of 8 independent lines, appreciation of health status). We propose to add a questionnaire to the application in which breeders shall be asked to position themselves with regard to the existing recognized breeds:

- from a scientific point of view, at least, to which breed pool does the new population belong ? There is little probability, but it should not be excluded, of finding ourselves in the presence of a totally isolated and original population
- to which breed(s) is/are the population closest - based on what we know of phylogenetics and morphological resemblances (a good method of evaluation is to ask ourselves what would be used, without any hesitation, in case of need for out-crossing).
- what distinguishes the new population from the neighbouring breeds (morphology, DNA, etc ...)?

If the application is in order, the new population could be recognized as "emerging breed". It is important that it remains in this category for a long time (to be defined).

3) Emerging Phase

The opinion of the Scientific Commission shall be solicited at this stage: does the new population qualify as a new breed or variety? The Commission will of course have to provide arguments. For scientists, to opt for either solution will not be very important, the essential point being the recognition of the population. Obviously, the breeders will have another point of view.

There exist indeed strong obstacles to the promotion of varieties :

- A variety is considered in a derogatory manner or, at best, ignored. The breeders of the applicant populations would feel "belittled" to see "their breeds" "lowered" to the level of a "simple variety". There is a lot of work to be undertaken to enhance the concept of variety, including, perhaps, the creation of new awards at shows. This feeling would be even more easily experienced as many of the breeds currently recognised are, in reality, from a scientific point of view, varieties.

- If a new population is recognized as a variety, it is obligatory to incorporate it within an existing breed. It is likely that very few of the presently recognized breeds would accept to be "enriched" by a new variety imposed by the FCI General Committee.

If the F.C.I cannot convince new applicants for official recognition to accept new politics, it shall find itself confronted with a difficult choice.

-either the F.C.I abandons the idea of curbing the increase in the number of breeds : there are probably many in reserve, which is a good thing;

-or the F.C.I. truly wants to prevent this escalation and we cannot see how it can not "set the example" by questioning the status of many presently recognized breeds which, in reality, are only varieties.

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NB: This report is a working document, aimed at giving a scientific view. It may appear very unrealistic or even aggressive. However, it is interesting for us to have stated our views in the hope that a more administrative and "diplomatic" study shall follow.