RESOLVING THE TIBETAN MASTIFF DILEMMA

A Possible Solution

Left to Right
We are hearing a rumor and understand that there is the possibility that FCI will split the Tibetan Mastiff breed into varieties.

Because of the variety of “types” of dogs called Tibetan Mastiffs that look very different, this is a good idea.

I am not aware of any other time in the history of purebred dogs that such a dramatic change in looks and function has happened so quickly in a breed. The changes have created a lack of consistency that makes it impossible to judge and disastrous to the other types to breed the newer types with the Descendant and Aboriginals.

When we observe the dogs registered/identified as Tibetan Mastiffs/Do Khyi we see three “varieties”. The New, the Descendant and the Aboriginal.

All owners of the different “types” believe they have the “true” Tibetan Mastiff. They all have paid money for these dogs, have bred them and invested time. Some of these breeders have invested their lifetime.

The differences in appearance of these types have caused heated arguments about what “type” is authentic. No one can agree. What we can agree is that the dogs are different from each other.

The breeders of the “New” type have been encouraged by the breeders of the Descendant and Aboriginal to start their own breed, but they are reluctant to do so because of the time and work that is involved in establishing a new breed. They also wonder why they would need to do so when their dogs are registered at Tibetan Mastiffs. This is a valid and logical conclusion.

However, there does need to be a resolution to this dilemma or some types will be lost forever or be driven to the edge of extinction... if that has not already happened.

**It is imperative that all of these owners’ interests and investments be protected while balancing the interests of the breed going forward.**

General description of the types:

**The New**
These types of dogs started appearing in the early 2000’s and were identified and presumably registered as Tibetan Mastiffs. These dogs are sometimes heavier and typically have more wrinkling and looser skin than the Descendant and Aboriginal dogs. Some do not have the same pattern of coat that the Descendant and Aboriginals have while, some do have the traditional patterning of the Descendants and Aboriginals. Ear sets are often different and ear shape can be different. Muzzles also are often different than the muzzles of the Descendants or Aboriginals. Their primary purpose and abilities are to alert/guard. They are most suited in structure as a stationary guardian. These dogs vary widely in height and appearance, but are more similar to each other than to the Descendants and the Aboriginals, which they often do not resemble at all. Mating the New with Descendants often produces a dog that is more similar to the Descendant, but many traits of the New are evident. To the most experienced a New/Descendant mix is often easy identified.

**The Descendants**
These dogs are descendants of the dogs imported from the Tibetan Plateau, Nepal, the Himalayan areas of India; and Taiwan. They were used to establish the breed in the Western part of the world. These dogs were part of the types and subtypes of the dogs of the Tibetan Plateau that were similar in appearance. They
typically have extensive documented pedigrees extending back ten or more generations. It is thought there has been an occasional hybrid introduced. Some kennels have focused on increasing the size of the dogs in terms of height, bone, head proportions and length of coat. Some of these dogs lack angulation for a working dog. Although they are more similar to the Aboriginal dogs, these traits distinguish them from the Aboriginal. The current breed standards throughout the world are based on these dogs.

The Aboriginals
These include dogs currently living and working on the Tibetan Plateau and dogs (and offspring) acquired from the Plateau and by breeders who wish to preserve them. They are the working dogs of the nomadic herdsman and the stationary guardians of homes in the villages of the high altitude areas of the Tibetan Plateau. The nomadic dogs are lighter in weight, have a longer coat, are generally dry mouthed, have tight fitting eyelids and possess the necessary agility to drive off or engage the wild predators of the region who have similar abilities. The stationary dogs tend to be shorter in coat, are heavier in weight, can have more pendulous flews and are used in the cities of the lower altitudes of the Plateau and in the valleys as stationary guardians. These dogs were part of the types/subtypes used as the foundation of the breed in the Western part of the world.

A Proposal for Preservation and Protecting the Interests of All
Unusual circumstances call for innovative and unusual solutions. As stated before these are unprecedented circumstances.

Here is one idea for steps that could be taken to implement a change that can preserve everyone’s interest. It requires that established protocols be set aside or modified.

Although this may seem time consuming it is a simple way to ensure all interests are preserved.

Since the “New” type dogs are very different than the Descendants and the Aboriginals these dogs should claim their rightful place as a new dog breed.

This breed should be established RIGHT AWAY, with a temporary name and with ALL the RIGHTS of EXHIBITING and REGISTERING offspring that come with an established and recognized breed.

There are more than enough dogs to meet the requirement set forth by FCI for numbers and bloodlines.

All standard procedures for establishing a new breed should be suspended or modified for this new breed. If found to be necessary and in the best interest of the new breed, any usual requirements to establishing the breed should be completed within one to two years AFTER the breed is established (i.e. establishment of a breed club, standard, stud book etc.). During that time puppies will be registered under this temporary breed name.

Owners and breeders should have the right to choose a permanent name after a period of time (one to two years?).

Because Descendant types of Tibetan Mastiff are currently being used in breeding programs along with the New type, breeders should be allowed to identify this breeding stock as foundation stock for the new breed and be able to continue to use this stock for at least five years. All offspring will be registered under the new breed.
This will enable the owners and breeders who have invested their time and money not to lose any prestige or the ability to continue with their endeavors to develop this sought-after type.

The Descendant and Aboriginals should retain the Tibetan Mastiff/Do Khyi name, but should be split into the two varieties, with possibly two sub varieties. This will enable the breeders/preservationists to revitalize the Descendant and bring it back closer to the Aboriginals in appearance or to continue to maintain the Descendant in its present state. This will also allow the Aboriginal dogs to be exhibited and judged separately from the Descendant and thus be preserved. Perhaps this would be an opportunity to separate the dogs of both varieties into two groups in their variety. High Altitude Nomad types and Lower Altitude Stationary types. Support for the variety categories comes from “lessons learned” in the United States. Because the Tibetan Mastiff was not split into varieties, one variety is (for practical purposes) extinct in the United States. There are a few left, but they are not exhibited because they are not able to compete with the more well-known variety.

Possible Steps to Implementation

For the “New” Breed

1. Assign a temporary breed name (suggestions: Chinese Mastiff, Great China Mastiff, Grand China Mastiff) and temporary Breed Standard. The Standard should be broad to accommodate the various types of the New breed.

2. Allow breeders and owners to voluntarily migrate their dog’s registration to the new breed. This can be based on appearance or pedigree. Migrating these dogs to this new breed will automatically migrate all the dog’s offspring and ancestors not identified as a Descendant or Aboriginal, to the new breed.

3. New registration certificates will be issued to all at no cost or low cost.

4. Make allowances for breeders currently using Descendants in their breeding program that are mated with the New breed. Offspring of these dogs are to be registered as the new breed. A time period should be specified that allows breeding and registrations. Perhaps until a decision about the allowance of foundation stock is made.

5. Set a time frame to have the usual tasks for establishing a new breed completed (breed standard, parent clubs, foundation stock, stud book, etc.). Perhaps one to two years. During this time the dogs will be shown, bred and registered under the temporary name and standard.

6. Establish a protocol by which judges, exhibitors and breeders can file a request for review of any registered Tibetan Mastiff for the dog’s type or pedigree for inclusion in the New breed or assignment as a Descendant or Aboriginal within the Tibetan Mastiff/Do Khyi registry.

This review should be conducted by a panel of experts (individuals to be determined) that include Cynologists and pedigree historians specializing in the Tibetan Mastiff and breeders representing all of the types. The panel should consist of persons with the above qualifications from throughout the world.

This panel will use consensus to assign the dog to its appropriate designation.
Reviews could be conducted electronically via the internet. The panel may use any means available to determine the assignment of the dog, including appearance and pedigree with as many photos of ancestors as possible to be provided. Owners should provide additional information upon request, including DNA information.

**For Aboriginal Dogs and Descendants**

1. To help revitalize the Descendant and to establish the Aboriginal types, Aboriginal dogs who are not registered should be registered as soon as possible. The traditional requirements for registration should be modified. If necessary, individual dogs may be reviewed for merit by the panel.

2. Discussion and decisions to be made about establishing varieties for both the Descendant and the Aboriginals.

**WORLD DOG BREED REGISTRATION ORGANIZATIONS**

If adopted by CKU and FCI these organizations will make every effort to cooperate and encourage the major dog breed registries of the World to adopt the same measures to ensure the future of the Tibetan Mastiff/Do Khyi and the New breed.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP**

If you acknowledge that there is real concern in our breed and want there to be a fair solution for all, please let your voice be heard.

Please contact the FCI (Fédération Cynologique Internationale) and CKU (Chinese Kennel Union, FCI Member), share this article and request they work toward a fair solution to resolve this unusual situation regarding the registration of Tibetan Mastiff “types”.


**AND/OR**

You can download the prepared letter (or make your own) and snail mail it, or copy and paste in an email and send to both the China Kennel Union and FCI. The letter has a link to this article, or if you prefer you can download the article and attach to your email.


For further reference, the following pages contain photos of the varying types of dogs registered/identified as Tibetan Mastiffs. Historical and Breed Standard photos and drawings are also included.
DESCENDANT
New
HISTORICAL PHOTOS

[Images of historical photos of dogs]
Historical
Tibetan Mastiff Breed Standard Photos & Drawings

Canadian Kennel Club

American Kennel Club
This information in this article was compiled by SnowSpirits Tibetan Mastiffs on behalf of the Tibetan Mastiff Community of owners, breeders and other interested parties. Many people assisted with input and photos. Without them this would not have been possible. Their assistance is deeply appreciated. Thank you, you know who you are. Most of the photos used were with the consent of the owner. Some were taken from the internet and are being used solely for the purpose of information and education.
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