



Are Purebred Dogs Headed for Extinction?

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Does this look like the face of an extinct dog? This is Liberty's Prudence, raised by Ara Lynn of Liberty Kennels. Her breed is considered rare, vulnerable or endangered in most countries. She is a Glen of Imaal Terrier.

Strange, isn't it? Millions of dogs are euthanized every year in the U.S., yet there are dog breeds at risk of becoming extinct.

Is it a widespread problem? No. While some breeds are on an endangered list, the breeding community is diligently protecting purebred dogs of all kinds from extinction. But there are some troubling trends that demand our attention.

For one thing, registrations of dogs and litters have been steadily declining over the past 10 years. The Kennel Club of U.K., AKC and our own registry have records to prove it. No doubt this is in large part due to the economic downturn, and is compounded by the current popularity of stray dog adoption.

What are some other contributing factors? Disease and congenital defects in our dogs are on the rise; veterinarians suspect that few dogs in the average breeding kennel are truly free of any defects these days.

In addition, we have movie stars and smaller yards driving the market to "handbag" dogs, further dwindling the numbers of the big family dogs of the 1950's. In 2012, the Kennel Club (UK) registered over 7500 pugs, while 20 larger breeds had less than 300 registrations each.

Could these factors be enough to drive down the number of breeding-worthy dogs in any given breed? Yes. Will it mean extinction? No.



Historically, what has caused the extinction of dog breeds? The most common reason is that the work the animal was bred for is no longer in demand. The Portuguese Water Dog is a case in point. It was bred for carrying messages from fishing boats to other boats and to shore, retrieving broken nets and even diving to help herd schools of fish. With the invention of radios and other technology, the breed nearly died out. In 1931 a wealthy shipping magnate began to re-establish the breed. As recently as 1960 there were only 12 in the United States. Now it has been popularized by the Obama family and is frequently spotted on the White House lawn and many other lawns across the country.

Sometimes a breed exists only in one location and falls victim to war. The Peruvian Hairless Dog (Peruvian Inca Orchid dog) nearly became extinct when Spanish conquistadors invaded Peru. It is not yet fully recovered.

A third cause of extinction, and one we should pay close attention to, is being bred out of existence by careless humans. The British “White Terrier” is one such breed. It became unpopular due to a variety of genetic problems, among them deafness, and was crossed with English Bulldogs to produce two new breeds: the Boston Terrier and the Bull Terrier. Sadly, the White Terrier no longer exists.

The answer to today’s question lies in our hands. We need to be guardians of our breed, not just breeders. It is of paramount importance that we select for consistency when choosing breeding animals. Too often a breeding line is botched by selecting a dog that overcompensates for a fault in its mate.

- Choose the best dogs from the start.
- Choose *only* the best dogs.
- Don’t breed inferior dogs.
- Be demanding in your selection procedures.
- No matter how pretty or fancy, dogs lacking the athletic ability for the job they were bred to do should be avoided at all costs.

Extinction is forever. Breeder determination is forever too.

THE DISAPPEARING BREEDS

- Glen of Imaal Terrier (46*)
 - Sealyham Terrier (47)
 - Field Spaniel (51)
 - Otterhound (57)
 - Sussex Spaniel (60)
 - Smooth Collie (74)
 - Skye Terrier (75)
 - Cardigan Welsh Corgi (79)
 - Irish Red / White Setter (85)
 - Dandie Dinmont Terrier (108)
 - English Toy Terrier (113)
 - Irish Water Spaniel (131)
 - Lancashire Heeler (133)
 - Smooth Fox Terrier (133)
 - Manchester Terrier (146)
 - Norwich Terrier (160)
- *Numbers registered with the Kennel Club in 2009

Data from the Kennel Club, U.K.

Related Links

[DVD on correctly choosing the pick of the litter \(order info/preview\)](#)

[Wikipedia article on vulnerable breeds in the U.K.](#)

[VIDEO: Endangered Dog Breeds BBC video](#)

[VIDEO: 5 British Dog Breeds Facing Extinction](#)

[VIDEO: 10 Most Rare Dog Breeds](#) – Tip: turn off sound – the music is just annoying