
HISTORY

Most dog breeds were developed after hundreds of years of evolution and lengthy selection by breeders. However, some breeds owe their existence to just one person, whose name they bear.

DUNKEREN, HYGENHUNDEN, DUNKER, HYGEN OR HYGENHUND

Wilhelm Dunker (1807-1860) was a captain in the Norwegian army who bred a hound for the purpose of hunting snow hares and Arctic foxes. Looking at the Dunkeren and Hygenhund, one immediately recognizes them as members of the

Germany, so unemployed Germans had an opportunity to work in Norwegian mines or in the Norwegian army. After the Napoleonic Empire, Norway and Sweden were joined by a treaty for a few decades, but at the end of the 19th century, the country once again became an independent kingdom. Today the Royal Family in Norway has no power, only ceremonial tasks.

NATIONAL SPORT

Hunting hares was very popular in 19th-century Norway when it was more or less a national sport. Norway has extensive woods, moors, ice fields and

MASTERMIND

WILHELM DUNKER & HIS DUNKEREN

and a little something about the Hygenhunden of A.F. Hygen

large hound family. You have to keep in mind that the breeds are named Dunkeren and Hygenhunden. When writing or talking about a specific dog, it's Dunker and Hygen or Hygenhund. Never say "stövare", because it's the Swedish word for gun dog or hare hound.

GERMAN MINERS AND SOLDIERS

Excavations have proven that hare hounds existed in medieval Europe. However, these dogs had nothing to do with present-day hounds in Scandinavia. The history of the Norwegian Dunkeren is recent and bears no relation to the dark Middle Ages. It is assumed that hare hunting was introduced by miners and army officers whose families had arrived in Norway from Germany in the 17th century when iron, lead, granite and zinc mining provided jobs for German immigrants.

Until 1536, Norway was an independent kingdom, but with the end of its monarchy, Norway became a province of Denmark. Under Danish supremacy, the various mines were developed and a flourishing industry of foundries was one of the results. Denmark had strong commercial relations with

text and illustrations by RIA HÖRTER

snow fields and is thus a paradise for snow hares and Arctic foxes. Today the population density in Norway is 12 people per square kilometer; in the north, it's sometimes only 1.6. These two circumstances make hunting not only very popular, but also necessary.

Originally, most Norwegian hare hounds were black with brown and white markings. They resembled the hounds we can see today in Sweden and Finland, for example the Hamiltonstövare and the Suomenajokoirra (Finnish Hound). The hounds of Wilhelm Dunker, however, were different, especially in coat color.

WILHELM DUNKER AND 'ALARM'

This is the story of a man who preferred a hound with one speciality: hunting snow hares. Capt. Wilhelm Dunker was born in Norway in 1807, the son of a Norwegian officer whose ancestors had come from Germany prior to the 1700s. Wilhelm grew up in a military environment; many of his acquaintances were interested in hounds or were breeding and hunting with them. In 1826, 19-year old Wilhelm obtained his first dog, 'Alarm', a blue-merle



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ice fields and snow fields and is thus a paradise
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Hunting hares was more or less a national sport in Norway. Axel Simensen and his hare hound after a hunt in Trøgstad. (Photo: Olaf Lund)

If 'Hvide Musik' had been a true type of hound, it's possible that his ancestors originated from Germany or Austria, like other old Scandinavian hounds.

The famous Swiss dog writer Dr. Hans Räber supposes that 'Hvide Musik' was a 'Luzerner Hound from Switzerland'. Räber also states that 'Alarm's' littermates had merle coats as well'. Unfortunately, Hvide Musik was killed by a wolf at an early age. His son Alarm, who lived until about 1838, sired many dogs with the same distinctive blue-merle coat and his offspring, called 'Dunkere' (the dogs of Dunker), became popular in Norway. Alarm is therefore the ancestor of Norway's most popular hound.

TYPICAL COAT COLOR

For most of his life, Wilhelm Dunker lived in various places in the southern part of Norway. He died in Hallingdal in 1860 and it's said that people remembered him as a breeder and hunter with a good reputation. Unfortunately, we have no stud books or other documentation belonging to Dunker. We know nothing about the ancestry of his other dogs. How were they bred? What types of dogs did he use after Alarm? We don't know.

There isn't even a portrait of Wilhelm Dunker, likely because he held only the modest rank of captain.

Dr. Räber supposes that Dunker used English Foxhounds and German and Swiss hounds. Dr. Friedrich Jungklaus supposes that Dunker used a Russian (Kostroma) hound.

Blue-merle coat color is typical of the breed, although more than half of the present population has a black coat with pale (brownish-yellow) fawn and white markings. In Dunker litters, usually 50 percent of the puppies are blue merle and 50 percent are black with pale markings. Today's breeders usually

male. 'Alarm' was the son of a grey-merle bitch and an almost-white male by the name of 'Hvide Musik' ('White Music'). The owner of 'Hvide Musik' was the future Norwegian General Jacob Krefting (1796-1879). 'Hvide Musik' was given to Krefting by gypsies, therefore his ancestry is unknown.

do not breed two blue merle dogs because entirely white puppies can be the result. Occasionally, black puppies are born in a litter from two blue parents.

HYGENHUNDEN - A LITTLE EXCURSION

Around 1830, the Norwegian solicitor H.F. Hygen (1808-1897) began a large-scale production of hare hounds. Presumably, his dogs – later the Hygenhund – descended from the so-called 'Ringerike dogs', local versions of old Scandinavian hound breeds, now extinct. It's said that Hygen used a Holsteiner Hound from Germany; it was a dark brindle lightly-built bitch called 'Diana'. Diana was mated by a red spotted male. In Die Hunderassen (1935), A. v. Hagen states that Hygen used a dog of the so-called 'Collet'schen breed, similar to a Harrier or Foxhound. Dr. Jungklaus supposes that the red-spotted male

came to Norway via Denmark, traveling with German officers. What we know for certain is that Diana became the mother of a red-spotted male and a greyish-yellow bitch; she is regarded as the foundation bitch of the breed.

During some periods, the Dunkeren and the Hygenhunden were regarded as one breed, but in 1934 the two were separated by the Norwegian Kennel Club and each got its own breed standard. Then, the coat of the Hygenhunden was



It is said that Hygen used a Holsteiner Hound from Germany. It was a dark brindle lightly-built bitch called 'Diana'. She may have looked like these Holsteiner Hounds, depicted by Ludwig Beckmann (1822-1902) in 1894.



A beautiful engraving of 19th century hare hunting. (Collection of the author)

red and white and some were black and white with white markings. In the beginning, there were three times as many Hygenhunden as Dunkeren because Hygen began a large-scale production.

The Hygenhunden is a robust gundog and has - like other

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members of the hound family - a sonorous typical bark. There aren't many differences between the Dunkeren and the Hygenhunden. It's no wonder these two breeds were once regarded as the same, a decision of the Norwegian Kennel Club in 1924. After five generations the dogs bred by Hygen had black-and-brown coats. In the sixth generation, Hygen used a descendant of the male Alarm, red-spotted 'Alarm Kare', a son of Wilhelm Dunker's Alarm.



The Norwegian solicitor H.F. Hygen (1808-1897) began a large-scale production of hare hounds, later Hygenhunden. (Photo: Eva-Maria Krämer)

And this is certainly one of the reasons the two breeds differ so little. Hygen wanted to name his breed 'Norwegian Beagle', but the Norwegian Kennel Club didn't agree. The allegation that Hygen had crossbred Beagles and hounds to create his own Hygenhunden must have an element of truth!

Hygen died in 1897 at 89 years of age. We know that he bred many hare hounds, later named after him as a tribute, but that's about all. Today, the Hygenhunden is a rare breed; in 1996 only 36 were entered in the Norwegian stud book. Outside its home country, the breed is extremely rare, as is the Dunkeren.

DOMINANT IN BREEDING AND IN THE FIELD

Around the turn of the last century, Wilhelm Dunker's dogs were dominant - not only in breeding, but in the field. They maintained this position until about 1970, when competition from Finnish Hounds increased. In the meantime, breeders in Finland had succeeded in breeding excellent hare hounds. In those days, about 700 Dunker puppies were entered in the stud book each year, but the quality of the dogs rapidly declined. Today, the quality of the Dunkeren is good, but only 325 puppies were registered in 1992.

A new breed needs a club. In the beginning, a club only for Dunkeren was considered, but Hygen and his Hygenhunden couldn't be ignored. It was therefore decided in 1902 that a breed club would be established for both: the Specialklubb for Norske Harehunde. That year also saw the official recognition of the Dunkeren. In 1940, a new breed club was founded in the southern part of Norway; after the war about twenty local clubs were established, now united in the Norske Harehundklubbens Forbund. Another club was established in 1986, only for the Dunkeren. The Dunkerringen now has roughly 700 members and its magazine 'Påskriket' is published twice a year.

After the Second World War both breeds suffered from health problems due to inbreeding and it was necessary that other breeds were used, for example Hamiltonstövares and Finnish Hounds.

Both Dunkeren and Hygenhunden were only slightly influenced by these breeds and breeders succeeded in maintaining the proper breed type in the Dunkeren and Hygenhunden.

PRIORITY

In the 19th century, four breeders/hunters each created their own breed in Scandinavia - Per Schiller and Dr. A.P. Hamilton (Schillerstövare and Hamiltonstövare) in Sweden, and Wilhelm Dunker and H.F. Hygen (Dunkeren and Hygenhunden) in Norway. Contemporary breeders, in England, for example, kept stud books and pedigrees. Dunker and Hygen did not, so there's very little information available about their breeding. We could come to the conclusion that these Scandinavian breeders set little store in imposing pedigrees, but gave priority to excellent working abilities of their dogs.

I was lucky to become acquainted to Hallvard Hegna from Norway. Being a honorary member of the Dunkerringen and judging hare hounds for almost forty years, he told me a lot about the Dunkeren and provided some photos.



The breed is named Dunkeren; writing or talking about a specific dog, it's Dunker. (Photo: Johan Adlercreutz)

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DUNKEREN AND THE HYGENHUNDEN

DUNKEREN

Recent F.C.I. Breed Standard (203): 1999

General Appearance: medium-sized, distinctly rectangular, powerfully built, but should not appear heavy. Should convey the impression of endurance

Head: Not to be carried highly, clean and noble, not wedge-shaped.

Ears: medium high set, smooth moderately wide, rounded at the

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A hunter and his Dunker, resting after a hare hunt in Norway. (Collection: Hallvard Hegna)

end. Flat without folds. Hanging close to the head.
Neck: fairly long, without noticeable throatiness.
Back: straight, firm and not too long.
Tail: set on level with the top line. Carried in a slight upward curve, reaching to the hock or slightly below.
Color: black or blue-marbled (dappled) with pale fawn and white markings. Warm brown or predominant black reaching from the muzzle and beyond the hock joint with black mask is less desirable.
Gait: free movement, covering ground. Parallel from behind, not crouched nor cow-hocked.
Height at the Withers: dogs 19.5-21.5 inches, ideally 20.75 inches; bitches 18.5-20.5 inches, ideally 19.5 inches.
Eliminating Faults: Aggressiveness and predominantly white color.

The voice is sonorous and deep.



Dr. Hans Räber supposes that 'Hvide Musik' was a Luzerner Hound. These Luzerner Hounds have blue-merle coats. Drawing J.A. Petersen (1894), secretary of the Swiss Kennel Club.

HYGENHUNDEN

Recent F.C.I. Breed Standard (266): 1999

General Appearance: medium-sized, solid and compact, rectangular with strong topline.
Head: Medium-sized and moderately broad, but not heavy. Medium-long, somewhat wedge-shaped.
Ears: medium high set, neither broad nor long, tapering rounded at the tip. Thin and soft hanging not close to the cheeks but somewhat away from them.
Neck: medium length, strong, not too throaty.
Back: straight and strong.
Tail: set on level with the topline. Carried straight or in a slight upward curve, reaching the hock.
Color: red-brown or yellow-red, often with black shading on head, back and tailset with or without white markings. Black and tan usually combined white markings. White with red-brown or yellow-red patches and tics or with black-and-tan markings. The different colors should be clearly defined from each other.
Gait: free movement, covering ground. Parallel in front and rear. Not cow-hocked behind nor toeing out in the front when moving.
Height at the withers: dogs 19.5-22.5 inches, ideally 21.25 inches; bitches 18.5-21.5 inches, ideally 20 inches.
Eliminating Fault: Aggressiveness.
 The voice is light and sonorous.



In the beginning, a breed club only for the Dunkeren was considered, but Hygen and his Hygenhunden couldn't be ignored. (Photo: Johan Adlercreutz)



Dr. Hans Räber supposes that Wilhelm Dunker used German and Swiss Hounds. These Swiss Hounds were depicted by Ludwig Beckmann (1822-1902), circa 1894. They resemble Dunker's first hounds.