

## HISTORY

Drenthe is one of the 12 Dutch provinces. Situated at the German border in the northeast, this part of The Netherlands is well-known for its beautiful landscapes with purple heather in late summer and green woods in spring. There are no big cities in this province; it has always been a rural area. In earlier times, many worked in the fen communities and on

white, with orange or brown markings.

### *A Quiet Worker*

Several paintings by European artists and dating from the period between 1600 and 1900 show dogs resembling the Drentsche Patrijshond – more proof that the former Spioen was already known in several

# Drentsche Patrijshond

“–DUTCH OR DRENTSCHE PARTRIDGE DOG”

*The offspring of Nimrod and Clovis*

text and illustrations by RIA HÖRTER

the small farms. Hunting small game like pheasant, partridge and black grouse was popular. The catch of the day was a welcome addition in large poor families where many children had to be fed. This is where one of the eight Dutch national dog breeds was developed.

### *Spioen-Epagneul-Espagne-Spanjoel Spaniel-Spain*

The history of the Drentsche Patrijshond can be traced back to the 16th century. Inventing of the gun meant a pointing dog was needed. It's generally assumed that the early history of all pointing dogs in Europe can be found in Spain. The 'Spioen' or 'Spanjoel' (from the word Espagna - Spain) spread all over Europe. In France we now have the Brittany and Epagneul Français, in Germany the Münsterlander and German Pointers. England has its spaniels. Like the Drentsche Patrijshond, they all descend from the early Spioen, a long-haired dog, mainly

parts of Europe. Development of the Drentsche Patrijshond took place in an area of sandy hunting grounds covered with dense bushes or heather. Its coat offered protection from thorn bushes and the hunter could see his dog from a good distance thanks to its color. The hunters preferred a dog that did its work quietly and could track down and retrieve game. Those qualities are still appreciated in the Drentsche Patrijshond.

### *Humble people*

Until the beginning of the 20th century, the province of Drenthe was rather isolated from the rest of the country. Generally the dogs' owners couldn't afford long trips to mate their bitches. They were not looking for type or beauty; the first choice was a male that had proved to be an excellent worker in the field. If this male was living next door, why not? The result was a more-or-less purebred type of dog, not mixed with other breeds. When the Dutchmen

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*Most breeders now agree that health, working ability, temperament and appearance, in that order, are important. (Photo by Alice van Kempen)*

became more mobile and hunters from other parts of the country came to Drenthe to hunt, they met the local gundog, appreciated its qualities, and began to talk about official recognition of this 'native' breed.

First, the Dutch Kennel Club had to be convinced of the breed's working qualities. Three things were important: the dogs had to prove they were suitable for their work; there had to be sufficient examples of the breed; and – very important –



*By Hubert van Ravesteyn (1638-1691), circa 1668.  
Various breeds in Europe descend from the early red and white  
or brown and white Spioen.*

a certain resemblance among the dogs was an express condition.

### *Nimrod*

It's amazing that in the middle of the Second World War (April, 1943) a member of the Dutch nobility, the Baroness van Hardenbroek van Ammerstol, and two gentlemen, Mr. G.J. van Heek and Dr. P.B.V. Quartero, organized a meeting for the Drentsche Patrijshond in the city of Groningen. They tried to prove that there were enough good examples to recognize the breed. This meeting was preceded by a field trial – not surprisingly, because working ability was as important as type. It must have been an odd gathering in Groningen. Some exhibitors had never walked their dog on a lead. Some did not own a lead and showed their dogs on a chain or a rope!

Today breeders still talk about 'the Nimrod bloodline', 'Nimrod type' and about the 'Clovis bloodline' and a 'Clo-

vis type'. 'Nimrod' (born in 1940) was one of the males present that day in Groningen. He has been a very important dog for the development of the breed, not only because of his working qualities, but because of his type, which he passed on to his many offspring – more than 400 registered sons and daughters. Another well-known male in the beginning was 'Clovis' born in 1942. The main difference between the two bloodlines is the shape of the head. Heads from the Clovis line are heavier, have longer, low-set ears and their skull is more rounded. In the breed, the Nimrod type is preferred.

Forty examples were judged in Groningen; both days, representatives of the Dutch Kennel Club were present to see if the Drentsche Patrijshond deserved official recognition.

### *Hidden patriotism*

Nimrod was a living example of the breed standard, which was written according to his outline and type. There was no hesitation by the Dutch Kennel Club; the first standard was developed in February 1944. Is there a relation between the fast decision and the German occupation? Maybe recognizing the Drentsche Patrijshond was an act of hidden patriotism in those dark days. From 1944 to 1971, Drentsche Patrijshonden were registered in a special appendix of the Kennel Club's Stud Book (NHSB). In February 1971, the breed population seemed large enough for a bright future and full registration.

People not familiar with dogs may mistake the Drentsche Patrijshond for a Heidewachtel (Small Münsterlander), German Longhaired Pointer, or Epagneul Français. The muzzle of a Drentsche Patrijshond is shorter than that of the Longhaired Pointer. The Heidewachtel is smaller and its skull is narrower. The Epagneul Français has a longer muzzle, not wedge-shaped, and longer ears, like Spaniels.



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*In February 1971, the breed population seemed large enough for a bright future and full registration. (Photo by Alice van Kempen)*

## Ups and downs

The first breed club was formed in 1948. By 1975 it had more than 1,000 members. As in any breed, there were ups and downs with genetic problems like hip dysplasia, PRA and epilepsy. In the 1980s more than 2,000 dogs suffered from PRA. Most breeders now agree that health, working ability, temperament, and appearance, in that order, are important. Most follow the breeding rules of the club and work their dogs. Today there are over 4,000 Drentsche Patrijshonden in The Netherlands with an average entry of about 30 dogs at Dutch dog shows. This breed can't go abroad to import new bloodlines because every dog outside the country originates from The Netherlands. The only breed clubs are in Denmark and Luxemburg. The present breed standard dates from 2003.



*In the middle of the Second World War a meeting was organized for the Drentsche Patrijshond in the city of Groningen. This group of bitches was pictured in 1943.*

**Origin:** 16th-century Europe

**Original purpose:** Gun dog, pointing and retrieving small game, now also companion dog.

**Description:** Symmetrically built, showing power, and able to develop the speed necessary for a gundog. Heavier built than the Heidewachtel and less heavier in head than the German Longhaired Pointer. By nature, obedient, loyal and intelligent - a good working dog and valuable family dog.

The skull is rather wide and only slightly rounded. The stop is visible and the muzzle is wedge-shaped and slightly shorter than the skull. A very light curve upward behind the nose is allowed; a Roman nose is a serious fault. The oval, amber-colored eyes, set rather far apart, are neither prominent nor deep; the expression shows kindness as well as the intelligence of the hunting dog. The high-set, well-feathered ears hang close to the cheeks without any fold. When the attention of the dog is drawn, the ears turn forward and are pulled up. Seen from the front, they form a triangle. The neck is powerful, of medium length and without loose skin; an 'elegant neck' is highly undesirable. The strong back is not too short; forequarters and hindquarters are well-muscled and well-angulated. The loin is strong and muscled, the wide croup not falling off but slightly sloping. The breed has a deep chest and long rounded ribs. A narrow forechest and barrel-shaped ribs are to be penalized.

Elbows are close to the body. Forelegs and hind legs stand neither wide nor narrow and have to be absolutely straight, with strong pasterns, round or oval feet, and powerful toes. The tailset is rather high and the tail reaches the point of the hock. In action it is carried with a light curl at the end. The dense coat is not curly and is longer on the neck, chest and tail. Preferably wavy hair on the back including the tail. Color is white with brown markings with or without spots. A mantle and dogs with a mixture of brown and white hair, with or without markings, are less desired. The ground-covering gait is neither wide nor narrow in trotting, with drive from the rear and no sign of single-tracking.

The Drentsche Patrijshond is an ideal dog for hunting in varying fields. The dog hunts within range of the gun. Keeping in touch with the hunter is apparently an innate quality. He is also a good retriever and finder of lost game. The breed is loyal and intelligent which makes him a good family pet and a valuable companion of the hunter.

**Height:** 23 to 25 inches for dogs; 21.5 to 23.5 inches for bitches. One-half to one more inch is acceptable if the dog is well-proportioned.

**Information:** [www.drentschepatrijshond.org](http://www.drentschepatrijshond.org) (Dutch breed club, in Dutch) and [www.raadvanbeheer.nl](http://www.raadvanbeheer.nl) (Dutch Kennel Club, in Dutch).

