

Boykin Spaniel

General:

Somewhere between 1905 and 1920, a banker by the name of Alexander White was walking to church in Spartanburg, SC, when he was befriended by a small brown stray dog. He took the dog home, and named him "Dumpy." Dumpy later demonstrated a considerable talent for the hunting of birds, and for retrieving. White eventually gave the dog to his hunting partner, Lemuel Whitaker "Whit" Boykin, in the Boykin township near Camden, SC. Boykin took the dog, and by crossing his offspring with various other hunting breeds such as the Chesapeake Bay Retriever, American Water Spaniel, Pointer, Cocker Spaniel and Springer Spaniel, made him the foundation of what is today known as the Boykin Spaniel. Boykin's goal was to produce a compact, multipurpose hunting dog and family companion. He wanted a dog that was able to retrieve birds over land, in water, and through swampland and that was willing to hunt ducks, flush wild turkeys, and that wouldn't "rock the boat." He was successful in reaching his goal.

"Mr. Boykin's spaniels" were locally recognized and widely sought throughout South Carolina until after WWII, when these unique dogs were discovered by hunters from other parts of the country as they found their way to SC's fertile hunting grounds. The Boykin's subsequent increase in popularity led to an escalation in the number of litters breeders produced, many of which were unfortunately bred indiscriminately. This led to the numerous health deficits that today's breeders are working diligently to overcome.

Today, the Boykin Spaniel is a medium-sized dog that exhibits a keen intelligence and a moderate amount of energy. They are presently found in homes all across the United States. Boykins love to swim and possess an outstanding nose, causing them to excel not only in traditional hunt activities, but also in modern dog events such as tracking, Nosework and Barn Hunt. When hunting, they excel at flushing upland game birds such as grouse, pheasant and quail, and also, at duck retrieving. Although not specifically bred for the purpose, Boykins additionally excel at tracking deer. Many enthusiasts believe the Boykin Spaniel to be the consummate all-round hunting dog.

Temperament:

Boykin Spaniels have few temperament issues. They love children and make fabulous family companions. Typically, each individual of the breed has a unique temperament, yet most demonstrate an enthusiasm for hunting that is hard to beat. Like other breeds that are possessed of an exceptional nose, it is important to pay attention to a Boykin's whereabouts when off lead as his nose has the potential to lead him into trouble. The American Kennel Club (AKC) classifies the Boykin Spaniel as the quintessential spaniel: friendly, eager to please, loveable and easy to train. They are nearly always amicable, and hostility towards other dogs or people is considered to be a fault.

Health:

Boykin Spaniels are prone to a number of hereditary health problems. Responsible breeders of the Boykin Spaniel are well-aware of potential health issues and perform health testing on all breeding stock prior to admission into their breeding programs. The AKC, which issues Canine Health Information Center (CHIC) numbers for all dogs that are tested for the issues that threaten their breed, has specific requirements for the Boykin Spaniel. Currently, in order to receive a CHIC number, the Boykin needs an eye examination conducted by a board certified ACVO Ophthalmologist, an OFA patellar luxation evaluation, either OFA or PennHip hip dysplasia evaluation, testing for exercise induced collapse (EIC) and also, collie eye abnormality (CEA). Optional tests include those for congenital cardiac disease, elbow dysplasia and degenerative myelopathy.

Care:

Boykin Spaniels require the same care as other breeds of dogs with regard to a high-quality diet, regular nail clipping, dental cleanings and routine veterinarian care. The coat care a Boykin requires depends upon an individual dog's type of coat, as they are known to range from smooth to curly. Longer coated Boykins that actively hunt in ponds, lakes and swampy southern (read humid) environs often do best when clipped. This facilitates faster coat drying and helps prevent the growth of bacteria. In the autumn, a field clip minimizes briar damage to a Boykin's coat. Boykin Spaniel owners that prefer to hunt with the coat intact are advised to use cooking spray on their dog's coat before hunting to ease the combing out of foxtails and cockleburs later. Regardless of whether one chooses to clip or not, it is recommended that a Boykin's coat be brushed weekly to catch loose hair as it sheds. In addition, it is suggested that Boykin owners bathe their dogs no more frequently than once a month, and that they use a pH balanced, veterinarian-approved dog shampoo so as to not dry out the skin.