

HISTORY OF THE BICHON FRISÉ

Bichon Frisé ~ The Bichon Frisé originated on the Spanish mainland, and has been known throughout Europe for many centuries. This is one of four varieties of Bichon: the Bichon Maltese, Bichon Bolognese, Bichon Havanese, and the little dog now called the Bichon Frisé, the Bichon Tenerife. All are descended from the Barbet or Water Spaniel and named for the areas where they were most abundant. It is believed that some of these little dogs were taken to the Canary Islands (where they became well established on the island of Tenerife), and were rediscovered in the 14th century by visiting sailors who returned with some of them to the mainland.

Back again on the continent the little Bichon's happy ways soon won him friends in high places. He became the favourite pet of the aristocracy, pampered by kings and ladies of the court, and was painted many times by masters of the French and Spanish schools. Then fashions in royal pets changed, and after four centuries of high living, the Bichon Tenerife became the little street dog. But he was not without friends. He became the pet of the common people and because the Bichon was a master at performing tricks many earned their keep travelling with the circus and as the organ grinder's dog.

After World War I, many Bichons were brought home as pets by returning soldiers, but nothing was done to establish the little dog as a pure breed until the 1930's when four French breeders began to take the Bichon seriously. They established bloodlines through controlled breeding programmes, and in 1933 a breed standard was draughted. The more suitable name Bichon a poil frisé or "Bichon of the curly coat" was selected, and in October 1934 the breed was admitted to the Stud Book of the French Kennel Club.

By 1971 there was sufficient interest in the Bichon Frisé to warrant its admission into the Miscellaneous Class of the American Kennel Club, and subsequently the Bichon Frisé was granted official breed status. Similar recognition followed in Canada in 1975.

Courtesy: CKC

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