

# THE RUSSIAN TOY DOG: *The Pearl Of Mother Russia*

By Jamie Walters and Ruth Ann Ford

**T**he Russian Toy Dog is a pearl in the treasure house of its mother Russia. The breed has survived two separate periods of near extinction and had emerged in the modern era as a breed that is uniquely Russian in origin.

The breed is currently enrolled in the Foundation Stock Services with the American Kennel Club. There is a small but loyal following in the states and the interest in the breed is gaining popularity with others in the dog show fancy.

## History of the Russian Toy Dog

The history of the modern Russian Toy Dog can be seen in three separate but distinct stages. The first period was the time prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917. The second period involved the evolution and salvation of the breed during the seclusion of communist Russia. The third period follows the end of the "Iron Curtain" and the opening to sharing across the globe.

During the 18th century Imperialist Russia prized all things English. With this Anglican modeling of Russian upper class society, Russians began importing the popular Black and Tan toy terrier from England. The Russians bred the toy Black and Tan terrier smaller and smaller, with possible crossings with the original Continental Toy Spaniel that had already been so very popular all across Europe since the 15th century.

During the 18th century the popularity of attending an English Tea, an evening at the theater and other cultured events grew exponentially. Women with small dogs were seen as being at the height of fashion during these events and the small dogs became a sort of "living accessory" to the most in vogue women. These dogs also served a functional purpose as a hand warmer during cold Russian winters when carried in a ladies hand muff.

Early examples of the long coated black and tan small dog of this type can

be seen in 19th century portraiture of the ladies of Russian aristocracy. While the prototypical version of the Russian type of the toy black and tan toy terrier could be seen at dog shows in St Petersburg as early as 1907.

Following the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the fall of the Tsarist autocracy the breeding of these delightful toy dogs became anathema. This period of survival of the terrier of Russian type persevered



completely and had it not been for the birth of Chicky in the 1958 the variety would have been completely forgotten. The breeder, Yevgueniya Fominichna Zharova, made a concentrated effort to solidify the presence of the long coated dogs. By 1966, two separate distinct standards were written for the smooth coated and long coated varieties. During this period the smooth coated variety became known as the Russian Toy Terrier and the long



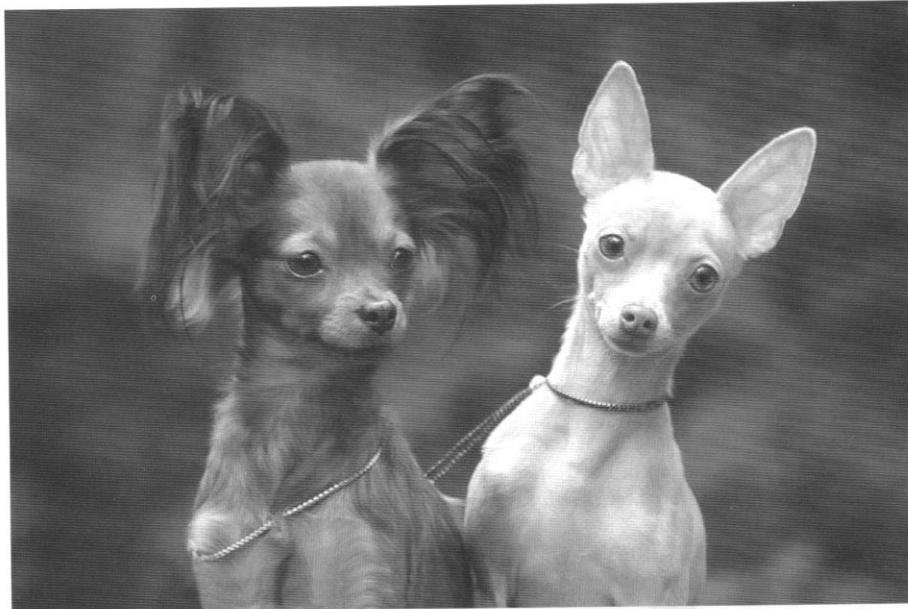
coated variety as the Moscow Long Coated Toy Terrier, denoting the epicenter of development for the long coated dog.

Through the 1970s and early 1980 prior to the dismantling of the "Iron Curtain" both the long coated and smooth coated varieties continued to develop with little to no influence from the outside world. However, the fall of the "Iron Curtain" saw an influx of breeds not native to Russia

in secret, as they were connected to the bourgeoisie and the overindulgence of the aristocracy.

By the mid to late 1950s the austere notion of utilitarianism of the early communist state began to relax and there was a concentrated effort to return the Russian Toy Dog to prominence in the Soviet Bloc. During these days of covert breeding the long coat had disappeared





and the popularity of the native toy breed waned.

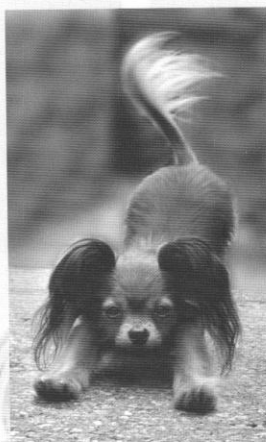
Luckily in 1988 a new breed standard developed by Russian breeders and the Russian Kynological Federation cemented the Russian Toy Dog's place in history. This new standard restructured the two varieties as a single breed and the long coated variety popularity quickly began to outshine the smooth coated dogs.

In 2006 the breed was added to the roster of the FCI's (Fédération Cynologique Internationale) new breeds and opened a new world of fandom to this treasured Russian export. Since the breed's addition to the FCI and exportation of wonderful specimen to various parts of Europe, Asia and North America the popularity of the breed is on the rise.

#### About the Breed

Whether long or smooth coated the Russian Toy Dog should be a small elegant toy dog that is well-balanced, lean and fine boned. This gives the breed a resemblance to being a small deer.

This docile appearance belies the impish nature of the Russian Toy Dog. At the core of the Russian Toy Dog's personality is a delightful little clown that loves to entertain its owners and



those that admire them when out in public.

Often mistaken as a Chihuahua or some sort of small mixed breed, the long or smooth coated breed's domed head, with large round eyes and big ears give the breed a look all its own that will charm just about anyone.

The smooth coated dogs are sleek and easy to care for, while the long coated dogs have profuse feathering on the ears, tail and backs of their legs.

These profuse featherings on the ears will often cause the long coated dogs ears to tip or hang like pendants as the dog matures.

Whether long or smooth coated the breed is wonderful to live with, being clean by nature they are housetrained more easily than many toy breeds and are quite proficient in litter box training.

#### The Russian Toy Dog fancy in the United States

In the late 1980s and early 1990s some Russian Toys made their way to the states with some Russian expats; however, the breed failed to gain a foothold in the states at the time as there were few venues to exhibit or promote the breed.

By the time of the new millennium a renewed interest in the breed arrived stateside and several dedicated individuals

devoted themselves to establishing the Russian Toy Dog within the Dog Show fancy in North America.

In spring of 2008 The Russian Toy Club of America, Inc. (RTCA) submitted the Russian Toy Dog to the Foundation Stock Services of the American Kennel Club and by August of 2008 the Russian Toy was added to the FSS program.

The Russian Toy Club of America became dedicated to promoting the Russian Toy Dog in the United States and educating the public about the breed. In 2010 the RTCA held its first National Specialty and membership of the club had grown over the years since its founding.

In the summer of 2011 the Russian Toy Club of America and the Russian Toy of USA met in Hot Springs, AR for the second RTCA National Specialty. At the event the two clubs discussed a merger that would be mutually beneficial to the two clubs and for the American Kennel Club recognition of the breed.

#### Conclusion

With the advent of the Open Show venue of the American Kennel Club the public will be able to become more familiar with these impish little dogs that are the pearl of mother Russia.

The Russian Toy Club of America, Inc. has devoted itself to a healthy and responsible development of the breed here stateside in conjunction with the AKC. More information about the breed and club can be found at the RTCA website. [www.russiantoyclub.org](http://www.russiantoyclub.org) ■

*Russian Toy Club of America, Inc. Members -  
Jamie Walters and Ruth Ann Ford*

