

# INTER-VARIETY BREEDING OF THE BELGIAN SHEPHERD DOG IN AUSTRALIA

By Amanda Camiller

All Belgian Shepherd dogs in Australia, Europe and around the world have inter-variety breeding in their pedigree. Every Belgian shepherd pedigree can be traced back to most, if not all, of the 4 Belgian varieties. It is hard to imagine where the breed would be today (and how each variety would look) without inter-variety having been in existence. Yet still many Belgian fanciers are not sure exactly what inter-variety is all about or think it is disadvantageous for the breed.

**The Belgian Shepherd dog consists of 4 varieties or coat types all being the same breed**

			
<b>Malinois Short Haired Red/Fawn</b>	<b>Laekenois Rough/Wire Haired Fawn</b>	<b>Groenendael Long Haired Black</b>	<b>Tervuren Long Haired Red/Fawn</b>

If the coat were shaved off each variety should look exactly the same underneath. This is where inter-variety is beneficial to develop and maintain phenotype (observable structure, function or behaviour etc) and genotype (inheritable genetics) for the all the varieties and the breed as a whole.

Without inter-variety breeding there is a danger that over time the varieties will deviate and become too different in breed type. We could end up with Belgian varieties that are not only different in coat type, but very different in other characteristics too which would be detrimental to the breed.

Accepted combinations of inter-variety breeding are:

## **Malinois & Tervueren**

In the 1st generation short hair (Malinois) is the usual result after which 3 clear Malinois generations are required if we wish to purify the short coat.

## **Groenendael & Tervueren**

Groenendael or Tervueren puppies can result depending on recessive and dominant red/black colour genetics.

## **Laekenois X Malinois**

To maintain correct coat type the Laekenois benefits from inter-variety with the Malinois. When rough hair is mated to rough hair over many generations it produces a coat that is too long and curly. It is recommended that resulting puppies from such a combination only be used for the advancement of the Laekenois variety.

All other combinations are forbidden due to the potentially undesirable coat or colour results e.g. black Malinois, black Laekenois, and Laekenois with hair that is too long & soft in texture etc.

Inter-variety was once permitted freely in Europe, and is still allowed today openly in some Countries with approval controlled by the respective kennel clubs or breed councils in others. However the Belgian Shepherd breed is present in much larger numbers in Europe and the gene pool is much greater therefore inter-variety is not needed as much.

As you have probably guessed I am in favour of inter-variety. Done carefully I believe it offers the breed some huge advantages. However I believe we also need guidelines and policies in place to prevent it being abused.

Within Australia inter-variety is particularly useful due to the smaller gene pool, especially for the Malinois and Laekenois varieties that are present in much smaller numbers in comparison to the Tervueren and Groenendael. The Groenendael and Tervueren are much more established and much of this is thanks to the opportunities inter-variety has offered in the past. In comparison, Malinois and particularly the Laekenois have not had the same chance to advance.

Inter-variety breeding in Australia was permitted freely for many years until 2005 when the policy became due for review and was discontinued. At present it has been extended but only if each inter-variety litter is approved by the ANKC 6 months in advance. In 2012 there is a push from some breeders to have inter-variety reinstated in full without prior approval from the ANKC being required. We will see what 2012 brings!

**Inter-variety bred Groenendael**  
(Groenendael produced from Groenendael X Tervueren)



**Intervariety bred Malinois**  
(Malinois produced from Malinois X Tervueren)



**Inter-variety bred Tervueren**  
(Tervueren produced from Groenendael X Tervueren)



**Inter-variety bred Laekenois**  
(Malinois existing in the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 generations of pedigree)

