



The White Pomeranian or Spitz - a Century of Persecution!

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A year ago I came across an intriguing comment, by Vale Nicholas, in the chapter on Pomeranians in the Kennel Encyclopaedia of 1907. He noted the larger white size had been banned from New York Dog Shows in the 1880s as it was felt they were prone to develop rabies.

Another canine historian, Rawdon Lee (1894), also expressed this viewpoint.

Additionally, I have always wondered why so little was known of the pre-1900 history in America of the Pomeranian. In most books this era is summed up in a couple of sentences with a mention of 2 or 3 Poms in the 1890's.

To my great surprise the answer to this mystery is in the wonderful archives of the New York Times newspaper. The mad dog scare in New York commenced in 1876 when a journalist singled out the white Pomeranian or Spitz Dog as the cause of 75% of human deaths in New York from hydrophobia - the term then used to describe humans suffering from rabies.

Unwittingly, this research has also revealed a plausible explanation for the missing history of the American Eskimo Dog.

At this time, as many canine historians confirm the Pomeranian was also known as the Spitz dog. J. H. Walsh (Stonehenge) was most specific on this matter and used Mrs Prosser's large white dog 'Joe' as an example. In the British edition of his book, Joe, a winner at Islington in 1877, features as an example of a Pomeranian and in the American edition of his book he is called a Spitz Dog!



Mr Walsh was highly thought of and the 2nd Annual Westminster Show in 1878 adopted Walsh's standard of points for the evaluation of exhibits at the show. However - they also banned the white Pomeranian or Spitz dog from being exhibited in the wake of the bad press the breed was encountering. The town of Long Branch also enacted breed specific legislation and ordered any Spitz dog in the City precincts was to be shot on sight.

Despite the lack of any accurate statistics to verify the claim of being pre-disposed to rabies, bad publicity continued and with it a certain degree of public hysteria. Articles from the era tell a sad tale and speak of how Spitz dogs were clubbed to death, shot and drowned. The medical profession encountered a condition they called pseudo-hydrophobia brought about by people being scared to death from the fear of contracting the disease.

The larger white Pomeranian or Spitz dog imported to adorn the carriages of the wealthy and rising middle class (confirmed in NYT articles) fell from grace.