

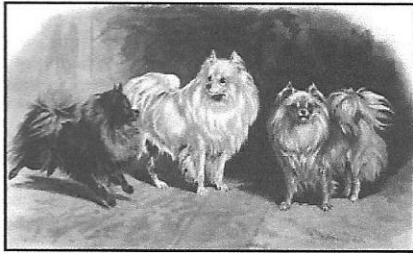
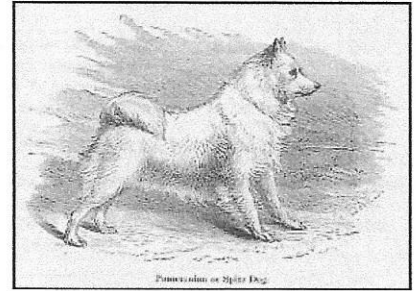
rattlesnake, the copperhead, the moccasin and the Spitz dog'. It stated the Spitz was devoted to 'thinning out the human race by inoculating with hydrophobia'.

There is evidence that for a number of years following all this bad press the Spitz was persecuted and often clubbed to death, poisoned or shot by a panicky public.

Meanwhile the City authorities took note and although stopping short of banning the breed an ordinance was passed to deal with the overall problem of stray dogs. Previously in 1874 they adopted a license and muzzling law that proved to be unpopular, as a bounty of 50 cents for every offending dog turned in at the pound, resulted in an epidemic of dog theft. Half a dollar could buy a man several whiskies at that time! A short article about the law did include the information that several 'pretty little Spitz dogs' impounded were now claimed.

The License Law Ordinance of 1877 basically required all dogs on public streets to be accompanied by a human and conducted by means of a dog collar attached to stout string. License details were to be attached to the collar on a nickel-plated card. Any dogs not on the end of a leash or unlicensed were 'to be arrested by official dog catchers and punished by death'.

In June an article renewed the attack on the Spitz dog. He was described as loathsome and continuing to insult licensed dogs whenever he could. His attitude was compared to a notorious murderer who laughed at the prospect of the gallows, as he bites without 'the slightest fear of punishment'. The article closes by asserting 'the ordinance must be enforced, if only to show the Spitz that he is not more powerful than the City Government'. Again, one might wonder if this is a dog or a person being discussed!



A man called Mr Bergh was entrusted with the job of 'punishing by death' but had yet to decide on the most humane method – he was considering suffocation with carbonic acid, drowning and blowing the dogs up with dynamite!

From the July 6th edition – Destroying of the dogs. This article is graphic and hard for the modern reader to work through without shedding a tear. Essentially an iron cage had been made seven feet long, four feet high and five feet wide and 759 adult dogs and 23 puppies were installed inside in batches of 48, taken to the river and drowned. A large crowd had gathered to witness the execution. Twenty dogs considered to be of some value by the pound keeper were spared. The carcasses were taken to a nearby rendering plant and the pelts were valued at \$1 each.

The article ends with yet another rant about the Spitz dogs – although only about 47 in number they allegedly accounted for most of the severe bites to employees. Of 48 men bitten 39 were bitten by Spitz.

There are no reports that any of these mauled men contracted hydrophobia! A theory promoted later was that dog-catchers were bitten so often they were immune to rabies. It does, however, demonstrate the rarity of genuine rabies as it's unlikely they had immunity.

Dog-catchers worked on a productivity scheme where income was proportionate to dogs turned in at the pound. These people were apparently from 'the roughest class' and were also armed with guns. Through the years there were countless incidents where they actually grabbed dogs out of people's arms, went into gardens and homes and seized animals. If challenged by the dog owners, often, for a \$2 fee the dog was returned with the advice to adorn it with a red ribbon to avoid further encounters.

Neighbourhood riots sometimes occurred such as the fiasco in 1886 when Mr Weissbaum, a fish merchant went to the defence of his Spitz dog. The dog catchers tried to seize the dog, peacefully eating a fish head in the gutter outside his owner's shop, and members of the Polish and Jewish community set to on them, the catcher's cart was over-turned and caught dogs were liberated, a shot was fired and the whole lot ended up in the court-room later that day.



By April 28th 1878 the town of Long Branch forbid Spitz dogs within corporate limits and urged citizens or Marshals to kill any Spitz found within city limits. This may have been the first breed specific civic ordinance.

### How the world of dog showing became involved...



At this stage the world of dog showing became involved. Also on April 28th 1878 a very interesting article gave details of the forthcoming 2nd annual Westminster Kennel Club Show. Ominously it also stated 'several persons have tried to enter Spitz dogs, but have been refused'. This did not escape the attentions of the dog showing world and others! Vale Nicholas wrote this in his contribution to the Kennel Encyclopaedia in 1907:

'In America the opinion was so deeply rooted that they were prone to develop rabies, that no entries of Pomeranians were accepted at the New York Show for a year or two after 1880.' In fact the refusal of entries was prior to 1880.

Rawdon Lee's book (1894) writes of the Pomeranian or Spitz dog:

A few years ago there was a mad dog scare in New York, and in some quarters the origin was said to be traced to the Spitz dogs, a great many of which were destroyed without any proof being forthcoming either one way or another'.

Harrison Weir wrote an article in the London Standard in 1889, which was picked up by the New York Times in October, dealing with canine madness in which he writes

'I am told the Pomeranian is an uncertain dog and in some countries is not allowed'.

The Westminster Kennel club held their inaugural show the previous year. It was limited to a few select Sporting breeds and spurred on by this success the club decided to open the show up to other breeds. The Field magazine in England (edited by Stonehenge - J Walsh) had publicised the show and wealthy fanciers sent entries over by steamer. Two collies, valued at \$20,000, had been directly imported for the show from the kennels of the Queen of England! This was to be a grand society event. The crème de la crème of American dog fanciers were to exhibit or attend. The last thing the club needed was mass hysteria brought about by the mere presence of a Spitz dog. Understandably they were banned. It is doubtful a judge would even want to go over a Spitz after all the scare-mongering of the press.

This decision met with approval, and by 1884 an article in the New York Times appeared about the 'moral mission' of dog shows, noting that by 'catering to popular prejudice' the founders of shows 'might have encouraged the breeding of Spitzes' but having declined to do so (by refusing them entry at shows) the Spitz is now generally thought of as 'no better than a cur'.

A Spitz, called Chubb, had won a prize in 1876 at a show in Springfield. However, it was not until probably 1894 that, under the alternative name – Pomeranian – that a Spitz dog would be exhibited at the Westminster Kennel Club Show.