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Tornjak

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Also known as the Bonanski Ovcar Tornjak, this ancient breed has been protecting the flocks of sheep and cattle in Bosnia and Croatia for at least 1,000 years. The word 'tor' means a sheep-pen.

The earliest written description of this large dog is to be found in the archives of a bishop in the year 1062. It is mentioned again, in later archives, in 1374 and then 1752. It has always been a dog of the hilly country and in more modern times its largest numbers have been concentrated in the mountains of central Bosnia and western Herzegovina. There has been some argument as to whether this is truly a Bosnian or Croatian breed and recently several books have appeared that list it as a 'Croatian indigenous and autochthonous breed.'

In origin this heavily built dog has been viewed as a descendant of the Tibetan Mastiff, with the later addition of spitz dogs and possibly some back-crossing to the Wolf.



According to the shepherds who work with these dogs and keep them close to their flocks day and night, they are capable of chasing away marauding bears. Any one of them is more than a match for two hungry wolves. In addition to their bravery, they are also extremely loyal, often stubborn, wary of strangers, and rather dignified. Their owners describe them as noble dogs, never looking for a fight, but ready to defend their flocks to the death if necessary.

The ears are folded. The tail is bushy and is held high 'like a banner' when the dog is active. The protective coat is long and thick. It is accepted in any color or color

pattern. The height is between 24-27 in. (60-70 cm.) and the weight between 77-99 lb. (35-45 kg.)

This rare breed is not yet recognized internationally and its numbers are low. In 1997, it was recorded that there were then only about 200 of these dogs with registered pedigrees. They, however, are becoming more popular at local dog shows and as many as 30 entries have appeared in recent times in a single show. This newly aroused interest in the breed bodes well for its future and in 1996 it was given an extra boost when it was chosen to appear on a Bosnian postage stamp.



Translated by Omer Hadžiselimović
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