

KIM-International – the First 10 Years

- Creation, Set-Up, Development -

The Beginning

Among hunters, the Kleine Münsterländer were known and loved because of their versatility. You could hunt with them in the field, in the forest and in the water. They worked before the shot and after the shot. And so it was for many decades in Germany. Breeding was further developed and stabilized, systematically and for the long term. Increasingly, stud dogs were used across borders or puppies were sold in many European countries and abroad. In time, some questions became more pressing like, "What will emerge from this breeding potential abroad?", "Are we promoting the preservation or the change of our breed?", "Could we not only export KIM, but also import them too?", etc. The numbers of Kleine Münsterländer abroad had become larger internationally, and in the meantime, there were KIM Clubs in many countries, but they knew only very little about each other. But this would change!

We wanted to know more about each other. We wanted to be able to share experiences, learn from each other, develop commonalities in breeding and promote cooperation. We decided in our Bylaws, "Our goal is to preserve the high standards of the FCI for this breed internationally" and "The preservation and promotion of versatile utility for hunting is the most important purpose of this international association". We have also decided "to respect the sovereignty and historically-based conditions of the national breed clubs".

These goals were fundamentally clear. But unexpected difficulties began with the implementation into practice: the representatives of the national clubs did not know each other well, or not at all; the legal integration of these clubs into the national organizations, such as the Kennel Clubs, for example, turned out to be quite different; the breeding regulations were and are in part very different; the regulations for natural ability or performance tests were and are still very different; and last but not least, the hunting priorities for the Kleine Münsterländer were also different in almost every country. In summary, we realized that the national interests and possibilities for the breed clubs are very difficult to determine and reconcile with each other.

But we have started nonetheless! Progress was slow and in very small steps. Ten years ago, we started with the development of the international organization. In 2006, it was officially founded as Kleine Münsterländer International in the form of a non-profit association. In the eight years of collaboration, the Executive Committee of KIM-I steadily grew together personally and in function. In this way, it became possible to develop and advance common initiatives, strategies and concepts.

The goals of our Bylaws and tasks

Goals:

- To secure the high standard of the F.C.I. for this breed internationally through the preservation and promotion of its versatile hunting abilities

Tasks:

- Unify breeding conditions (development of versatile performance breeding)

- Uniformly and effectively represent the interests of the breed with the national and international organizations and associations (development of cooperation with the **FCI and the national kennel organizations**)
- Conduct international tests and exchange practical experiences (**design and implement an international testing system**)
- Manage fundamental breed, utility and organizational affairs
- Advise KIM-clubs in a uniform way

What has been achieved?

Because we have only limited resources and possibilities, we first started with the organization of our work and cooperation, attempting to create greater transparency with our members in the extensive breeding and testing work. We then focused on these topics: the **expansion of versatile performance breeding**, the **development of contacts to the FCI and the national kennel clubs**, as well as the concept and implementation of an **international Münsterländer test**.

International versatile performance breeding

It took numerous, often fruitless efforts and a lot of time, to establish international transparency among the breed clubs and to receive and compare numbers and information about members, puppies, testing or breeding regulations. The conditions are so complex, and different from country to country, that today, after 10 years, there are still many unanswered questions. Because the standard of the breed is managed uniformly by the FCI internationally, much is comparable and thus assessable. But the task becomes difficult as it concerns the natural performance abilities of the breed. There are no international recommendations and no international comparabilities. A common understanding of breeding, similar breeding goals and regulations or comparable criterion for performance natural ability tests do not exist internationally. In spite of this, we have made progress in our work:

We know, that the greater part of the European KIM population today does not come from standard-based, versatile performance breeding. In many countries puppies receive FCI pedigrees even without the parent animals having passed any kind of natural ability test—to say nothing of a natural ability test comparable with others. In many countries the breeders orient themselves on the special types of hunting done by their hunters, thereby promoting the development of KIM subtypes, which have lost their versatility. But for breeding, however, the versatility of natural performance abilities must remain the highest goal. Otherwise the breed will lose the ability to be trained to specialize in all aspects of the work in the field, forest and water—before and after the shot! This ability to specialize through instruction and training is a fundamental breed characteristic, which must be preserved internationally. To illustrate this, at KIM-I today we speak about the „classic KIM“ and increasingly wish to spread the use of this expression in international breeding.

In 2013, after lengthy discussions, we asked KIM-Germany, as the parent country of the breed, to highlight and expand on the necessary hunting abilities of the breed in an international standard and made a proposal to KIM-Germany on this topic. KIM-Germany has picked up on this and has submitted a corresponding motion to the FCI, jointly with the VDH. Thus, in the future the “classic KIM” will be better anchored in the international standard as a versatile hunting dog.

For years, KIM-Germany has recorded with about 70 matings abroad per annum the most common use of stud dogs abroad. In this way small populations in countries, which did not

practice any performance breeding, were also helped and freshened up again and again with German blood lines. In order to promote the idea of performance breeding in cases like this, German stud dogs are now only approved within the framework of versatile performance breeding in KIM-International member countries. Among other things, this has led to a significant reduction of the matings of German stud dogs abroad. Under the responsibility of Dietrich Berning, KIM-Germany has consistently lobbied for the development of common interests in our international organization, and is – in particular – the motor for the consistent spread of versatile performance breeding. In addition, natural ability tests and breed shows, as well as judge training sessions, were actively supported by the parent country of the breed. Through the promotion of international performance breeding, KIM-Germany wishes to achieve the goal, that in the future breeding in Germany can be done with more powerful blood lines from abroad. An improved, mutual exchange of blood lines strengthens the base of our breed in the long term and helps the KIM populations in all of the member countries.

In the past year, we have created the position of “Chairman for Performance Testing” in the Executive Committee of KIM-International. Germain Klein from France was entrusted with this assignment. On the one hand, it is his task to support the national KIM clubs in the creation or further development of versatile natural ability tests and, on the other hand, to make assessments of natural abilities comparable internationally. In this way, we want to encourage the implementation of the future KIM standard in our member countries. In this regard, our Annual Meeting in 2012 agreed to minimum performance standards in the following natural ability characteristics: use of nose, desire to retrieve, search, pointing, desire to track, willingness to work and take to water and cooperation. Dogs without Laut or which bark without the presence of game are barred from breeding. These are the basics for international versatile performance breeding.

In several member countries KIM have already been bred and tested for a long time as versatile hunting dogs. In other countries most of the natural abilities characteristics in pointing are recorded and tested. This could be further developed. In the remaining countries there is no uniform understanding about versatile performance breeding of the KIM breed.

The goal of versatile performance breeding thus remains far from being achieved, but we have improved the requirements, done lots of marketing for the concept, established international cooperation and taken some steps in the right direction. But there is still much work to be done!

Contacts with the FCI and other national umbrella organizations (Kennel Clubs)

The development of performance breeding and of comparable criteria for natural ability tests runs into problems, however, not only with the national breed clubs. The national kennel clubs are the greatest obstacle in the various FCI member countries. With the exception of Germany, all other national kennel clubs issue pedigrees to breeders. Regarding additional records in these documents--test results, for example—these are determined by the kennel clubs or the hunting dog umbrella associations alone – not the breed clubs as in Germany.

Those things not accepted by a kennel club are not entered in the pedigree. And what is not found in the pedigree, is also of little interest to breeders and puppy buyers. Today there is still no control, whether and which natural ability tests may be recorded in the pedigree.

As a result, together with the German JGHV, we have undertaken initiatives before the German Kennel Club (VDH) to push for better solutions in international performance breeding. Up until now, all of the German hunting dog breeds have joined this initiative.

At the suggestion of Henrik Andersen, we had the opportunity to persuade Jørgen Hindse, President of the Danish Kennel Club and the Nordic Kennel Union, of the sense of our versatile performance breeding for the long-term, international safeguarding of the “classic KIM”. After the joint meeting with our Executive Committee in Hamburg, Jørgen Hindse, who is at the same time also the speaker of the Group Europe in the FCI, promised to support our international breeding strategy in his committees. And so more and more forces are found who advocate common regulations in the area of performance for hunting dog breeds in international organizations. But there is still a long way to go for us—but the beginning has been made!

The international Münsterländer Tests (IMP-A und IMP-B)

A further important step was initiated years ago with the development and testing of a concept of international natural ability tests, the International Münsterländer Tests IMP-A and IMP-B. Experienced KIM people from the Czech Republic, Austria, France, Holland and Germany have developed two sets of test regulations over several years of committed effort. Both tests enable comparisons of the KIM breeding potential at an advanced level of performance ability. The basic variation IMP-B corresponds essentially to the German Fall Breed Test (HZP) and the select variation IMP-A is a challenging combination of a natural ability and a performance test. The final proposal on the last versions of both test regulations is with the participants of today’s Annual Meeting. We are working toward the goal that the International Münsterländer Tests will be accepted in the future by all of the national breed clubs or Kennel Clubs as a breeding requirement for the „classic Kleine Münsterländer”.

Both versions of the test regulations have already proven themselves, are respected and continually encounter increasing interest with breeders and handlers. Since 2010 the IMP has been carried out and tested with international judging teams in Austria, Germany and Denmark (in cooperation with the German Landesgruppe Schleswig-Holstein). In two weeks the IMP-A and the IMP-B will be organized by the Dutch Heidewachtel Club (in cooperation with the German Landesgruppe Rheinland). Then more than 60 handlers, both men and women, will have completed the International Münsterländer Tests. For 2015 the Czech and for 2016 the French Club for longhaired pointing dogs have offered to organize both IMP tests. KIM-Germany has been asked to present the test regulations to the FCI for international approval (homologation). Then all FCI member countries will be bound to this official recognition.

The development, testing and implementation of both test regulations has greatly stimulated the international cooperation among the KIM breed clubs in the past six years. International performance judges were able to work together in mixed teams and exchange practical experiences. Handlers, male and female, have spent many happy hours together. That has brought us all closer together.

Cooperation in the practical work of breeding, promotional measures

The practical supervision of breeding in the national breed clubs lies on the shoulders of the Breed Warden. Therefore, last year, we established an International Breeding Committee in which interested Breed Wardens work together. Under the direction of the Breed Warden of the German national club Josef Westermann, common topics are discussed and regular information is exchanged and coordinated. In this way, a practical “small border traffic” of communication has arisen, which is very helpful and will also benefit the practical breeding topics internationally.

Despite our tight financial situation, we have repeatedly supported dog handlers, both men and women, with small financial grants, who have taken part in foreign tests. In this way, international contacts and an exchange of experiences shall take place on site. Unfortunately, our budget increasingly leaves us with increasingly little leeway.

What has not been achieved?

In all of the member countries we encounter similar situations: there are long-standing, firm convictions and habits. Much of this is the result of protracted developments, controversial interests and discussions or compromises. The breeders, member and officials have been constructing the “club building” for a long time together and for the most part feel comfortable and well cared for in this structure. The willingness to change is limited, because with the introduction of new ideas, practices and goals, then tried and proven conditions would have to be exchanged for much uncertainty.

The thought of versatile performance breeding requires more or less extensive changes in the breeding and testing system. For this, breeders, officials, performance judges and hunters have to be interested and excited. Until now we have had far too little power to convince and have enjoyed little success. In addition, in order to achieve international agreements, acceptable compromises must be made regularly. Unfortunately, the willingness to make compromises varies considerably.

Small KIM populations need a well-functioning cross border exchange of blood lines. Otherwise, health risks will be fostered by excessive inbreeding coefficients. If the criteria for breeding approval are increasingly limited - through the desire for a high level of performance selection, for example, then growing problems for the character and health of the KIM result. We should work against this. Up until now, unfortunately, we have been able to awaken little interest in our advice on this matter.

To develop sound concepts we depend on receiving information, figures and answers to our written questions. Often we were unable to convince our partners about the sense or urgency of our request.

On the one hand, traditions, self-image and deep-rooted ways of doing things, and on our side, lack of time, persistence and patience or insufficient persuasive power, has prevented us from making greater progress in the desired fundamental regulations on matters of breeding, canine utility and organization, which are found in the Bylaws. Of course legal obstacles in the various countries also play a role. But we are still far from an agreed unity and fundamental regulations.

The interest in and the identification with the work of KIM-International is predominantly widespread to a greater or lesser extent in the “upper levels” of the member clubs. Most breeders and dog handlers have little or no idea about our work. We have not yet convincingly succeeded in conveying the meaning and benefit of our work for the international breeding of KIM. For this reason, the willingness of the member clubs to improve funding for our work is very limited. This fact limits in turn the impact of our work. Until now, it has been possible to keep our budget in the black only with donations and private grants.

Summary

In summary, our development has required patience and optimism, but it is gaining speed in the meantime. The foundation for our work has been laid and become firmer. We have taken our role in international breeding strategy, as well as in international testing, international

advocacy, and in practical, cross-border breeding efforts. But we have also been unable to accomplish other important tasks, or have done so only insufficiently. The interest of the national breed clubs, as well as our funding, is still in great need of further development. With this, we still cannot be satisfied.

On this journey increasingly more KIM friends have worked together with great commitment. This is especially the case with the international tests. Many leaders from the various national KIM clubs have worked hard for the development of strategies and concepts.

My appreciation and thanks go to all of these friends of the KIM! Let me personally thank our Business Manager, Jacqueline Mette, as well as my colleagues Cor Bottenheft and Henrik Andersen, for the trusting and friendly cooperation in our Executive Committee. Without your continual and committed work, as well as the participation of guests in the Executive Committee, KIM-International could never have achieved today's milestones. I wish all much happiness and success on the future path for KIM-International, as well as a steady hand in the decisions of the future.

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Bernd-Dieter Jesinghausen