

Questions - A Learning Experience?

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Anyone who owns a Miniature Pinscher will testify to the fact that you can't walk your dog around the block without having people stop you to ask questions. If you and your dog venture out to a mall or flea market it is not uncommon to literally attract a crowd. Far and away the most frequently asked question appears to be "Is this a bred down Doberman?" Proud Min Pin owners are happy to respond with a resounding "No". Unfortunately, that is often the only response given. This is not because Min Pin owners are rude or unfriendly, but usually because they don't know the history of their breed. It is not necessary to recite an entire chapter of a book to provide people with some basic information on where the Min Pin came from. It would be sufficient to let people know that the Miniature Pinscher is of German origin and is believed to be a cross between the Italian Greyhound and the Dachshund. You might add that the recognition of the Miniature Pinscher occurred a number of years earlier than the recognition of the Doberman Pinscher. Of greater interest is the fact that in Germany the Miniature Pinscher was known as the "Reh Pinscher" due to its resemblance to a small red deer, the Reh, which was found in German forests many years ago. One of the most fascinating personal observations I've made is that innumerable small children will ask me if the little red dog I'm walking is a deer! This is a fairly common occurrence with children, yet I've never had an adult ask that question. Oh, through the eyes of children!

Next on the list of the most commonly asked questions seems to be "How big do they get?" This is a tough one to answer because our Breed Standard allows the size range to spread from 10" to 12 1/2" at the withers. That of course is not complicated, but you must factor in the dogs bred for show who were sold as pets due to size discrepancies in either direction who are still absolutely pure bred Min Pins. These pets can range from a tiny 8" to a towering 15", plus or minus. Naturally, the Miniature Pinscher Club of America (MPCA) strongly encourages its members to spay/neuter all such specimens but the parent club can't act as a policing agent. Min Pins who were purchased at pet shops or who were the result of backyard breeding can present even greater size discrepancies. To the alert Min Pin breeder this question about size is a golden opportunity to educate people as to why it is so critical to purchase a pet from a reputable breeder and why the spay/neuter contract is so important.

As you stand there answering questions and your Min Pin is barking, bouncing up and down and charging the lead in all directions, it should come as no surprise when the next question is "Are they always so hyper?" This question is a gold mine as it opens all kinds of doors, but my favorite is to use it as an opportunity to talk about Min Pin temperament. The Miniature Pinscher did not earn the name "King of Toys" by cowering around its owner's legs or being carried everywhere. This is a breed with big dog mentality in a small dog body. I love it when some of the judges who are old timers still spar them in the ring, and I hate it when those asked to spar stand in a small circle and commence to bait and stack their dogs - but I digress. A Min Pin with good temperament simply shows it. The dog is not aggressive but he is definitely assertive. He is full of himself and full of mischief. Rarely do you hear the words mellow and Min Pin used in the same sentence.

As the Public Education Coordinator (PEC) for MPCA, I am asked a myriad of questions about our breed. If I don't know the answer I have no qualms about saying so and adding that I will find the answer and pass it along. I would like to encourage all dog fanciers to view every question from the general public as a great opportunity to educate someone about your breed. Invariably, one question will lead to another and if people sense your willingness to take the time to talk with them they will walk away with both of you richer for the experience. The best way to learn about your own breed is to continually refresh your knowledge by sharing it with others.