

Is Manchester Terrier an overlooked breed?

Manchester Terrier is knowingly one of the oldest terrier breeds yet nowadays one of the least popular breeds in the third FCI group and not many people know of its existence! The first mention goes back to 16th century when a dog publicly known as a 'black and tan' was a very popular breed all around Britain. Small, elegant but compact, strong and fast dog was originally used for killing rats and other rodents and due to its very strong neck, they were also able to kill a fox. The shape and appearance only changed slightly over the years, they have become more elegant, the coat is shorter and the head is longer – all facts coming from crossing the 'original' B&T with some hound dogs (Whippet). Also in character they calmed down a bit but are usually quite a challenging breed to train. Still, after spending a generous amount of time with them in the puppy months and using strong and definite boundaries they become great family dogs – calm, relaxed in the house and active outside, with a lot of energy to be spent in running around and with you. The hunting instincts still insist, they will hunt everything that moves and this is the biggest behaviour issue in this breed. They should be leashed in unsecured areas as they will run after a hidden rabbit easily. Considering all facts written above we could compare them to a Parson or Jack Russell Terrier, Fox Terrier or maybe even an Irish Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier which are one of the most popular non-bull types of terriers, every one at least heard of them or saw a few of them on dog shows and some agility competitions. Even most of a 'non dog people' would recognise a PRT if they saw one walking around the neighbourhood. But not a Manchester Terrier - a breed that is a vulnerable native breed in England, its native country where only about 200 dogs are registered each year. In Slovenia we have 55 registered dogs all together, Southern parts of Europe don't even have any. The popularity is a bit on the rise in Germany, Netherlands and Scandinavian countries where they are entering the dogs sports ground more and more, but the numbers are still surprisingly small. You can also find them in USA but the toy version is the more known and popular one. Around the world they are rare and unknown and I can't see why this is a case.

Whoever ever saw a Manchester Terrier either on a city walk or just running around in a dog park, they stopped and commented on how cute they are, asking if he/she is a Doberman, followed by a no answer and they still go on with oh, but they look so alike and they are so cute and funny, they look like puppies etc. Everyone falls in love with their appearance: a small kid just wanting to pet it being so soft or even an adult just impressed with the fact of how shiny and black their coat is. When they see them running the usual comment is of how fast they are and when they see them do some basic tricks like a turn or maybe slalom, or say hi, they smile and comment on how smart they are. So my conclusion would be they are fancied by the general public. And if I take in account the fact I have to stop regularly on our daily walks just to talk with people about my two dogs – I would say this is the most popular breed there is!

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Moving along to a dog show, where most of the people know something about most of the breeds that are showing in BIS ring but not the Manchester Terrier. First of all, being a rare breed, it is hard to even see them on shows, even on big international shows there are only few entered, as an example WDS in Moscow 3 dogs entered, EDS in Brussels 19 dogs entered. Many judges who regularly judge 3rd FCI group only saw a few of them and whenever I enter the ring I hear a comment on how rare they are. The biggest number of

dogs showing is definitely at Crufts where every year around 60 dogs is entered. So I would say they are not a very popular show dog probably due to their 'normal' appearance that does not stand out in any way – angulations are moderate, coat is short and black, their stride is regular and all in all they are nothing special for an outside viewer. Maybe even for a judge as they are, even when entering BIS ring very rarely placed in group.

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In dog sports they are surely athletes in all views. Fast, agile, strong, brave, driven and also quite smart. Lets start with agility where they just fit in the medium category. Their speed and agility is unbelievable, their turns can be fast and controlled, they cover a lot of ground with one gait, and they can easily jump even the large obstacles – I would say jumping is one of their favourite activities. If you allow it and your dog gets very excited there is no problem for him to bump your nose with his head when you are standing! In the Northern countries and also in Germany and UK we can see them on many agility competitions, also winning regularly. It might be a challenge to control them on field because of their speed and a terrier character but some dogs are achieving a lot of great results with their owners. Next in line is definitely dog frisbee as the jumps of this breed are really spectacular and high. As they have a very strong hunting instincts they will fetch everything – ball, stick, frisbee, you name it. You just need to have the patience to teach them to give you your toy back. Competing in dog frisbee, let it be distance or freestyle, is not a very popular sport yet, but a Manchester is surely to be taken seriously when entering a competition ring holding a frisbee in his mouth. Another sport I would say they are perfect at is lure coursing – but this will be hard to confirm, while as far as I know, only my bitch is running on coursing trainings regularly. Her focus on the bait is unbelievable, she runs right behind a bait and she is fast and driven. She is no Whippet considering how fast they run, but her killing of the bait in the end of course is very effective. I plan on trying lure coursing with all my future dogs and if you know a Manchester Terrier owner I would strongly suggest them trying it out too – the coursing training is a number one activity for my bitch for sure, her eyes just sparkle when she hears the bait! Also they are a great companion on daily runs, they can do whole day hiking, a breeder in Poland even uses them in dog trekking where the distances are up to 50 km. I know of a Manchester doing nose work and mantrailing. You can find pictures of dogdancing Manchester and some are even doing flyball. In summer they will jump piers and go SUPing with you. They can really participate in every sport there is!

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So why are they so unpopular and unknown I ask? They are small and cute, can be tough, are active outside and calm inside when needed, they are easy to travel with, well behaved in public places if learned and socialised in an early age, the training process is a bit harder but still moderate compared to some other terrier breeds. And lets just touch the health – they can easily live up to 15 years or even more, there are practically no genetic diseases in their lines (very rarely eye glaucoma, auto-immune thyroiditis, von Willebrand's disease), their hips and elbows serve them well, they don't have skin issues or problems with allergies, you don't even need to bath them even their dentition is full and healthy. Also they literally have no dog smell, hygiene wise you just have to trim their nails regularly. Going to the veterinarian is a real exception, just do the recommended vaccinations and they will be fine.

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I really hope that popularity of Manchester Terriers rises at least a bit. They are great life companions if only you can consider spending a bit more time on their basic training and socialisation in the puppy months. And then taking care of them and enjoying your days with them is easy and exciting, as they will surely join you in all your free time activities. A good opportunity to see around 100 dogs of this breed at one time is a special breed event called Manchester Terrier Happening which is organised every year throughout Europe – this summer we meet you in Berlin, Germany.

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