

Interview with Kiene Zandbergen, of the Netherlands. Ms. Zandbergen has been breeding rottweilers under the "Ter Waele" prefix for more than 20 years, and has served as 2nd Secretary on the board of the Dutch Rottweiler Club since 1992 .



1) You had Rottweilers in your childhood home, what are your fondest memories of the Rottweiler as a child?

Our first Rottweiler, a bitch called “Barry” (Bork van de Brantsberg X Anka v. Sonnenhugel), joined our family in 1954 at the age of 9 weeks. Arriving home, my father placed her down beside him, where she remained loyally at his side for the next 12 1/2 years. She was almost 6 years old when I was born. My parents had their rottweiler first, and then children. Barry was “my first horse”, and she was our protector. Sometimes, we hid behind her when we were naughty, cheekily baiting our parents to “do something to us”. However, they did nothing, as they knew that Barry would protect us. She was always there, like our shadow.

2) Tell us a little bit about your history in the Rottweiler world prior to establishing “Ter Waele”.

Ter Waele is the name of our family home, which was built in the year 1959. I still live in the house. The area where I live was known in ancient Roman times as a water forest. In Latin, “Ter Waele” means a “water forest.” Our local historian and archeologist (also our first General Practitioner - family doctor) was also interested in ancient history, and told the story about the name to my parents. In turn, they placed the iron letters "Ter Waele" on our house. In the early 1960's the name was further established as the stable name for the sport ponies we were breeding, New Forest Ponies; and later in 1985 the name became our Rottweiler kennel name. It is also the stable name of our Arabians, featuring the Crabbet and

Old English type, which we have also bred for a number of years. The horses are co-owned by my eldest brother and I.

3) The Ter Waele-kennel was established in 1985, what led to you becoming a breeder (as opposed to simply owning Rottweilers)?

I was brought up with rottweilers and horse breeding. From early childhood, I was completely fascinated by them. The other dog breed we had at home were smooth Fox Terriers, as my father had those dogs from childhood. They still hold a very warm place in my heart too.

4) How would you define a good breeding stock and what are the qualities you like to look for in a Rottweiler when breeding?

This is a very difficult question because everybody has his or her own opinions about a dog or bitch. For me, the most important thing is that the dog/bitch comes from a kennel and a background that you can trace back. **I like a situation in which a great deal of additional information is known about the bloodline over a period of several generations.** You must know the dogs and the breeder to come to a decision about buying something from a specific kennel.

Further, for me, movement is extremely important. I also want dogs with an attitude and an open mind. I want a dog / bitch that is willing to please the owner. I do not like insecure dogs or dogs that lack drive. I am a very energetic person myself and cannot stand lack of motivation. I do not mind an independent dog. It is a must, off course, to find the key that will fit such a dog to get the best results in working and breeding. I judge my own stock pretty harshly in this regard. I want a dog with good conformation and structure, but I do not like the “extreme dogs” we seem to see more often these days. I want enough length of muzzle to give the dog the opportunity to get plenty of oxygen and have adequate room for all his teeth. Angulation in the rear and good feet are also very important to me (and my private opinion is that some of the breeders these days should pay more attention to this). I always say “no feet”, “no dog”, and “no movement”. Same applies to my horses. And by movement I do not mean a dog that can run fast around the show ring, but instead a dog that can cover ground efficiently with a very well balanced gait. I believe in a balance of confirmation & working ability. For me these subjects must go hand in hand.



5) What do you feel are the highlights of your work as a breeder?

Looking back, I am extremely pleased to have bred and owned bitch like Dutch Champion Ter Waele Ducaat. One of her greatest victories was being first in the open class at the Klubsieger show in Germany. That pleased me tremendously. Ducaat was very impressive and won many, many shows. Her brother Ter Waele Draviet was a well-known dog in Canada. I am also very proud of my Int. Champion Ter Waele Emirca, half sister to Ter Waele Ducaat. Emirca was a very good working dog too. I am always very happy when I see my plans work out in reality, meaning, when I get a litter of the quality and type that I am aiming to breed.

Sometimes a bad habit of mine, but I have always placed rigorous demands on myself. I am a perfectionist in many ways, not an easy part of my character! One of the recent highlights in my breeding program is the P-litter, Dutch Champion Ter Waele Patch, and her brother Dutch Champion Ter Waele Posse. These two dogs are owned and trained by me. Both also possess the attitude I like to see in my dogs. Indeed, they are both dogs that will be very difficult to replace. Naturally, I hope that more special dogs and horses will be born at Ter Waele in the near future. At this moment, I have a youngster who represents 3 generations bred, raised, owned and trained at Ter Waele. That litter is the result of 20 years of selective breeding, bringing my two main bloodlines together in combination. Time will tell me if my expectations were fruitful.

On the Arabian front, I was tremendously pleased when Ter Waele Hamidah won the three-year-old mare class in 2003 at the Dutch Regional, repeating her victory a few weeks later at our National show over heavy competition. In 2004 she was second in her class with a very slight difference in points behind the winning mare. That really gives me great pleasure, to further pursue my goals for generations yet to come.

6) What are your thoughts on the Rottweiler today noting his...

Working qualities

A very complex question to answer subjectively, I think perhaps some people inaccurately assume the wrong opinion about our breed. In the beginning, they were herding dogs. Now the herding days are long gone, the public wants a dog as fast as a Malinois or German shepherd, and they want them to behave like that too. This is not possible for our breed, and I think it is wrong to try to breed a dog like that. A Rottweiler can be a very good working dog, but it depends on the background and the bloodlines it came from. I am afraid at this moment some people are trying to create two different types of dog: a show type and a working type. I think this is the worst thing that can happen to our breed. I already notice this trend in other breeds and I am not pleased by it. Further, according to my personal point of view, many young dogs are rushed too much, way too early in life. I always find it extremely important that the dogs have their youth, with pleasure and education appropriate for their age. I get upset when I see young dogs going over fences, or A-frames, or doing bite work very early in life. I am also upset when I hear about a so called "great competitor" who buys several young dogs in one year, and gets rid of them as fast as possible when they do not meet unrealistic, premature expectations.

•Character

The average modern Rottweiler is perhaps a more outgoing and friendlier dog than in the past. Also, in the past, the mental state and quality of the dogs was developed through a totally different life than dogs have today. It makes, according to my point of view, a lot of difference which breeder the people buy their pup from. Stock bred according to the rules and code of ethics of a club, whose litters are inspected, is a much better start than a dog from a kennel following no code of ethics. Though unfortunately, quite often those generic kennels produce many pups each year.

Further, the socialization process of a young dog is extremely important. To create a social rottweiler one must bring the dog into a broad variety of social situations many times during his youth, and that the dog must have a very good relationship with his owner. It takes time to build that relationship up, and putting a dog in a kennel all day or taking it exclusively to the training club, cannot achieve it alone.

•Appearance

The average dogs are much bigger and heavier these days. At this moment, some breeders think a Rottweiler should look like a Bull Mastiff – especially the intention to create overdone heads. This is absolutely not in accordance with the standard, and it worries me a lot. It has been a reoccurring trend throughout the existence of our breed; in the 1970's it was the same and caused quite a few problems. Some stud dogs have really put their stamp on the breed, but not always in a positive way according to my point of view.

•Health

It is more common these days to take your dog to the vet regularly. I think we are seeing more diseases caused by congenital disorders than there were in the past. Years ago, outbreaks of infections and parasites caused a lot of problems for dogs, many pups and dogs died at a young age. The average dog was kept in totally different circumstances, and fed differently too. But these days, the knowledge and range of treatment possibilities by the veterinary community have improved a lot. That also makes it necessary for us to face health issues in another perspective. I think overall that HD statistics have improved when compared to the past. These days we see quite a few dogs having nutritionally related allergies. Today I think there are too many obese dogs, further decreasing health and longevity. I am also sometimes disturbed by owners/vets who go to extremes, and sometimes by disturbingly invasive means, to prolong an animal's life unnaturally.

7) If you could pick just one Rottweiler that represents the ideal Rottweiler to you, who would it be and why? (

For me, one of the most ideal Rottweilers was Oscar van het Brabantpark. Oscar was almost the perfect Rottweiler in structure, but also because of his outstanding character. Mrs. Clara Hurley and Mr. Michael Grossman later imported Oscar to the USA, where he lived only a short time. His sister, Odessa van het Brabantpark,

also shared the superb confirmation and movement of Oscar, as well as his tremendous attitude and character.

8) Are there any legislative restrictions on keeping a Rottweiler in the Netherlands? If yes, kindly specify.

In the Netherlands we have very strong restrictions on breeding. Rottweilers are still on our government's list of dangerous breeds. Especially discouraging are dogs bred by breeders who choose not to be members of the Dutch Rottweiler Club or abide by its Code of Ethics. Those dogs have sometimes caused the breed a lot of harm.

According to our rules, dogs must be x-rayed for HD and all breeding stock must be rated A or B (FCI standard). The Dutch Rottweiler Club has required hip evaluation since the early 1960's, and we have started x-raying elbows now too (I have already been x-raying elbows for several generations in my kennel). Our HD and ED committee is, in my opinion, the strictest in the entire world. For ED they require 4 X-rays of each elbow in different positions at the age of 18 months. HD x-rays may be done when a dog is over 12 months of age. The dogs also have to pass the mental test before they are allowed to breed. All dogs must also have at least two SG ratings at all breed or specialty shows and one of these ratings must be achieved under a judge who is a breed specialist. Dogs are not allowed to breed if they have not fulfilled our code of ethics requirements. For several years now, if a litter is not bred according to the code of ethics of the Dutch Rottweiler Club, the pups will not receive a pedigree. It is the Dutch kennel club, "De Raad van Beheer op Kynologisch Gebied in Nederland" who issues the pedigrees.

After whelping a litter, at least 10 months time must pass before the bitch may be bred again, even if the litter consisted of only one pup. This is mandatory from date to date! If this rule is not obeyed, the litter shall not receive a pedigree. A stud dog is allowed to produce 5 litters per year, and a maximum of 25 litters in the Netherlands over his entire life. Foreign bitches are not counted among the 25 litters. At this moment, bitches are allowed to have a maximum of 3 litters over an entire lifetime. A breeder is not allowed to breed more than 2 litters per year at the same address. Docking has been forbidden since September 2001. Our code of ethics consists of several pages in the size of an A-4 form.



9) Your thoughts on the future of the breed?

Sometimes I am worried about our breed because I see changes that could potentially lead us in the wrong direction. And for some breeders, brokers and trainers spread all over the world, money is their primary goal, and not the love and dedication to our breed.

At this moment I am upset about the prejudice in some overseas countries towards the undocked dog and their owners. I have heard some have even tried to force judges to “excuse” undocked dogs from the show ring. I think the time is long overdue for breeders and fanciers to cooperate together, instead of fighting against each other. In my opinion, there are many more important issues to be solved and improved for our breed.

10) Any additional comments or thoughts.

I always have been (and still am) pleased if somebody with more experience and know how from a specific breed was/is willing to share their thoughts and ideas to help educate me. These days I notice many novice breeders are not inclined to pay attention, or be mentored by older breeders with more experience. I get the impression they sometimes have the idea that they “know it all” after they have bred 2 or 3 litters.

I had the good fortune to be born into a family who had already been breeding horses for several generations. The family on my father's side are bulb breeders, and many varieties of tulips were created by my grandfather. You can only achieve such success if you are dedicated to the goals you possess, and set your mind to reaching them. As longtime Horse breeders, the necessity of closely evaluating breeding stock was ingrained very early in our lives. To further recognize the importance of looking around at other kennels/stables and discussing thoughts and ideas with other breeders – always keeping an “open mind”. Kennel (and stable) blindness is the biggest fault a breeder can make. Further, I am blessed to have the friendship of some very influential people in the dog and Equestrian world, willing to share their knowledge with me. To me that is priceless.

The Rottweiler is a wonderful breed in my eyes, but people must realize rottweilers are not suitable for everyone. That has been the slogan of the Dutch Rottweiler Club since 1952, and it has not changed. I sincerely hope it will be possible for me to pass on my knowledge to others who share a true interest in the history and future of our breed. For me, breeding parallels the painting of a masterpiece I will never quite finish. There is always something more to improve. Even after twenty years I am still learning, sometimes facing problems or situations I thought I would never encounter.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share some of my thoughts and ideas about our beloved breed, the Rottweiler, with the members of the Finnish Rottweiler Club.

Sincerely,

Kiene Zandbergen

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