

**Evolution of Field Spaniels**  
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## Abstract

The Field Spaniel, as a distinct breed, evolved from other existing breeds to develop into the all around show, companion, and hunting dog that is known today. The heritage of the Field Spaniels includes a variety of canines including the Cocker Spaniel, Irish Water Spaniel, Norfolk Spaniel, English Springer Spaniel, and even Basset Hounds. While all domesticated dogs originated from the wolf, the spaniel breeds share a similar initial evolution. The Field Spaniel developed from a variety of other breeds and characteristics of those breeds may still be seen today.

## Thesis

While the domesticated dog originates from the ancestral wolf, the subclass of canines known as spaniels share a common ancestry. The Field Spaniel, as a distinct breed, evolved from other existing breeds to develop into the all around show, companion, and hunting dog that is known today.

## Introduction

A noted fancier and author, Mrs. Peggy Grayson (Westacres Kennel, England) often stated that Field Spaniels have such a small genetic base that current breeders simply mix around the same genes. By this, Mrs. Grayson meant that current fanciers of the breed must take care to choose those puppies in any given litter that most closely resemble the proper structure and type of a Field Spaniel. In doing so, the breeder deliberately chooses against those puppies resembling the breeds that went into the development of the Field Spaniel as a distinct breed. This means that it is imperative to have knowledge of the development of the Field Spaniel in order that characteristics resembling the breeds that contributed to their development may be minimized while those characteristics specific to the Field Spaniel are maximized.

## Origins of Canines

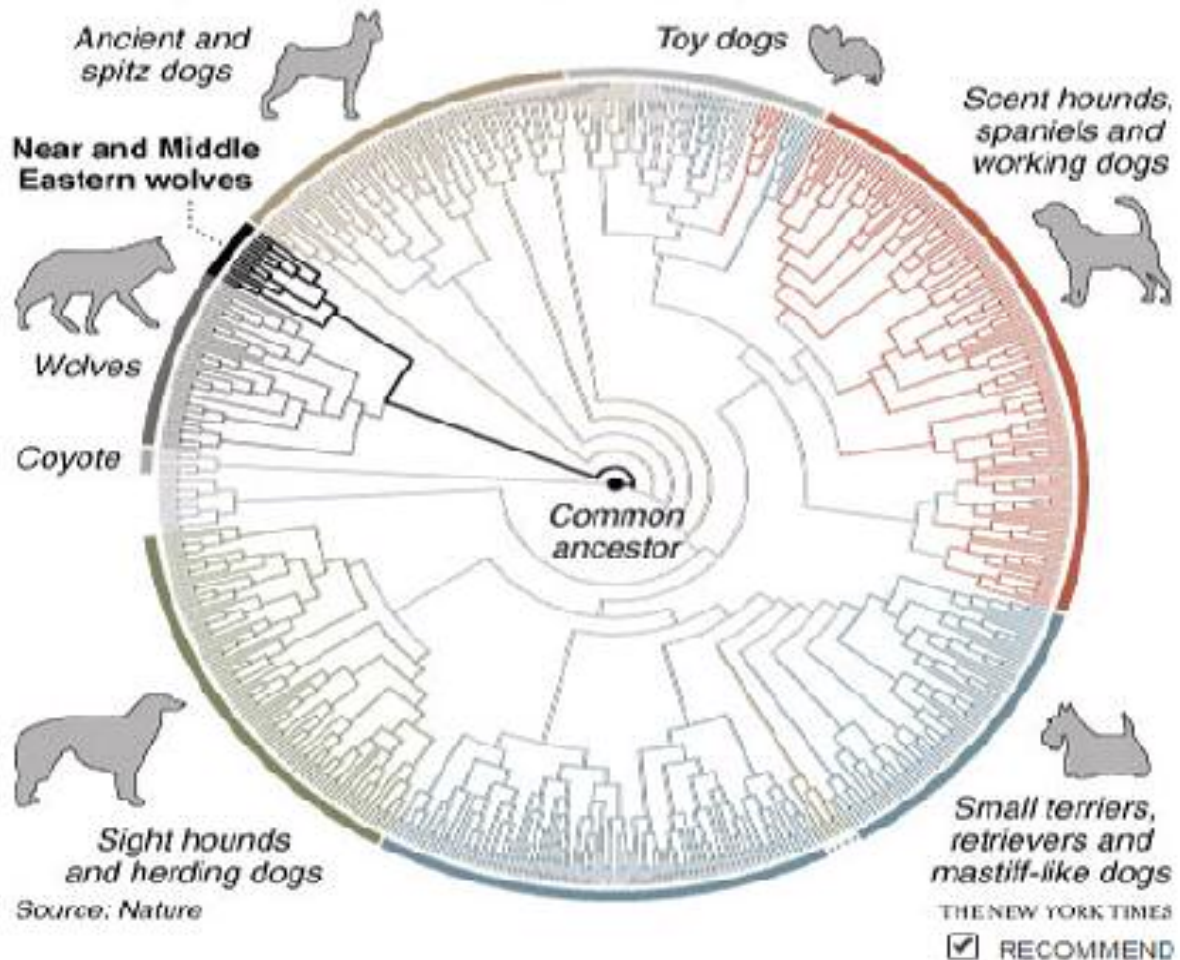
It is thought that dogs in general split off from the wolves over 100,000 years ago, but is that true? According to Nicholas Wade from The New York Times, “researchers have concluded that dogs were probably first domesticated from wolves somewhere in the Middle East, in contrast to an earlier survey suggesting dogs originated in East Asia” (Wade, 2010, para. 1). In addition, The New York Times created a chart that displays ancestral wolf to modern dog. This was a study that showed how the genetics of 85 different breeds are related to Near Eastern Wolves.

The New York Times

March 18, 2010

## From Ancestral Wolf to Modern Dog

A genetic study of 85 breeds suggests that dogs are most closely related to Near Eastern wolves, and were probably first domesticated in the Near East. A simplified family tree of the past 20,000 years is shown below.



(New York Times, 2010, para. 1)

### How Did Spaniels Develop?

The word "spanyell" came from the idea of the short legged dog with long feathering on their legs and tail, and dropped ears. Mindy Mymudes writes, "Colonel David Hancock, in *The Heritage of the Dog*, feels that the Roman empire played a major role in bringing the Spaniels to England, by way of the trade routes to the far east.

His belief is that the “sporting spaniel originated in China, from the short-faced ancestors of modern day Pekingese, pugs, and Shih Tsus, as well as Japanese Chins, Tibetan Spaniels, and Llasa Apsos.” These dogs were introduced into South Europe and were then bred into the small sporting spaniels and water dogs of the 1300 -1600 AD period. These dogs were the ancestors of Blenheim Spaniels, Canne Chiens, and Espagneul Nains, and then cocking and setting spaniels. If there is any question as to how a short nosed breed could be bred into dogs having the current muzzles of our present dogs, look into the recent history of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, a breed that was lost, but selected for out of breedings of the English Toy Spaniel” (Mymudes, 2002, para. 3).

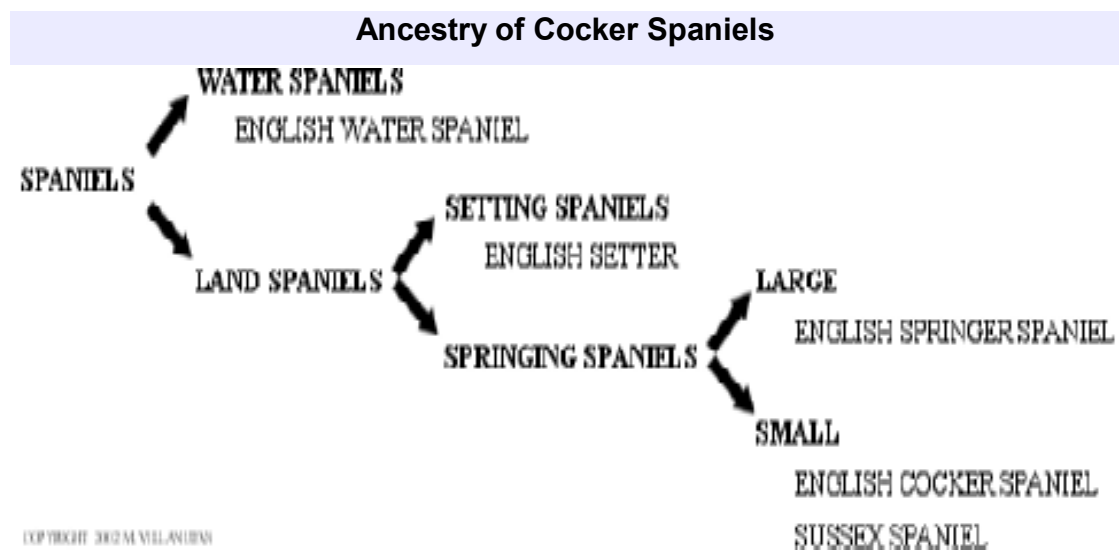
### The Development of the Field Spaniel

Field Spaniels are to have been documented to go back to a variety of canines including Cocker Spaniel, Irish Water Spaniel, Norfolk Spaniel, English Springer Spaniel, and even Basset Hounds. In order to understand a little more about where these breeds came from I will give a brief description about the history of each breed since between a combination of all these breeds it makes of the genetics of Field Spaniels. Of the four breeds listed the Irish Water Spaniel is the largest and the Cocker and Basset Hound are the smallest.

### The Cocker Spaniel

The Cocker Spaniel is the most similar to modern day Field Spaniels because in the 1800’s they were the same breed and came from the same litters. The only difference is a Cocker Spaniel was less than 25 pounds and a Field Spaniel was over 25 pounds, so they are the smallest of the flushing spaniels. A Cocker Spaniel enthusiast writes, “Cocker spaniels are descended from spaniels, one of the oldest breed of dogs. Spaniels have become a part of history in stories by Chaucer (1342-1400), Shakespeare (1564-1616), and even played a part in England’s separation from the Catholic Church when Lord Wiltshire’s cocker spaniel bit Pope Clement VIII on the toe. In the end, Henry VIII severed his relations with the Catholic Church. Spaniels may

have arrived in England during Caesar’s invasion (54-55 BC). It is assumed spaniels originated from Spain as the word spaniel may be derived from Hispania (Spain) or possibly from the French phrase Chiens de l’ Espagnol (Dog of Spain). Spaniels were especially bred to flush game out of dense brush” (Villanueva, 2002, para. 3). The Cocker Spaniel ancestry can be illustrated by a diagram that Villanueva drew:



(Villanueva, 2002, para. 4).

### Irish Water Spaniel

The Irish Water Spaniel (IWS) has similar characteristics of the Field Spaniel. The Field Spaniel often gets a top not, which is a clump of hair, on the top of their head. It is said that Irish Water Spaniels have been bred into the Field Spaniels during the 1800’s. The AKC explains their origin in more detail by writing, “A dog of ancient lineage, there is evidence of Irish Water Spaniel-type remains going back as far as the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. In the late 1100’s, dogs found in southern Ireland below the River Shannon were called Shannon Spaniels, Rat-Tail Spaniels or Whip-Tail Spaniels, among other things. Records document the “Water Spagnel” with “long, rough, curled hair and a tail somewhat bare and naked.” Today’s IWS is a true dual-purpose hunting dog, as qualified with upland game as with waterfowl” (AKC, 2010, para. 2). The Irish

Water Spaniel is a very silly breed and I believe that characteristic is in Field Spaniels and it proves the origins of the Irish Water Spaniels are linked to Field Spaniels heritage.

### English Springer Spaniel

The English Springer Spaniel (ESS) is similar in their overall silhouette of modern day Field Spaniels. The English Springer Spaniel is one of the oldest spaniels, but they were not officially recognized by the Kennel Club of England until 1902 and then in 1924 by the AKC. Mindy Mymudes writes, "By 1801, Sydenham Edwards in the *Cynographia Britannica* wrote that the land spaniel may be divided into two kinds, the Springing, Hawking Spaniel or Starter (which is a synonym for the Welsh Springer spaniel) and the Cocking, or Cocking spaniel. These types were not consistent, and in 1621 Gervase Markham commented, "It is reasonable that people should cross land Spaniels and Water Spaniels, and the Mungrells between these, and the Mungrells of either with the Shallow-flewed Hound, the Tumbler, the Lurcher and the small bastard Mastiff... all of which are yet inferior to the truebred Land Spaniel – if one could still find one of those. By 1800, three general classifications were established: cockers, used for woodcock weighed up to 25 lbs. Larger dogs, 17-18 inches tall and weighing 35 to 45 lbs. were field or English spaniels. These included springers, field, Sussex, and the Clumber. Miniature, or toy, spaniels fancied by King Charles and the Duke Norfolk, were called "Comforters". (Mymudes, 2002, para. 5-6). It is documented that English Springer Spaniels trace back to the Field Spaniel by an outcross in the 1950's.

### Basset Hounds

The Basset Hound has been breed a little into the Field Spaniel line in the 1800's, but the Basset Hound dates back to the Middle Ages. The Basset Hound is a direct descent or cousin of the Bloodhound. From the Basset Hound Club of America website it states, "The Basset Hound originated in sixth-century France, a country known for its many strains of hounds. Most strains had a tall version as well as a short-legged size under sixteen inches, which were called "*basset*" (*bas* in French means low-

set). Both the Basset Hound and its long-legged cousin, the Bloodhound, are thought to be descendants of the famed St. Hubert hounds. St. Hubert, a churchman, was the patron saint of the hunt, who set out to develop a new strain of hound, which looked similar to today's Bloodhound. Many authorities feel the Basset was a result of a mutation in the St. Hubert strain. This genetic deviation produced a short-legged, dwarfed hound, whose slower movement and low-set form was to prove useful for hunters on foot in search of small game" (Basset Hound Club of America, 2010, para. 2). The Field Spaniel in the 1800's had interbred the Basset Hound a little. The attributes they were hoping to achieve were influences in color, longer and low body style and an amazing sense of smell for hunting. It is believed by breed experts that the Basset Hound being breed into the Field Spaniels helped achieve the tan markings that are seen in Field Spaniels today.

### The Field Spaniel

The Field Spaniel is an American Kennel Club (AKC) registered breed that originated in England in the mid-1800's. The Field Spaniel was used to flush, find and retrieve game from land and water. Field Spaniels have been documented to have been brought over to America in the 1880's, but at that time was just the start of having a division from Cocker Spaniel to Field Spaniel. In order to tell the Field Spaniel and Cocker Spaniel apart the Field Spaniel was over 25 pounds and the Cocker was less than 25 pounds and that is what helped in distinguishing the difference of the two breeds. One of the first documented Field Spaniels was a Black colored Field Spaniel named "Dash" and below is a picture of what he looked like:



FS CH Black Prince AKC 12524 whelped 7/15/1881 resembled his FS sire CH Benedict. (Kaye, C., 2007, para. 2)

### Original Imports to the United States

The Field Spaniel almost became extinct in the United States. Becki Hirschy writes, “The modern re-birth of the Field Spaniel in the U.S. began in the homeland of the breed in December 1966. Three of this litter were imported to America in 1967 to form the base of the breed in America. These Fields were: “Mac” (CH Pilgrim of Mittina) and “Twiggy” (CH Flowering May of Mittina), owned by Richard and Doris Squier (Squier’s Kennels) of Randolph, Ohio; and “Brig” (CH Brigadier of Mittina) owned by P. Carl Tuttle (Gunhill Kennels) of Rectorville, Virginia. All were bred by Mrs. A.M. Jones, MBE of England (Mittina Kennels) and were liver in color. You may see the names of these original imports in extended pedigrees of Field Spaniels in the U.S.” (Hirschy, 2010, para. 4). Below is the picture of the three original imports to the United States:



Imports at the ASC Flushing Breeds Specialty Show 1968; Photo credit: Shafer, Courtesy D. Squier.

### Modern Day Field Spaniels

All Field Spaniels in the United States share a common base and with the exception of a few recent imported dogs, all will show these original imports in their extended pedigree. For example, the foundation of Calico Field Spaniels, the kennel prefix under which I breed Field Spaniels, is through “Clara,” CH Squier’s Clara Barton UD. Clara’s pedigree shows the original imports, CH Pilgrim of Mittina and CH Flowering May of Mittina, as her great-grandparents. Due to the narrow genetic base, strict attention to coefficients of inbreeding is necessary since the higher that coefficient

might be, the more likely you are to see “throw backs” to the breeds who went into the development of the Field Spaniel.

### Conclusion

While all domesticated dogs originated from the wolf, the spaniel breeds share a similar initial evolution. The Field Spaniel developed from a variety of other breeds and characteristics of those breeds may still be seen today. It is imperative that fanciers of the breed have knowledge of the evolution of the Field Spaniel as a distinct breed of dog in order to choose puppies that show correct type and structure so that any individual looking at the mature dog would be able to say, “That is a gorgeous Field Spaniel.”

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