

FILA VAGABONDS

INES VAN DAMME (text and pictures)

Of course I have seen mongrels and vagabonds in Brazil as much as they can be found everywhere in the world. In Brazil they are called “vira latas” that means dogs that eat from cans found in the garbage. It is obvious that in the patria of the Fila real Fila vagabonds can be found and also mongrels that have Fila blood in their veins.

The first one I spotted – many years ago - was a huge brindle Fila, he had no owner but he choose the place where to live, it was next to a gasoline station near Belo Horizonte. A friend of mine who used to come there frequently told me that he had Sobrado blood, the famous old line from Minas.

In the small places in the Serra da Mantiqueira in the south of Minas, the region where so many Filas were bred in the past, I have often seen Fila mongrels.

In Carmo de Minas there was a small size Fila type sleeping in the street, always in the same place. He had the traditional cinza vinagre color, the darkish shade that was also frequently found in the Filas of Pedrinho do Engenho who had his Fazenda close to this town.



In Itanhandu there is a brindle Fila mongrel walking around, he has no owner. He is not looking slim and I suppose that he has his usual places where he gets something to eat. When I spotted him he stood relaxed in front of a small food shop, watching what was going on in the street.

All these dogs are calm, do not show the aggressive part of the Fila temperament, a logical thing because they do not have anything to defend, on the contrary they have to be opportunist to get their daily food. The only typical element of the Fila character is their

ojeriza, their mistrust and they keep distance.

The most exciting specimen I met was in Passa Quatro, near Itanhandu. I was sitting in the back seat of the car of Brazilian friends driving through a small street with modest tiny houses. Two women were walking there in company of a dog, and in a flash I saw him, that white dog walking the Fila pace. I asked my friends to stop, to drive back and I jumped out. And

indeed, it was a white Fila with brindle plates, but not hundred percent pure. The proportions of his body were correct, top line and underline were very good, he had a white muzzle that went up to the head, and the eyes and ears were covered with brindle spots. The legs and the body were white apart of two big brindle spots beginning behind the



shoulders and two smaller ones at the backhand, covering part of the tail. The proportions of the head were correct, only I missed the depth of the muzzle. The ears were set too high. It was a pity that the skin under the white hair showed black spots. This is forbidden in the CAFIB Standard, the only Standard that still allows this antique variation of this colour

in the Fila.



Nevertheless, meeting this Fila was for me stepping back into time. These Filas were seen frequently in the old Fazendas during the time that Dr. Paulo Santos Cruz was looking for pure specimens in Minas Gerais. I asked where

he came from. Nobody knew, the lady that took care for him did not even

realize what she had, it was just a dog and in her eyes I must have been a very strange foreign woman, making pictures of her “mongrel”. She even wanted to give him to me, a nice gesture indeed, but I decided that it was better for this old male to stay in his peaceful surrounding instead of being transported in a plane to an other continent.

It is obvious that in the State of Minas Gerais, the cradle of the Fila Brasileiro breed; a lot of Filas are wandering around and are tolerated and left in peace by the inhabitants, surely because these dogs compel admiration by their noble attitude.

My friend Dr. Olegário Bretas Ferreira told me a nice story about a vagabond Fila he knew in a small town at the São Francisco River where he usually goes for fishing. This is what he told me:

I do know some dogs, which drift from one place to another in some country cities. The one, which has really impressed me, is a brindle male, which can be seen in the streets of Felixlandia, near Tres Marias that is in the North of Minas Gerais on the banks of the São Francisco River, 183 km. away from Belo Horizonte.

This dog is a pure Fila and he used to live in a farm with other Filas. When he was about six months old the farmer sold the farm and moved away. The dog left the farm and found itself in this city called Felixlandia. The population of that city, about 12.000 inhabitants, accepted him and everyone respected him. No one got close to this dog and he spent his time at the doors of a little grocery and in front of a butcher's shop where he received some meat, bones or bread from the people that worked in these places. I first saw him about 9 years ago and I was impressed and tried to track from where he came. Then many people told me his history and I have the dog on film. He never played with anyone and I had serious thoughts of using this dog. The only thing that prevented me from using him is that I did not know how to put him with a bitch without danger. He still walks around the city and people change their way in order not to walk on the same side. He is calm and firm. Another interesting thing is that I noticed that in these country cities normally there are many dogs wandering around and I noticed that after some time the size of the street dogs in Felixlandia grew and many started to look like Filas once he bred ALL THE BITCHES, BIG OR SMALL ONES, in the city.

I regret not having used this dog because when I saw the result of the breeding with sorry-looking dogs I could verify how pure he was and how much he threw in the bitches. Now he is old and still lives there and still is respected by everyone.



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THE PROUD FELIXLANDIA VAGABOND FILA