



## Why control pests with terriers?

BY THE IRISH WORKING TERRIER FEDERATION (IWTF)

1.1. THE use of terriers to control pests has evolved, improved and continued to flourish over many hundreds of years. If a more practical, efficient or effective alternative existed, terrierwork would long since have been superseded as a result of natural progression. In many pest control situations it is the most humane method available and today it is the only remaining legal method of controlling foxes below ground.

1.2. The terrier's primary role is not to fight with its quarry. Its role is to locate the quarry below ground and to bark at it continuously, either causing it to leave the den or, alternatively, to indicate where in the den the quarry is located so it can be dug to and dispatched. Terriers are also used to locate and flush quarry above ground and in dense cover.

1.3. Terriers are kept by farmers to control pests around the farm. They are used by gamekeepers, independent pest controllers and other wildlife managers wherever rats, rabbits, mink or foxes cause damage. They are also used in association with packs of Foxhounds and Minkhounds. All responsible terriermen ensure the necessary culling of pests is carried out as humanely and efficiently as possible, and in accordance with the IWTF code of conduct.

1.4. Pest control with terriers is recognised and widely practised throughout Europe and in various other parts of the world.

1.5. It is an essential service which is well accepted by the farming and rural communities, with whose consent and upon whose land it takes place. Indeed, anyone engaged in terrierwork should seek the landowner's permission.

1.6. Terrierwork is a selective form of control, in that when a fox causes damage, it is often possible with the necessary fieldcraft skills to locate the culprit's den and ensure it is dealt with accordingly. Foxes are opportunist killers but experience has shown that it is often the old, sick or injured which turn to alternative food sources when they are unable to catch natural wild prey.

1.7. Terrierwork is one of the few control methods where the quarry is normally identified alive and to hand before being dispatched. All activity is localised and takes place over a relatively small area, normally a few hundred square metres maximum.

1.8. Terrierwork poses no threat to domestic pets, farm animals or other wildlife, neither does it interfere in any way with the activities or interests of non-participants.

For more information on the Irish Working Terrier Federation, visit [www.iwtf.ie](http://www.iwtf.ie)

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to each compartment that can easily be operated with one hand.

For more information on the double and triple terrier boxes, priced at £175 and £215 respectively, or to view the full Animal Transit Boxes Ltd range, visit [www.animaltransitboxes.com](http://www.animaltransitboxes.com)

# Terriers!

Special feature

## A question of size

**I AM sure I was not the only person surprised to hear of the recent admission of the Jack Russell to the Kennel Club (KC). Do we not already have pedigree Russell Terriers? Is that not what a Parson Russell Terrier is?**

Many readers will have seen the announcement from the KC that, from January 1, this year, the Jack Russell Terrier would be a recognised breed. Although the KC does not intend on publishing an interim breed standard until April 1, its website already includes the proposed wording for the standard.

In 1990, when the KC opened the first register for Jack Russell Terriers, it adopted Parson Russell as the name for the new breed. Presumably this was to distinguish the new 'pedigree' terriers from what Plummer described as the "motley collection of dogs collectively and conveniently known as Jack Russell Terriers."

In the United States, from 1997 the American Kennel Club registered Jack Russells as the 'Jack Russell Terrier', until it too adopted the title Parson Russell in 2003. Creating a new name for a long-established dog breed was nothing new though.

Breeders only renamed coloured working terriers 'Lakeland Terriers' in 1912. Similarly, breeders coined the name Border Terrier long after Northumbrians knew them as a Redesdale or Coquetdale Terrier.

### Ability and conformation

Putting aside my confusion about two types of Jack Russells having KC recognition, my main interest in reading the standard was in seeing what size it prescribed. Sensibly, the draft standard requires Jack Russell Terriers to be 10-12 inches and that substance and weight should be proportionate to height. As for 'body', the standard states a Jack Russell should be small enough to be "spanned by two hands." Under 'characteristics' the terrier should be "lively, alert and active. A good hunting terrier, sturdily built, that could go easily to ground." As far as it went, that seemed fine.

However, according to its KC standard, a Parson Russell Terrier should be "originally a terrier bred to work fox." It should be a "dog that has the ability and conformation to go to ground." The standard describes the ideal height as 13 inches for bitches and 14 inches for dogs. It adds "most importantly, soundness and balance should be maintained while taking into account that this terrier, bred to work fox, should be capable of being spanned behind the shoulders by average sized hands. With these provisos, lower

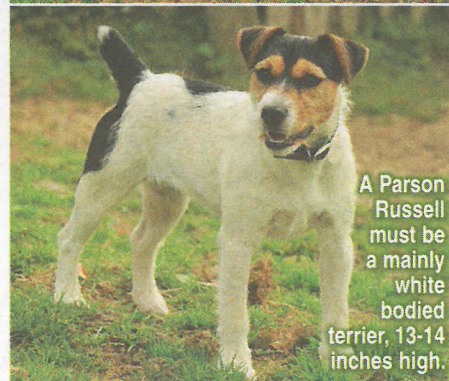
**George Sherston looks at the breed standards for both Parsons and Jack Russells**



Hunts in the 1920s preferred terriers to be between 11-13 inches.



The Jack Russell is now a recognised breed.



A Parson Russell must be a mainly white bodied terrier, 13-14 inches high.

heights are acceptable, however."

So to summarise, a KC registered Jack Russell must be a mainly white bodied terrier which can be spanned and is 10-12 inches high. Meanwhile, a Parson Russell must be a mainly white bodied terrier which can be spanned and is 13-14 inches high, but can be smaller. Surely this means a short Parson Russell can be a Jack Russell and a tall Jack Russell can be a Parson Russell?

This riddle reminds me of the time a young lady approached me in the secretary's tent at our local terrier show. "Do you have a class for Parson Russell Terriers?" she asked. I explained we had classes for Jack Russells, Borders and Lakelands. She gave me a patronising smile and said: "No, I meant a class for Parson Russell Terriers." Though I explained it would be fine to show her dog alongside identical looking (although unregistered) terriers, I could not persuade her to enter her dog.

Despite sowing confusion by registering the same types of dogs as two separate breeds, I do think the KC are right in setting the maximum height at 14 inches. Also right for the future of Russell Terriers (of either stamp), is the insistence dogs be of a size that an average pair of hands can span. Too many terriers today are too big, in height and in chest size.



This may seem like a bold statement to make but I've yet to come across any serious terrierman or woman who recommends terriers of 15-16 inches for working to ground. Even less likely is that one can find a writer on terriers who favours terriers much over 14 inches.

Jocelyn Lucas, in his encyclopaedic work, *Hunt and Working Terriers* (1931) describes the type and weight of terriers worked by almost every Hunt in the United Kingdom. Though he records some variation, most Hunts in the 1920s preferred terriers to be between 14-16lb, which supposes terriers of 11-13 inches.

The Hunt Masters canvassed by Lucas included not only those from the shires but the hill packs and the fell packs as well. All preferred smaller terriers and many of these hunt terriers ran with the hounds.

Gerald Jones, who wrote as Dan Russell, was an authority on the Rev. John Russell and his terriers. Jones often repeated the old saw about the sporting Reverend liking terriers to be 14 inches and 14lb. However, towards the end of his life, Jones took to wondering how true it was that Russell's dogs were all 14/14, likening such a dog to a daddy-long-legs. Similarly, Plummer's view was that a 14-inch terrier at 14lb would look emaciated.

### Quarry list

John Winch, that most knowledgeable of terriermen, wrote in 1980 that Jack Russells were far too tall and light. His view was that a general-purpose terrier should be 13 inches and 16lb in weight. More recently, Patrick Burns, an American terrierman, provided information on his website on the ideal size of a working terrier. His website details 100 terriers, all but one registered with the Jack Russell Terrier Club of America. All the dogs were proven workers, working at least two kinds of quarry underground, and most worked at least three. The quarry list includes red fox, grey fox, groundhog, raccoon and opossum.

Burns states the average size of the 100 working terriers (58 bitches and 42 dogs) in the sample was just under 12 inches. He believes small size is of little or no obstacle to working formidable quarry. The dogs under 11½ inches tall on this list were the ones most likely to work red fox, grey fox and raccoon.

The KC will argue, I'm sure, that it is serious about preserving the Jack Russell and Parson Russell as dogs which have the conformation and ability to go to ground. To achieve this it will need to pay close attention to how its judges apply the standards on height and chest size.