

A Yorkie OR A Silky WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

BY SANDY MESMER, TESSIER SILKY TERRIERS



Yorkshire Terrier (Yorkie)

Silky Terrier (Silky)



We've all walked down the street and complimented someone's small, silver-coated "Silky Terrier," only to be told, "This is a Yorkshire!" Then, to be politically correct, we call the next one we see a Yorkie, only to be told, "Can't you tell the difference? This is a Silky!"

So, what IS the difference?

First, a bit of history of both breeds. The famous 19th century dog writer Edward C. Ash mentions "bonnie wee Skyes with long silky hair." The idea here is that in the early 1800s, enterprising Skye breeders produced a miniature and silky-coated version of their 50 to 60 lb. breed, creating the now extinct Paisleys and Clydesdales. One breed was a beautiful silver blue, the other a deep silver blue and tan. Though smaller, they were long and low like a Skye.

In the 1840s and '50s, northern English pub owners latched on to these "mini Skyes." They needed small, scrappy terriers for their rat pits (where dogs were thrown into a pit full of rats, and bets were laid as to how fast a dog could kill the vermin). The smaller the dog, the larger the betting. Conjecture says that these small but tough dogs were bred together with the equally scrappy, but slightly bigger, Black and Tans (progenitor of the Manchester Terrier) to produce the blue, tan, and fawn of the Silky Terrier and the blue and tan coloring of the Yorkshire Terrier we see today.

The father of the Yorkshire Terrier is Huddersfield Ben who lived in the 1860s.

The Yorkshire developed from "Ben," as pub owners recognized the "fancy" quality of Ben's get. These quickly became a popular milady's companion, despite the dogs' regular desire to nip behind the curtains and grab a mouse or two.

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But what about the Silky? Ben's granddam, "Katie," emigrated with her owners to Tasmania in Australia, where the Silky Terrier (also known as the Australian Silky Terrier) was developed. Newspaper reports document this as early as 1860.

The facts, as we know them, are that Yorkshire Terriers and Silky Terriers are genetically just about the same.

But the Yorkie developed in an industrialized society—Northern England—where tiny size, long flowing coats, and the ability to hide in milady's sleeve were prized. Silkys were also developed as companion dogs, but their owners were pioneers who prized the Silky's joy of life, independent thinking, and scrappy terrier qualities, resulting in a somewhat larger, hardier breed.

Silkys are larger than the Yorkie. Yorkies tend to be about 4 to 7 lbs. (though some are throwbacks to Ben and are much larger) and Silkys are roughly 8 to 12 lbs. Silkys have a longer muzzle and a longer back. Both breeds have distinctly terrier temperaments, and can take over their owners' households, so both breeds require owners who can be very kind but very firm.

But there is one difference between the two breeds that is perhaps the most helpful to the casual passerby. In 2022, Yorkies are the 13th most popular breed in the US according to the AKC. Silkys rank 116th. So, if you see a small, silver-coated dog walking down the street, chances are—it's a Yorkie. ■



Clau Mi



Lou Barnicle

