

Introduction

This may be your first glimpse of a Shiba. Cute huh? The Shiba is probably one of the most universally appealing of all breeds. It has the look toy manufacturers try to capture in their favorite stuffed animal, the teddy bear. But, the Shiba is not a toy. It is a very lively little dog with a unique set of characteristics. Each one is an individual with its own personality, but there are some traits that are considered typical of the breed. This booklet will give you a brief overview of the breed.

A Brief History

A small, sturdy, double-coated, prick-eared dog with a fox-like expression, the Shiba Inu originated in Japan, quite possibly as early as 1500 BC. The first Shiba was officially recognized by the Japanese Preservation Society (NIPPO) in 1932. In 1936, the Shiba was

designated a precious natural treasure in its country of origin.

The name Shiba Inu was first used to identify the breed in the 1920's. "Inu" means dog, but the translation of



"Shiba" varies. Shiba can mean the color of or an actual brushwood plant indigenous to the Shiba's habitat; more often Shiba means small. Thus Shiba Inu is translated as "brushwood dog" or "small dog". It is the smallest of a family of breeds known as the "Japanese Native Breeds". The others are the Akita (largest) and the Kishu, Hokkai, Shikoku and Kai (medium). Shibas appeared in the United States after the end of World War II.

Physical Characteristics

The Shiba is a very proportionate dog with a height to length ration of 10 to 11. Males run from 14.5 to 16.5 inches tall with females ranging an inch shorter. Height over the upper limits and below the lower limits is a disqualification. Weight varies according to height up to about 25 pounds. It is a medium boned, moderately compact and well muscled dog with a spitz-like appearance. Because of its hunting heritage, it should be quick, agile, and able to turn on a yen. It has a dense double coat similar to that of a husky. The breed standard has the following acceptable colors: Red, Red Sesame (sable), and Black and Tan. Creams, whites, or any other color is a serious fault. White and cream shadings are present on the legs, belly, chest, and part of the face and tail.

Temperament

With a black button nose, little pricked ears and a curly tail, the Shiba enters the world knowing he is a superior being. Whether with intrepid boldness, squinty-eyed cuteness or calm dignity, he is king.

The Japanese have three words to describe the Shiba temperament. "Kani-I", which is bravery and boldness combined with composure and mental strength. The opposite side of "Kani-I" is "Ryosei" which means good nature with a gentle disposition. One cannot exist without the other. The charming side of the Shiba is "Soboku" which is an artlessness with a refined and open spirit. They combine to make a personality that can only be described as "irresistible".

If a Shiba could utter only one word, it would probably be "mine". It is "mine" food, "mine" water, "mine" toys, "mine" sofa, "mine" crate, "mine" car, "mine" owner, and "mine" world. Sharing is a concept he thinks others should practice.

Exemplary examples of canine cuteness, fiery little fuzzballs from hell, no words can describe the appeal of the infant Shiba. A litter of Shibas is a Dakin™

convention and a school of piranha, strutting, posturing little wind-up toys. The adult Shiba is far from a toy. "Macho stud muffin" has been used to describe the male Shiba. The body may look "muffin", but the mind is all "macho stud". The Shiba takes the spirited boldness part of the temperament quite seriously. Early socialization, temperament testing, and careful conditioning are mandatory for the young puppy.

With "Soboku", the Shiba sets his hook into the heart. This is "artlessness" with squinty eyes, airplaned ears and a vibrating tail. It is "charm" standing in your lap washing your ears, and "dignity" plus "refinement" born of the knowledge of superiority.

Health

As a breed, Shibas can rightfully be described as sturdy, healthy little dogs, able to stand the rigors of outdoor life as well as enjoying the comfort of indoor dwelling. They are easy keepers, requiring no special diet other than a premium commercial dog food, and they can run for miles with an athletic companion or take their exercise chasing a tennis ball around the backyard. Their cat-like agility and resilience provide good resistance to injury, and the "natural" size and symmetrical proportions lesson susceptibility to conditions caused by structural imbalance.



Despite their assets, Shibas do have some hereditary defects which all reliable breeders screen for in their breeding stock. Patellar luxation is common in toy breeds and sometimes appears in Shibas. It causes loose kneecaps and is usually not severe enough to be detrimental to a pet. An experienced veterinarian can detect the condition by palpation. Hip dysplasia occasionally occurs but it is not as serious in the Shiba as it is in large breeds of dogs. Mild dysplasia will not

show any adverse clinical effects and the dog will lead a normal life. Responsible breeders will not breed any dog whose hips have not received a rating of 'fair' or better from the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA).

Breeders also check their Shiba's eyes for hereditary eye defects. No breed of dog is totally free of hereditary eye defects. Few defects are severe enough to cause blindness or interfere with a dog's life, but dogs with eye defects that are potentially blinding should not be bred.

A smattering of other defects have been reported, but none in numbers to cause concern at this time. Reputable breeders guarantee puppies to be free of disabling hereditary problems for the first few years of life.

The Final Test

So. You are thinking of adding a Shiba to your family. First, ask yourself:

If you want a pet Shiba: Are you willing to spay/neuter? Are you willing to devote time and energy to the new member of the family? Are your children mature enough to respect the needs of another member? Do you have a fenced yard and/or understand that a Shiba must be on leash when outside?

If you want to show and/or breed Shibas: Are you ready to spend time and money to study breed literature and contact other professionals? Are you ready to spend time and money to get judges' opinions of the quality of your Shiba? Are you ready to spend necessary money to x-ray, certify hips, certify eyes and have patella tests and any other testing needed?

If you can answer "YES" to these questions, then start looking for a breeder who can also answer "YES" to these questions.



To learn more about the Shiba Inu

For information about NSCA, please visit the website at www.shibas.org. There you can find the following:

- * Breeder's Directory
- * Member Clubs
- * Breed Standard and Information
- * NSCA Goals
- * NSCA Membership Applications

Available books on the breed:

The Total Shiba by Gretchen Haskett & Susan Houser

The Complete Shiba by Maureen Atkinson

Shibas by Richard Tomita

The Shiba Inu by G.A.A. Lane

Shiba Inus, A Complete Pet Owner's Manual by Laura Payton

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SHIBA INU



NATIONAL SHIBA CLUB OF AMERICA