

# SHIBA INU FANCIERS



# OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

## Introduction

This may be your first glimpse of a Shiba Inu. The Shiba is probably one of the most universally appealing of all breeds. Often mistaken as a fox, the Shiba is in fact a very lively little dog with a unique set of characteristics. Each Shiba 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. Recent DNA tests link the Shiba as the most genetically closest dog to the wolf, suggesting that they are one of the oldest domesticated breeds.

The 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 the word "Shiba" varies. Shiba can mean the color of or an actual brushwood



plant but 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, Hokkaido,

Shikoku and Kai (medium). Shibas first appeared in the United States after the end of World War II.

## Physical Characteristics

Males run from 14½ to 16½ inches tall with females ranging an inch shorter. Average weight is approx 23 lbs for males and 17 lbs for females. Shibas are a medium boned, moderately compact and well muscled dog with a spitz-like appearance.

The Shiba has a dense double-coat of hair with the outer being stiff and straight and the undercoat soft and thick. The AKC breed standard of acceptable colors for the confirmation show ring are: Red, Sesame (red with black-tipped hairs), and Black & Tan. Creams, whites, or any other color are considered a "major fault" and should never be intentionally bred. Yes, Shibas shed their soft undercoat about twice a year.

## Temperament

Shibas are generally independent and intelligent dogs. As such, consistent obedience training and early socialization at a young age can greatly affect temperament of a Shiba.

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 "*Sobuku*" which is an artlessness with a refined and open spirit. They combine to make a personality that can only be described as "irresistible".

With "*Sobuku*", 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

The Shiba takes the spirited boldness part of the temperament quite seriously. 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.

Shibas should ALWAYS be on leash, unless in a secured area, due to their hunting instincts and high prey drive.

## 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.

The Shiba is a fastidious breed and feels the need to maintain itself in a clean state. They can often be seen licking their paws and legs much like a cat and generally go out of their way to keep their coats clean. Their average life expectancy is from 12 to 15 years.

Despite their assets, Shibas do have some hereditary defects which all reliable breeders screen for their breeding stock. Patellar luxation 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 conditions by palpation.

Hip dysplasia sometimes occurs but it’s generally not as serious in the Shiba as it is in large breeds of dogs. 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.

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

Are you are thinking of adding a Shiba to your family? If so, 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 at all times 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 the **Shiba Inu Fanciers of Northern California**, please visit our website at [www.SFNC.org](http://www.SFNC.org). There you can find the following:

- \* [Breeder’s Directory](#)
- \* [Club Functions](#)
- \* [Breed Standard and Information](#)
- \* [SFNC Membership Applications](#)
- \* [Additional Links about the Shiba Inu](#)

**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