ILLUSTRATED STANDARD and HISTORY of the SIBERIAN HUSKY

Siberian Husky Club of America, Inc.
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SIBERIAN HUSKY

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THE SIBERIAN HUSKY

In no breed more than the Siberian Husky has function dictated form.

And possibly in no other breed has there been a greater misunderstanding of the true nature of that original function. In this brief study of breed history and heritage we hope to clarify these misconceptions concerning the basic purpose of the breed and to assist in the recognition and evaluation of proper breed characteristics in contemporary specimens.

The breed of dog recognized by the American Kennel Club as the Siberian Husky was developed by the Chukchi people of extreme northeastern Asia. When climatic conditions and the encroachment of unfriendly tribes forced them to base their economy upon a wide-ranging hunting existence, the Chukchis responded to this challenge of nature and man by developing a unique breed of sled dog, tailored to their special requirements and upon which their very survival depended.
Today the character of sled dog racing has changed, and this is where the first misconception about the breed is likely to occur. Today's races, with short courses varying from five to twenty miles, demand an increased emphasis upon speed alone. The Siberian Husky was never intended to be a sprint racer. Therefore, it is logical that many racing drivers now use hounds, setters, pointers, Indian dogs, Alaskan sled dogs, or any mixed breed built along high-speed racing lines. Rising to the new challenge of the trail with a different dog is far more sensible than attempting to modify the basic conformation of the Siberian Husky to meet the current demands of a changing sport.

However, there are still many teams of registered Siberians in competition today, illustrating the determination of fanciers to preserve the traditions of the past and to prove the working abilities of the breed. The Siberian Husky Club of America each year awards a racing trophy to the team of Siberian Huskies whose performance both on the trail and in the show ring best exemplifies the dual capabilities of the breed.

Another common misconception in breed evaluation today is the assumption that greater size, heavier bone, and coarser build will better enable the Siberian Husky to perform his function in harness. This is not true. The Siberian Husky was not originally intended to be strictly a freighting animal either. He is capable of pulling considerable weight, but his real forte lies in his ability to cover great distances with a light load at a moderate speed. And a Siberian Husky that is at the lower limits of the standard is just as capable of performing this task and is therefore just as desirable and correct as one at the upper limits.
The Chukchis needed a sled dog with a conformation designed to provide maximum speed and strength over great distances with a minimum expenditure of energy. From the Chukchi breeding there gradually evolved a sturdy but graceful dog, having moderate bone, medium length of leg and fairly close body coupling. The key word for the Chukchi dog was endurance, and it is this same look of solid capability and easy grace that we cherish in the Siberian Husky today.

Shortly after 1900 Americans in Alaska, already engaged in the sport of sled dog racing to prove the worth of their freighting teams, began to hear tales of a superior breed of sled dog in Siberia. Fox Maule Ramsay, a young Scotsman in Alaska to supervise his family's interests in the gold fields, chartered a schooner and crossed the Bering Sea in search of these fabulous "huskies". His voyage took him three hundred miles up the Anadyr River to the Chukchi village to Markovo, the principal market point for the selling of chukchi dogs to other native peoples.

Ramsay returned to Nome with seventy of the Chukchi dogs and trained and entered three teams in the 1910 All Alaska Sweepstakes. He won first place with the team driven by John "Iron Man" Johnson, and placed third and fourth with the other two teams. For the next decade, particularly under the legendary driving skill of Leonhard Seppala, Siberian Huskies dominated the Alaskan Racing scene, where the typical 400-mile course was ideally suited to the endurance capabilities of the breed. The ancestry of most Siberian Huskies today can be traced back to the original imports of this early period.
Since we now understand that the original function of the Siberian Husky required a perfect balance of speed, power and endurance, we can accept some of the ideals of perfection as set forth in the breed standard as seeming reasonable and necessary. For example, the tail, trailing when the dog is working or relaxed, and arched over his back when he is alert, must not curl to either side of the body nor snap flat against the back. This request, too often ignored, is based upon the fact that the tail, as a continuation of the spine, often provides us with a clue to the suitability of the entire bone structure. Some authorities feel that an incorrect tail-set and carriage can be symptoms of an entirely faulty rear assembly, which in turn could interfere with the dog’s ability to generate power and move correctly.

Proper movement is essential to any dog for the efficient performance of his specific work, and especially so to a long-distance endurance sled dog such as the Siberian Husky. A careful scrutiny from front, side and rear of the dog moving individually may reveal structural faults not so apparent in the motionless dog. For example, stiffness in the shoulder action is often the result of improper angulation; a constricted or choppy gait may be due to insufficient rear angulation; and excessive size and heaviness of bone can create a lumbering or cloddy gait more typical of the larger draft animals. A properly proportioned body should enable the graceful Siberian Husky to maintain his smooth, free-moving gait with effortless ease.

Even the explicit preference for a dense coat of medium length, as stated in the standard, has a strong practical basis in breed history. The combination of a soft thick undercoat with an outer coat of smooth guard hairs creates a layer of trapped air to help insulate the Siberian Husky against extreme cold. However, an outer coat of very long guard hairs permits loss of this vital body heat. Equally dangerous is the tendency for snow or ice balls to form, under certain weather conditions, in the very long coats, incapacitating a sled dog. During the summer months the Siberian Husky sheds and renews this undercoat and should not be penalized for lack of it at that time. An unusually dense summer coat should not take precedence over such basic points as general conformation, soundness and movement.

After Leonhard Seppala gained national prominence through his humanitarian “serum-run” to save the diphtheria-stricken city of Nome in 1925, he was invited to compete in races in New England where the sport of sled dog racing had already been introduced by Arthur Walden. In these arduous point-to-point races, the superior ability of Seppala’s Siberian
Huskies quickly won the hearts of New Englanders. It was through the efforts of these pioneer New England fanciers that the breed was established in the United States, that AKC recognition of the breed was granted in 1930, and that the Siberian Husky Club of America was founded in 1938.

Today the membership of the Siberian Husky Club of America is composed of many breeders, exhibitors and drivers who are united in their dedication to the preservation and perpetuation of this breed in its original image. While we cannot today follow the ancestral function of the breed by mushing across the Siberian tundra or rerunning the All Alaska Sweepstakes course, many of us can and do harness our dogs for competition and pleasure. Striving to maintain the original form has become more than just a demonstration of pride in the past and a respect for tradition. We do not visualize our dogs as relics of a forgotten day, but rather as useful, enjoyable, beautiful creatures of a modern age, the result of man's supreme ingenuity. The heroic Chukchi culture is disappearing in Siberia, but here in America we must remain dedicated to the preservation of our own special breed qualities and to the perpetuation of the Siberian Husky as an original, capable and natural breed.
Correct Ear Set

Ears Set Too Wide
Incorrect Tail
Excessive Plumage

Incorrect Tail
Curled To One Side of Body

Incorrect Tail
Snapped Flat To Back
Standard Siberian Husky
Correct Angulation

Too Straight Stifle
Correct Rear

Too Narrow Rear

Cow-Hocked
Legs Too Short
Too Coarse, Excessive Bone And Coat
SIBERIAN HUSKY STANDARD
Approved April 1963

GENERAL APPEARANCE
The Siberian Husky is a medium sized working dog of powerful but graceful build. His moderately compact and well furred body, erect ears, and brush tail curved over the back suggest the Northern heritage of the capable sled dog. His characteristic gait is free and effortless but unbelievably strong when called upon to pull. And the keen and friendly expression in his slightly oblique eyes indicates the amenable disposition of the good companion.

HEAD
1. Skull --- Of medium size, in proportion to the body; a trifle rounded on top and tapering gradually to the eyes, the width between the ears medium to narrow. Muzzle medium long, that is, the distance from nose to stop is about equal to the distance from stop to occiput. Skull and muzzle are finely chiseled. Lips dark and close-fitting, the jaws strong, and the teeth meeting in a scissors bite.
   Faults --- Head too heavy; skull too wide; the muzzle either bulky, snipy or course.
2. Ears --- Medium in size, set high and carried erect. When at attention, they are practically parallel to each other. They are moderately rounded at the tips and well furred on the inner side.
   Ear Faults --- Too large, too low-set and not strongly erect.
3. Eyes --- Set a trifle obliquely, their expression keen but friendly, interested and even mischievous. Color may be either brown or blue, one brown eye and one blue eye being permissible but not desirable.
   Eye Faults --- Eyes set too obliquely.
4. Nose --- Preferably black, with brown allowed in specimens of redish colored coat; and flesh colored nose and eye rims allowed in white dogs. The nose that is temporarily pink-streaked in winter is permissible but not desirable.

NECK
Strong, arched and fairly short.

BODY
Moderately compact but never cobby. Chest deep and strong but not too broad, the ribs well sprung and deep. Shoulders powerful and well laid back. Back of medium length and strong, the back line level. Loins taut, lean and very slightly arched.
Body Faults --- Weak or slack back; roach back.

LEGS AND FEET
1. Legs --- The legs are straight and well muscled, with bone substantial but not heavy. Hindquarters powerful with good angulation. Well bent at stifles. Dewclaws on the rear legs, if any, are to be removed.
2. Feet --- Oval in shape, medium in size; compact and well furred between the
toes. Pads tough and deeply cushioned. In short, a typical snowshoe foot, somewhat webbed between the toes.

**Faults** — Bone too light or too heavy; insufficient bend at stifles; weak pasterns; feet soft and/or splayed.

**TAIL**
A well furred brush carried over the back in a sickle curved when the dog runs or stands at attention, and trailing out behind when working or in repose. When carried up, the typical tail does not curl to either side of the body, nor does it snap flat to the back. The tail hair is usually of medium length although length varies somewhat with overall coat length.

**COAT**
Double. The under coat is dense, soft and downy, and should be of sufficient length and density to support the outer coat. The outer coat is very thick, smooth textured and soft, giving a smooth, full-furred appearance and a clean-cut outline. It is usually medium in length; a longer coat is allowed so long as the texture is soft and remains the same in any length.

**Coat Faults** — Harsh texture, or a rough look which obscures the clean-cut outline of the dog; absence of under coat, except while actually shedding.

**COLOR**
All colors and white, and all markings are allowed. The various shades of wolf and the silver grays, tan and black with white points are most usual. A variety of markings, especially on the head, are common to the breed, these including many striking and unusual patterns not found in other breeds. The cap-like mask and spectacles are typical.

**SIZE**
1. **Height** — Dogs from 21 to 23\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches at the shoulder, bitches from 20 to 22 inches.
2. **Weight** — Dogs from 45 to 60 pounds; bitches from 35 to 50 pounds.

**Disqualifications** — Dogs over 23\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches; bitches over 22 inches. Both height and weight are very important.

**SUMMARY**
Most important of the Siberian Husky's characteristics are medium size and moderate bone, soft coat, high-set ears, ease and freedom of action, and good disposition. A gait, or a general appearance in any way clumsy, heavy or unwieldy is to be penalized. In addition to the faults already noted, obvious structural faults common to all breeds, such as cow hocks, for instance, are as undesirable in the Siberian Husky as in any other breed, even though they are not specifically mentioned herein.

**DISQUALIFICATION**
Height over 23\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches in dogs; over 22 inches in bitches.