



An Oriental Masterpiece ...the Chow Chow

Chow Chow History

Definitely one of the most impressive of all breeds, the Chow Chow is an awesome creature with his lion-like appearance and regal manner. Looking a little like a cross between a lion and a bear, the true origin of the Chow is unknown and lost deep within Chinese antiquity. The Chow as it is known today is easily recognizable in pottery and sculptures of the Chinese Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 22 A.D.); other artifacts indicate that he was even a much older breed and may have come originally from the Arctic Circle, migrating to Mongolia, Siberia and China.

Some scholars claim the Chow was the original ancestor of the Samoyed, Norwegian Elkhound, Pomeranian and Keeshond. In more recent times, that is, in the Tang Dynasty (7th Century A.D.), it is reported that one Chinese emperor kept 2,500 of these "Chow Dogs" to accompany his ten thousand hunters! Admired by emperors as well as Western royalty, used by Chinese peasants for food and clothing, and a favorite of the Hollywood movie star set in the 1920's, the Chow Chow has had a dramatic history.

How the Chow got his blue/black tongue is a mystery. An old fable offers a theory: When God was painting the sky blue, He spilled a few drops of paint as he worked. The Chow followed after, licking up the paint and from that day on, the Chow Chow has had a blue tongue!

The Chow came to America by way of England where it had been brought from China in the late 1700's. Sailors returning from the east brought them back in the cargo holds of trade ships. "Chow Chow" was a slang term applied to the large variety of items carried by these ships. Like a nickname, the term stuck to these dogs.

Chows first appeared at AKC dog shows in the late 1800's. The Chow Chow Club, Inc. (CCCI) was formed in 1906. The breed first knew general popularity in the 1930's when President Calvin Coolidge kept a Chow in the White House. The Chow again soared to popularity in the 1980's.

Appearance

The Chow Chow can have one of two different types of coat: either rough or smooth. The most common coat is the long-haired or rough, which has an outer coat containing long, straight, coarse guard hairs and a soft, thick undercoat. The smooth coated Chow Chow has a short, hard, dense "smooth" outer coat and a definite undercoat. The rough and smooth are two distinct varieties of Chow. Although there are many rough coated Chows with fairly short coats, these should not be

confused with the true unique, smooth coat. Most importantly, the Chow is unique in its blue-black tongue and stilted gait.

Chow Chows come in five colors: red, black, cinnamon, blue and cream. Red is the most common and varies from a light golden to deep mahogany. There may be lighter shadings on the breeches and tail. The so-called "dilute" colors of cinnamon or fawn (a dilution of red) or blue (a dilution of black) are less common. Cream Chows are seldom seen in the show ring because their noses are usually brown at maturity - a disqualification under the breed standard.

Color has absolutely nothing to do with a Chow's value and while not as common, blue, cinnamon or cream Chows are not rare nor any more valuable than reds or blacks. The Chow's worth depends not on his color, but rather on his beauty and excellence in regard to how closely he approximates the Chow Chow Club, Inc.'s Breed Standard as recognized by the AKC.

Personality

The Chow Chow's disposition is quite different from other breeds. They are cat-like in their attitudes: aloof, reserved with affection, independent, dignified and stubborn. Although their soft fur is ripe for hugging, they don't always enjoy being fussed over by children or strangers. The Chow is very intelligent but like a cat, is not as highly motivated to please their masters as most other breeds. They seem to please themselves first. They do not tolerate physical punishment. Hitting or beating a Chow may result in viciousness or a broken spirit. The Chow expects to be treated with dignity and respect. He will return that respect with undying loyalty if he believes you are worthy of it.

The Chow Chow's temperament is often misunderstood by people who do not understand the breed's unique nature. Naturally suspicious of strangers and territorial, they take their homes and families very seriously and feel that it is their responsibility to protect what they love. On his own property and without his owner present, the Chow may appear to be quite fierce. He will seldom let a stranger pass unchallenged. People used to the warm welcomes of other breeds may be startled by the seriousness of the Chow. Once greeted by the owner and accepted into the home, the Chow should accept the stranger but may be reserved in his desire to "make friends."

The Chow Chow's appearance also contributes to myths about his temperament. The scowling face, small dark deepset eyes and lion-like ruff are intimidating. The Chow's natural aloofness, dignity and indifference to people outside his family is often misinterpreted by people who expect all dogs to be outwardly friendly and affectionate. The Chow saves his affections for those he loves most dearly and finds little reason to seek attention from anyone else. He minds his own business and simply doesn't care what strangers think of him.

Training & Socializing Your Chow Chow

The strong willed, stubborn Chow needs an equally strong willed, stubborn owner! This breed has a mind of its own and may easily become your master if you let it. Chow puppies are naturally well-behaved, seldom destructive or disobedient.

Because of their good behavior, some owners feel that training is not necessary. When an untrained Chow reaches adolescence, though, he may refuse to accept authority. We've found that most people who experience behavior problems with their Chows failed to train and socialize them properly.

Socialization is the ongoing process in which the Chow puppy is taught to accept new people, other dogs and environments outside his home with politeness and calm. Socialization should begin at birth with regular handling by the Chow's breeder. A responsible breeder introduces the puppy to as many new experiences as possible before the puppy is placed into its permanent home.

It is critical that you continue the socialization process by regularly introducing him to strangers, children, animals and places outside of your home. Socialization with children is especially important if the dog is to be good with them as an adult. Teach children how to hold and pet the puppy properly so that all his experiences with them are pleasant. Puppy "kindergarten" classes hosted by your local kennel club are excellent opportunities for socialization.

As soon as your puppy is old enough, you and he should attend obedience classes with a qualified instructor. The AKC or your veterinarian can refer you to local kennel clubs that host these classes. Training should continue at home and obedience commands should be incorporated into your Chow's daily life. A well-trained Chow is a joy to live with! He's a happier dog because he knows what's expected of him and how to please you. He can go more places and do more things with you because he knows how to behave properly.

Living With Your Chow Chow

Although the Chow adjusts well to being alone during your working hours, he prefers to be at your side when you're at home, not kept as an "outside" dog. Chows love to spend time outside but tied up or confined away from regular contact with people, they may become very antisocial.

The Chow's independent nature sometimes gets in the way of obedience to his master. Chows are well known for not coming when called and should never be allowed off leash outside of a fenced yard.

Grooming Your Chow Chow

A clean, well-groomed Chow is the most beautiful of all dogs. Regular grooming is essential to keep your dog comfortable and looking his best. Expect to spend one to two hours a week thoroughly brushing your Chow's coat to the skin. Chows shed their undercoats on a seasonal basis. Regular grooming and bathing will minimize loose hair in your home as well as maintain your Chow's good condition.

Entropion

Entropion is a health condition in which the dog's eyelids turn inward toward the eyeball rather than outward as they should. This causes irritation to the eye and, if left untreated, can lead to blindness. Entropion can be inherited but may also develop as a result of an eye injury or infection. Entropion isn't always apparent in young puppies. Runny, red, inflamed eyes or crusty eyelids are not normal for a Chow and should be treated by a veterinarian as soon as possible.

Should I Breed My Chow Chow?

Breeding a litter sounds easy and fun but most of the time, the responsibility of breeding turns out to be more than most people can cope with. As a breeder, you have an obligation to the Chow

breed and to the buyers of your puppies to produce the healthiest, most mentally sound Chows possible. Breeding good dogs first requires a study of genetics along with the fine points of the Chow Chow standard, canine structure and health. It requires a commitment of time, work, money and space that most people aren't prepared to provide. Instead of making money, breeding good Chows costs money!

It is critical that you work with your veterinarian to have your Chow's health evaluations performed prior to the first breeding. Health certifications include hip and elbow radiographs submitted to the *Orthopedic Foundation for Animals* (www.offa.org), thyroid, patella, and cardiac evaluations and eye certification (www.vmdb.org/cerf.html).

Along with the responsibility of producing dogs that will be a credit to the Chow breed, you have a lifelong responsibility to the puppies you help to create. You must select buyers who are suited to the breed's personality and guide them in care and training. You must be there to help buyers with potential problems throughout the life of the dog. Most importantly, you must be there to take the dogs back if they are ever unwanted or abandoned. The Chow Chow Club, Inc. encourages its members to follow through on the placement of their puppies and take them back if their owners can't keep them.

The future of the Chow Chow breed depends on the actions of each of its breeders whether they produce one litter or twenty. Before considering breeding your Chow, contact the CCCI for guidance in becoming a responsible breeder.

The Chow Chow Club, Inc.

The CCCI, a member club of the AKC, is the national parent club for the breed. It oversees the activities of regional Chow clubs, maintains the standard by which Chows are judged, promotes the exhibition of quality Chows in shows, produces a quarterly magazine about the Chow and offers information to Chow Chow owners on responsible care, training and breeding. Many Chows have strong hunting instincts. Untrained or unsupervised Chows may not be compatible with cats or smaller dogs. Most Chows do not make good "pack" dogs and may not get along well with dogs of the same sex. If you're planning to get a second dog, we recommend that you choose one of the opposite sex to your Chow Chow.

Your Chow will need annual veterinary exams and vaccinations. We recommend that you spay or neuter your pet Chow. Spaying and neutering eliminate the risk of reproductive system cancers and life threatening infections. Neutered males are often better behaved, interact better with other dogs, are less territorial and less inclined to "mark" their territory. Spaying your female frees both of you from the mood swings and the untidiness of seasonal heat cycles as well as the worry of unplanned or unwanted litters.

For more detailed information about the Chow Chow, club membership, referral to a regional club near you, or magazine subscription information, contact:

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