

# An Introduction to the Keeshond



**Congratulations on your new Keeshond! The Keeshond Club of America wants to help you enjoy your new pet by giving you some basic information about Keeshonden.**

## ORIGINS

The Keeshond (pronounced "Kayz-hawnd") is a very old breed, and one of the very few which throughout history has always been raised as a family companion and watchdog. They are known for their gentle, intelligent devotion to their owners; they are renown for their special fondness for children.

Keeshonden are members of the Spitz family and descend from dogs that arrived in Europe from the north many centuries ago. In the 17th and 18th century, they were extensively used as watchdogs on riverboats, farms, and barges throughout Europe. The breed was particularly popular in Holland and in the late 1700s became associated with the leader of the Dutch Patriot party, Cornelius (nicknamed "Kees") de Gyzelaar. In fact, the breed became a political symbol of the Patriot Party. After the Patriots' defeat, Keeshonden became rare in Holland because of their political significance.

About a century later, the breed was revived in Holland and also appeared in England where it aroused great interest. An English breed club was formed in 1926.

The first Keeshond was registered with the American Kennel Club in 1930 and the Keeshond Club of America was organized in 1935. After World War II, the breed's popularity in America increased greatly.

## APPEARANCE & CHARACTERISTICS

The Keeshond is a handsome, medium-sized dog of short-coupled body; the ideal height at the shoulders is 18" for males, 17" for females. Keeshonden attract attention for their abundant gray, black, and cream coat, intelligent, alert expression, a fox-like face with "spectacle" markings around the eyes, and a plumed tail curled tightly over the back.

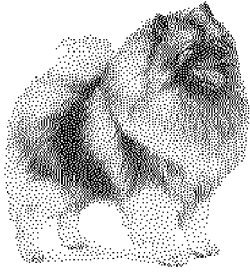
Although alertly giving the alarm as watchdogs whenever strangers approach their homes, Keeshonden are not attackers or "yappers," and they quickly offer friendship to those welcomed by their owners. The Keeshond is an affectionate, adaptable, happy-natured dog; the breed is quick and eager to learn and makes an outstanding companion to people of all ages.

## CARE

Keeshonden require a proper diet and regular medical care with yearly vaccinations for protection against diseases. Even though your Keeshond may be obedient, no dog should ever be allowed to run free. If you do not have a fenced yard, your dog will certainly need several daily walks. The Kees is an energetic breed; if you do not find acceptable outlets for this energy, your dog may think up unacceptable activities!

Your Keeshond's coat is relatively easy to maintain in good condition because the coat texture insulates from weather, both hot and cold, and most dirt. The coat seldom mats unless burrs or such are involved, and is free from "doggy" odor.

Typically, a twice-weekly thorough brushing with a long-bristle or pin brush (brush toward the head), and regular nail trimming is generally sufficient. When shedding, the loose undercoat should be removed, which is easily done with a wide-toothed metal comb.



## TRAINING

Keeshonden are quick and eager to learn, and they remember their experiences. This makes it very important that their "lessons" are happy experiences for them, and that good habits are learned right from the start.

Only a few brief sessions are needed for leash training if owners make it fun for the dog and follow a routine. Before beginning, the dog should be completely accustomed to wearing a collar - the lightest weight, rounded leather collar obtainable. Begin leash training using small bits of food to encourage the puppy to walk with you. Should the puppy start to go away from you, GO along so that there is no frightening pressure on the neck that will lead to a struggle. With praise, the puppy will soon be ready to join you on an outdoor walk.

Basic obedience training for all dogs is strongly recommended by the Keeshond Club of America. Look for obedience classes in your area which teach you how to teach your dog.

Also consider participating in Agility training and competitions with your Keeshond. They excel in this performance event, and both you and your dog will enjoy many wonderful outings.

## SPAY/NEUTER

The Keeshond Club of America strongly recommends that you spay or neuter your pet Keeshond. Most responsible breeders require this by selling their pets with spay/neuter contracts.

There are several important reasons for this recommendation: (a) Neutered animals are normally healthier and usually live longer than unaltered animals. Spaying a female before the first season greatly reduces the risk of mammary tumors and eliminates the dangers of uterine infections. Neutering a male removes the possibility of testicular cancer and lowers the risk of developing prostate problems; (b) The breeding of dogs is a serious responsibility and should be undertaken only by those who seek to improve the breed; it should never be done to make a profit; (c) The basic disposition of your Keeshond will not be changed by spaying or neutering.

The American Kennel Club permits dogs that have been spayed or neutered to participate in all phases of obedience, tracking, and agility competitions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Finally, if the day should come when you can no longer keep your Keeshond (for whatever reason: divorce, moving, allergies, etc.), what should you do? The Keeshond Club of America urges that you NEVER take your pet to an animal shelter. You should first contact your breeder for assistance in re-homing your dog. If that is not successful, contact Breed Rescue. Sometimes your local Shelter knows the Breed Rescue contact in your area. If not, contact your local/regional Keeshond Club; a listing of such Clubs can be found at [www.keeshond.org](http://www.keeshond.org), or The American Kennel Club at [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org).

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The Keeshond Club of America maintains a very informative Web site at [www.keeshond.org](http://www.keeshond.org). This Web site also provides contact information about the local/regional Keeshond Clubs in your area; participation in the activities of your local club provides a wonderful opportunity for you and your dog to interact with others who love this wonderful breed!