

An Introduction to the Keeshond



Congratulations on your new Keeshond!

To help maximize your enjoyment of your new pet, the Keeshond Club of America has prepared some fundamental information about Keeshonden for you.

ORIGINS

The Keeshond (pronounced “KAYZ-hawnd”) is a very old breed and is 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, and renowned for their special fondness for children.

Keeshonden are members of the Spitz family of dogs and descend from canines that arrived in Europe from the north many centuries ago. In the 17th and 18th Centuries, they were used extensively as watchdogs on farms and on the barges that carried goods along canals and the Rhine River throughout Holland and Germany. The breed was particularly popular in Holland and, in the late 1700s, became associated with the leader of the rebellious Dutch Patriot Party. After that party’s 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 and Keeshonden continue to delight American families to this day.

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 and alert expression, fox-like face with “spectacle” markings around the eyes, and richly 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 scheduled 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 a moderately energetic breed; if you do not find suitable outlets for this energy, your dog may think up less acceptable activities for itself!

The Keeshond’s coat is actually a double coat, comprised of a soft, downy undercoat which insulates the dog from weather (both hot and cold), and an outer coat with coarse guard hairs that readily shed most dirt and keep snow and rainwater from getting all the way down to the dog’s skin. Because of its texture, this coat does not easily mat unless burrs or such are involved. The Keeshond’s skin is not oily and is free from “doggy” odor.

Your Keeshond’s coat is relatively easy to maintain. Typically, a twice-weekly thorough brushing with a long pin brush and soft slicker will keep your Keeshond looking its best (brush its fur toward the head). When shedding, the Keeshond’s loose undercoat should be removed. This is easily done with a wide-toothed comb and a soft slicker. Regular nail trimming is necessary for all dogs.

TRAINING

Keeshonden are mentally quick and eager to learn, and they readily remember their experiences. This makes it very important that their lessons are happy experiences

for them, and that good habits are instilled 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 consistent routine.

Before beginning, the dog should be completely accustomed to wearing a collar. Because the magnificent ruff of the Keeshond is one of its most distinguishing features, it is desirable not to damage the fur on the dog's neck with an inappropriate collar. Traditionally, a lightweight, rounded leather collar has been the choice least likely to damage the ruff (rather than metal chains or flat, leather or stiff nylon collars). Also, a very soft, silky, double-ply and color-fast nylon collar is now available which is much gentler on fur than other nylon collars. This material can provide Keeshond owners an additional choice when selecting a collar.

Begin leash training using small bits of food to encourage your puppy to walk with you. Should the puppy start to move away from you, GO along with it until you can coax the puppy with food and attention to move in the direction you wish to go. Try to avoid creating pressure with the collar and lead on the puppy's neck that will frighten it and cause a struggle. With a gentle hand and lots of praise, your puppy will soon be ready to join you on an outdoor walk.

Basic obedience training for all dogs is highly recommended by the Keeshond Club of America. Look for obedience classes in your area which will teach you how to teach your dog. This is greatly preferable to simply sending your dog to a trainer to learn a few commands.

Also, consider participating in Conformation, Companion and Performance training and events with your Keeshond. Keeshonden excel in Obedience, Rally and Agility competition, they are great Conformation competitors and have had remarkable success in Barn Hunt, Herding and Therapy activities. With just a little training, both you and your dog will be able to enjoy many, many wonderful outings together.

SPAY/NEUTER

The Keeshond Club of America strongly recommends that any dog which is not destined for use as breeding stock (as a contributor to the effort to improve the breed) be spayed or neutered. Responsible breeders require this by selling their puppies that are not to be used for breeding with spay/neuter contracts.

There are several important reasons for this recommendation: (a) Neutering an animal at an appropriate age can bring some health benefits: spaying a female reduces the dangers of uterine infections; neutering a male removes the possibility of testicular cancer and lowers the risk of developing prostate problems. Recent veterinary research indicates that the hormones produced by puppies' sex organs during their first year play an important role in the development of many parts of their bodies and can also affect their health much later in life. As a result, recommendations for the pediatric neutering of dogs have become less common – many breeders will insist that their puppies not be spayed or neutered before their first birthday; (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. Spaying or neutering animals that are not suitable breeding stock also avoids the possibility of unwanted pregnancies; (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 Companion and Performance competitions.

JUST IN CASE

If the day should ever come when you can no longer keep your Keeshond (for whatever reason: divorce, moving, physical disability, 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 for Keeshonden in your area or your local/regional Keeshond club; a listing of such clubs can be found at www.keeshond.org, or through the American Kennel Club's website at www.akc.org

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Keeshond Club of America maintains a very informative website at www.keeshond.org. This website also provides contact information for the local/regional Keeshond clubs in your area. Participating in the activities of your local club provides a perfect opportunity for you and your dog to interact with other Keeshonden and with fellow fanciers who share your love of this wonderful breed!

