

The Shih Tzu

This small sturdy dog, like the Lhasa Apso, is covered with an abundant double coat of long hair lined with a wooly undercoat. This proud looking little dog has hair above the nose growing upward, creating a “chrysanthemum” face. The head is rounded, with a profuse beard and mustache, short hairy muzzle, and black nose (except in liver-colored dogs which have liver noses). There is a definite stop. The eyes are large, round and wide-set, dark on most dogs but lighter on liver and blue colored dogs. The pendant ears are so covered with hair that they blend right into the body coat. The teeth should form a level or undershot bite. The topline is level and the body is slightly longer than the height at the withers. Dewclaw removal is optional. The heavily plumped tail is curled over the back. Any color is acceptable, though white on the forehead and tip of the tail is preferred by most dog show judges. The Shih-Tzu is an alert and spunky little dog. Happy and hardy, endowed with loads of character. They are royally dignified, courageous, and sometimes arrogant. This breed does well with polite, careful children. The gentle loyal Shih-Tzu makes friends easily and although obstinate can respond well to consistent patient training. A very alert watchdog, the Shih-Tzu likes to bark, but is usually quiet inside the house. They are stubborn and clever. Shih-Tzus can get snappish if they are surprised or peeved. Playful and lively, this affectionate little dog needs to be with people and are generally good with other pets. Some can be difficult to housebreak. The height is up to 11 inches and their weight is from 9-16 pounds grown. They tend to wheeze and snore. Some bloodlines are prone to ear and eye and respiratory problems. Spinal disc disease caused by a long back and short legs may be a problem. Their teeth need regular veterinary attention, as they tend to be lost early. These dogs gain weight easily and should not be overfed. The Shih Tzu is good for apartment life. They are fairly active indoors and will do okay without a yard. This breed is sensitive to the heat. The Shih Tzu is a naturally active dog but if it is allowed it will lie around in its favorite spots. They should be encouraged to get out and about to stay fit. Daily walks are a good idea. Do not over feed this breed or it will quickly become fat. Their life expectancy is 12-15 years. These little dogs require a good daily grooming using a bristle brush. A topknot is usually tied with a bow so that the dog can see properly. Some owners prefer to have them trimmed to make the coat easier and less time consuming to care for. Keep the ear passages and area around the eyes clean. MAKE SURE you trim the hair around the anus so your Shih Tzu can potty. Shih Tzu's have sensitive eyes that should be kept clean. There are special drops you can buy to put in them if needed. Ask your vet what to use on your dog. This breed sheds little to no hair and are good for allergy sufferers if their coats are kept very well groomed. (Due the fact that they shed little skin dander). Documents and paintings dating from the sixteenth century show dogs resembling a small lion (which the Shih-Tzu is sometimes called). In the seventeenth century, dogs were brought from Tibet and bred in the forbidden City of Peking, probably by crossing the Lhasa Apso and the native Pekignese. The Shih Tzu became a favorite of the Imperial Chinese court. The breed was so revered that for many years after the Chinese began trading with the West, they refused sell or even give away, any of the little dogs. It was not until 1930 that the first pair was imported to England. The Shih Tzu was recognized in Britain in 1946 and by the AKC in the United States in 1969. Today, the breed is very popular, both as a companion and as a glamorous show dog.