

The Siberian Husky



Breed Focus by Thomas L. Oelschlager (Tommy O) (copyright)

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The essence of the Siberian Husky is a combination of the features that make "that Arctic dog" look, i.e. the small well furred, closely set ears, the slight oblique almond shaped eyes, the well furred cheeks, the foxy shaped head, the double coat which instills the breed's ability to survive the cruelest of winters. These features coupled with the build of a long distance runner.

A total blend of moderation with NO suggestion of coarseness. The friendly disposition that knows the world as it's friend. Beware that this essence is fast disappearing. As a judge, one must consider this "above all". These breed characteristics that are so VITAL, must be recognized and rewarded.

the AKC standard

General Appearance

The Siberian Husky is a medium-sized working dog, quick and light on his feet and free and graceful in action. His moderately compact and well furred body, erect ears and brush tail suggest his Northern heritage. His characteristic gait is smooth and seemingly effortless. He performs his original function in harness most capably, carrying a light load at a moderate speed over great distances. His body proportions and form reflect this basic balance of power, speed and endurance. The males of the Siberian Husky breed are masculine but never coarse; the bitches are feminine but without weakness of structure. In proper condition, with muscle firm and well developed, the Siberian Husky does not carry excess weight.

Size, Proportion, Substance

Height: Dogs, 21 to 23½ inches at the withers. Bitches, 20

to 22 inches at the withers. *Weight:* Dogs, 45 to 60 pounds. Bitches, 35 to 50 pounds. Weight is in proportion to height. The measurements mentioned above represent the extreme height and weight limits with no preference given to either extreme. Any appearance of excessive bone or weight should be penalized. In profile, the length of the body from the point of the shoulder to the rear point of the croup is slightly longer than the height of the body from the ground to the top of the withers.

Disqualification: Dogs over 23½ inches and bitches over 22 inches.

Head

Expression is keen, but friendly; interested and even mischievous. Eyes almond shaped, moderately spaced and set a trifle obliquely. Eyes may be brown or blue in color; one of each or parti-colored are acceptable. *Faults:* Eyes set too obliquely; set too close together. Ears of medium size, triangular in shape, close fitting and set high on the head. They are thick, well furred, slightly arched at the back, and strongly erect, with slightly rounded tips pointing straight up. *Faults:* Ears too large in proportion to the head; too wide set; not strongly erect. Skull of medium size and in proportion to the body; slightly rounded on top and tapering from the widest point to the eyes. *Faults:* Head clumsy or heavy; head too finely chiseled. **Stop:** The stop is well-defined and the bridge of the nose is straight from the stop to the tip. *Fault:* Insufficient stop. Muzzle of medium length; that is, the distance from the tip of the nose to the stop is equal to the distance from the stop to the occiput. The muzzle is of medium width, tapering gradually to the nose, with the tip neither pointed nor square. *Faults:* Muzzle either too snipy or too coarse; muzzle too short or too long. Nose black in gray, tan or black dogs; liver in copper dogs; may be flesh-colored in pure white dogs. The pink-streaked "snow nose" is acceptable. Lips are well pigmented and close fitting. Teeth closing in a scissors bite. *Fault:* Any bite other than scissors.

Neck, Topline, Body

Neck medium in length, arched and carried proudly erect when dog is standing. When moving at a trot, the neck is extended so that the head is carried slightly forward. *Faults:* Neck too short and thick; neck too long. Chest deep and strong, but not too broad, with the deepest point being just behind and level with the elbows. The ribs are well sprung from the

spine but flattened on the sides to allow for freedom of action.

Faults: Chest too broad; "barrel ribs"; ribs too flat or weak. Back: The back is straight and strong, with a level topline from withers to croup. It is of medium length, neither cobby nor slack from excessive length. The loin is taut and lean, narrower than the rib cage, and with a slight tuck-up. The croup slopes away from the spine at an angle, but never so steeply as to restrict the rearward thrust of the hind legs. *Faults:* Weak or slack back; roached back; sloping topline.

Tail

The well furred tail of fox-brush shape is set on just below the level of the topline, and is usually carried over the back in a graceful sickle curve when the dog is at attention. When carried up, the tail does not curl to either side of the body, nor does it snap flat against the back. A trailing tail is normal for the dog when in repose. Hair on the tail is of medium length and approximately the same length on top, sides and bottom, giving the appearance of a round brush. *Faults:* A snapped or tightly curled tail; highly plumed tail; tail set too low or too high.

Forequarters

Shoulders: The shoulder blade is well laid back. The upper arm angles slightly backward from point of shoulder to elbow, and is never perpendicular to the ground. The muscles and ligaments holding the shoulder to the rib cage are firm and well developed. *Faults:* Straight shoulders; loose shoulders. **Forelegs:** When standing and viewed from the front, the legs are moderately spaced, parallel and straight, with the elbows close to the body and turned neither in nor out. Viewed from the side, pasterns are slightly slanted, with the pastern joint strong, but flexible. Bone is substantial but never heavy. Length of the leg from elbow to ground is slightly more than the distance from the elbow to the top of withers. Dewclaws on forelegs may be removed. *Faults:* Weak pasterns; too heavy bone; too narrow or too wide in the front; out at the elbows. Feet oval in shape but not long. The paws are medium in size, compact and well furred between the toes and pads. The pads are tough and thickly cushioned. The paws neither turn in nor out when the dog is in natural stance. *Faults:* Soft or splayed toes; paws too large and clumsy; paws too small and delicate; toeing in or out.

Hindquarters

When standing and viewed from the rear, the hind legs are moderately spaced and parallel. The upper thighs are well muscled and powerful, the stifles well bent, the hock joint well-defined and set low to the ground. Dewclaws, if any, are to be removed. *Faults:* Straight stifles, cow-hocks, too narrow or too wide in the rear.

Coat

The coat of the Siberian Husky is double and medium in length, giving a well furred appearance, but is never so long as to obscure the clean-cut outline of the dog. The undercoat is soft and dense and of sufficient length to support the outer coat. The guard hairs of the outer coat are straight and somewhat smooth lying, never harsh nor standing straight off from the body. It should be noted that the absence of the undercoat during the shedding season is normal. Trimming of whiskers and fur between the toes and around the feet to present a neater appearance is permissible. Trimming the fur on any other part of the dog is not to be condoned and should be severely penalized. *Faults:* Long, rough, or shaggy coat; texture too harsh or too silky; trimming of the coat, except as permitted above.

Color

All colors from black to pure white are allowed. A variety of markings on the head is common, including many striking patterns not found in other breeds.

Gait

The Siberian Husky's characteristic gait is smooth and seemingly effortless. He is quick and light on his feet, and when in the show ring should be gaited on a loose lead at a moderately fast trot, exhibiting good reach in the forequarters and good drive in the hindquarters. When viewed from the front to rear while moving at a walk the Siberian Husky does not single-track, but as the speed increases the legs gradually angle inward until the pads are falling on a line directly under the longitudinal center of the body. As the pad marks converge, the forelegs and hind legs are carried straightforward, with neither elbows nor stifles turned in or out. Each hind leg moves in the path of the foreleg on the same side. While the dog is gaiting, the topline remains firm and level. *Faults:* Short, prancing or choppy gait, lumbering or rolling gait; crossing or crabbing.

Temperament

The characteristic temperament of the Siberian Husky is friendly and gentle, but also alert and outgoing. He does not display the possessive qualities of the guard dog, nor is he overly suspicious of strangers or aggressive with other dogs. Some measure of reserve and dignity may be expected in the mature dog. His intelligence, tractability, and eager disposition make him an agreeable companion and willing worker.

Summary

The most important breed characteristics of the Siberian Husky are medium size, moderate bone, well balanced proportions, ease and freedom of movement, proper coat, pleasing head and ears, correct tail, and good disposition. Any appearance of excessive bone or weight, constricted or clumsy gait, or long, rough coat should be penalized. The Siberian Husky never appears so heavy or coarse as to suggest a freighting animal; nor is he so light and fragile as to suggest a sprint-racing animal. In both sexes the Siberian Husky gives the appearance of being capable of great endurance. In addition to the faults already noted, the obvious structural faults common to all breeds are as undesirable in the Siberian Husky as in any other breed, even though they are not specifically mentioned herein.

Disqualification

Dogs over 23½ inches and bitches over 22 inches.

Approved October 9, 1990

Effective November 28, 1990

history

With the most definite intentions, the "forefathers" of the AKC standard of the Siberian Husky, had very definite motives in mind. They saw fit to use the word MODERATE and MEDIUM eighteen times throughout the standard. These two words represent where the breed was hundreds of years ago, where it is today and where it will go in the future.

Originally known as the Chukchi Indian dog, as history notes, the Chukchi Indian people were the original architects of this free willed, extremely athletic and unbelievably sturdy breed. The centuries strong nomadic will of the Siberian was most apparent during the years of the Cossack's ironfisted rule over what was then known as Russia. Even though the climate of the area of the land known as Siberia was not and still is not a favored climate for millions to live, the Cossacks in their quest to own Siberia were determined to bring the Chukchi people under their rule. Exactly why the Cossacks were determined to persecute and perform genocide on the Chukchi people is not sure. But, what is for sure is the Siberian Husky with all of its incredible survival characteristics was what led to stop the extinction of the Chukchi people.

Throughout world history, the accountings of the political prisoners of the Cossacks and their government, being exiled to Siberia cast and provided a bleak existence of life. Even the Cossack soldiers who were so feared, were not equipped to survive the hostile weather of the area. But, this land was home to the Chukchi people and their dogs. Interesting to note, the Chukchi people were a peace loving people, their ability to survive and stay one step ahead of the Russian government is nothing less than remarkable.

As these Indian people were chased and hunted, they wandered further into the bleak areas of Siberia, staying one step ahead of their persecutors, thanks to these wonderfully fast, athletic, moderately built dogs. As with ethnic cleansing throughout history of the world, the men of any given race were either off fighting or had already been killed. The amazing Chukchi women were determined to keep their race alive, even if it meant killing off their families and their dogs, so as not to fall into the hands of the Cossacks and their government. If the Cossacks had access to these incredible dogs, they could further pursue the Chukchis. When threatened of capture by the Cossacks, the Indian women killed their dogs, their children and themselves. A very unknown holocaust that faced the Chukchi people for hundreds of years. A CHILLING part of the history of the Siberian Husky.

The Siberian Husky was brought into national view when in 1925, Leonard Seppala's dog sled team, led by the famous dog Togo, saved the city of Nome, Alaska from a terrible diphtheria epidemic. This traveled 658 miles over a period of 5-1/2 days, with the serum so desperately needed to save thousands of lives. In the decade before this, the Siberian had established itself among the Alaska residents as the fastest sled dog of it's time. Sled dog racing was the sport of Alaska, dominated by teams of larger mixed malamute dogs. When the Siberian was introduced in 1909, the local dogs were no match for this smaller, incredibly athletic durable dog.

Two very prominent women who brought the Siberian into the national dog show scene in the United States were Eva B. "Short" Seeley and Lorna Taylor Demidoff. Short Seeley's famed, Chinook Kennels of Alaskan Malamutes and Siberian Huskies, provided the cornerstone for Lorna Demidoff's internationally recognized Monadnock Kennels of Siberians Huskies, both living in New England. It is still fact that a huge percentage of today's Siberians can trace their ancestry to the Chinook and Monadnock kennels. Both Mrs. Seeley and Mrs. Demidoff ran their dogs as well as exhibited them at dog shows....in that order. Both women, though now deceased, still hold records in the history of sled dog racing.

*(For a complete accounting of Leonard Seppala, Eva Seely and Lorna Demidoff, refer to the book(s), **THE COMPLETE SIBERIAN HUSKY**, by Michael Jennings and Lorna Demidoff)*

feature

When one dissects the parts of the Siberian's conformation, it becomes easy to understand why the breed's history is so intertwined to the functionality of the dog.

Beginning with the Siberian's head; the AKC standard calls for a small well furred ear. The reason for this is that in the cruelest of winters a smaller well furred ear allows little chance for frostbite, whether working on a dogsled or while sleeping. Both of these situations have the dog exposed to the raw elements. An almond shaped eye, obliquely set, allows the snow to pass by the eyes, without interfering with the dog's performance. A larger round eye, incorrectly set, would require the dog to keep closing his eyes to avoid freezing of the eye, thus slowing down the team.

A moderate stop allows the cold, icy air inhaled to be slowly warmed through the nasal cavity, allowing proper airflow to the brain and the lungs. (Think of the terrible freeze you may have gotten in your head when you eat ice cream too fast?)

A well-arched neck flowing into well laid back shoulders, (not sitting on top of i.e. stove pipe effect) with an upper arm well laid under the body, equal in length to the shoulder blade. These shoulders and upper arm proportions are vital to the Siberian's workability. Imagine a synchronized swimmer, the movement is free and easy, allowing maximum performance with minimum effort. Smooth and effortless gait, with no looseness, bouncing or rolling over the shoulders or topline. Along with a well let down foot, allowing for proper cushioning as each pad pulls the ground in, with each stride taken.

When viewing the Siberian from the front, there should be no noticeable spring of ribs. This is very important to remember, as the elbows must move freely past the rib cage to allow maximum flexibility and performance to cover the ground quickly and efficiently. Just imagine how far you could run, if each time you brought your arms past your ribs, your elbows would "slam" into your rib cage. You would tire quickly and with great discomfort. And, a moderately angulated rear, to work in harmony with the rest of the body.

The Siberian has a double coat. The soft undercoat is to provide warmth during the cold months. This undercoat sheds during warmer weather, as to work as an air conditioner. The slightly coarser outercoat, which repels the snow, rain and ice, keeps the undercoat dry and prevents the dog from freezing to death.

The Siberian's tail carriage allows from the trailing tail, which extends as an almost straight line off the croup to a sickle tail, NEVER touching the back of the dog when working. Perhaps one of the most beautiful sights to behold is that of a team of dogs, 10 miles out on the snow covered trail, their movement totally synchronized and all of them having their tails trailing behind them. An interesting note: many Siberians have a small darker patch of their respective coat color half

way down the tail. This is known as a scent mark. There is a gland under the skin, which, (when you feel the coat over this patch) makes the coat feel slightly oily. Legend has it, that when dogs from different tribes would meet, they would greet each other by first smelling this scent mark and then the genital area. I have seen this with my own dogs on many occasions. It was thought that this scent mark differentiated the packs of dogs.

One must remember the vital words from the AKC Standard regarding the Siberian Husky's movement, "quick and light on his feet, free and graceful in action". As the Siberian moves away from you and towards you, the feet should move (converge) towards a center line under the body. Soundness is a strong virtue of this breed.

This virtue is what has made most judges strongly resound that the Siberian is the best moving breed. Unfortunately, the soundness and incredible movement that set the Siberian far above other breeds is quickly disintegrating.

The only disqualification (other than those that effect all breeds) breed specific to the Siberian Husky is size:

Dogs: 21" - 23-1/2" Bitches: 20 - 22"

A judge "must" be diligent and measure any dog or bitch he feels may be over the assigned limits. The fact that another breed (i.e. Alaskan Malamute) bears such a strong resemblance to the Siberian Husky, and that the founders of this standard (Eva "Short" Seeley and Lorna Demidoff) worked on BOTH of these breed standards, and were very specific and forth right in their translation of the Siberian Husky standard.

health

Some of the health issues that face the Siberian. . .

Probably no other genetic problem has reared its ugly head, as that of juvenile cataracts. While there were accounts of this problem in the late 1960's, it was in the mid 1970's that this eye abnormality became full blown within the breed. Interesting to note, it was thought that if an affected dog was bred to an affected dog, all of the offspring would be affected. This theory was

shattered in 1975, when a Siberian bitch whelped a litter out of 2 affected parents, tested clear herself . . . and, remained clear until she died at the age of 15. There is still no definite inheritance mode for the Siberian eye problems.

Of all of the breeds that are affected by hip dysplasia, the Siberian Husky has the least incident rate. This can be attributed to those breeders who recognized this problem early on. They were extremely open to each other with information and any affected dogs were immediately removed from breeding programs.

EPILEPSY affects the Siberian. It is extremely important for "any" Siberian breeder to realize that with the breed's consistent popularity over the past 20 years, a dog that produces seizures **MUST** be eliminated from any breeding program. "NO ONE" can justify breeding an affected animal, selling it's offspring to a loving home, where the new owners must deal with the horrible pain of a watching their animal seize.

comments

More attention must be paid to the correct body shape of the Siberian (which is rectangular). Overall, the animals have become too long in loin. In addition, the small well furred ears, vital to surviving the coldest winters are being replaced by large incorrectly shaped ears that are too widely set. The beautiful almond shaped eyes, critical to the blowing snow not affecting the breed's working ability has given way to large, round and sometimes bulging eyes, that deny the "arctic dog" look, so very precious to this breed.

If fanciers will allow themselves to first; read and learn about the history of the breed and comprehend why the Siberian as been around for centuries, there will be a greater hope for the future.

about the author

Thomas L. Oelschlager (Tommy O) has bred and shown Siberian Huskies for 32 years under the kennel prefix of **KONTOKI**, located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

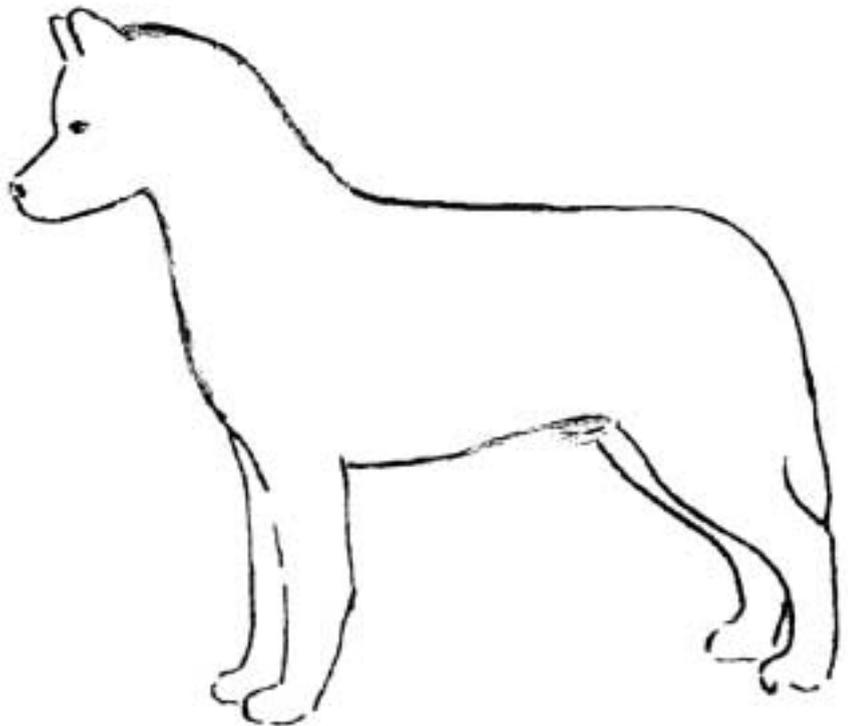
Along with Marlene DePalma, Tom is the breeder, owner and handler of the two Top Winning Siberians in the history of American Dogdom;

Ch. Kontoki's EIEIO and his grandfather,

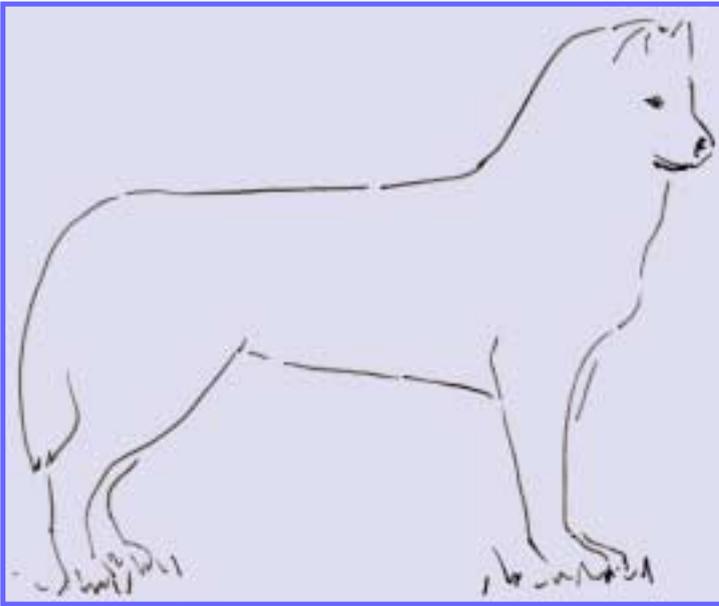
Ch. Kontoki's One Mo' Time

Their grandsire, **Ch. Kontoki's Natural Sinner** (also a Best in Show winner) has held the top specialty record honor since 1987.

With his own dogs and as a professional handler, Tom has shown over 300 Siberians to their American Championships, handled 13 different Siberians to Best In Show honors, totaling more than 155 BIS for this breed.

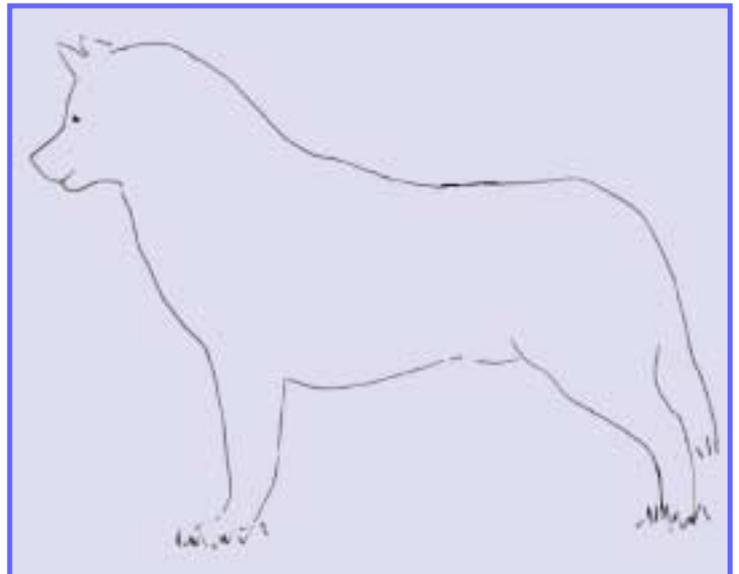


ideal proportions



Left: this dog is too long

Right:
this dog is too deep in
chest with a poor topline



Left:
this dog is short-legged,
straight stifled with an
overdone body

