
Dog Breeds

HISTORY

Canine Ancestry

The canine family tree can be traced back some 38 million years. This family tree includes 37 recognized *species* and 13 *genera* spread throughout the world. From Africa's wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*) and Australia's dingo (*Canis dingo*) to the South American fox (*Dusicyon chilla*) and the golden jackal (*Canis aureus*), all canines have descended from the same genetic origins—the family Canidae. All modern domesticated dogs (*Canis familiaris*) come from one branch of the family tree, the genus *Canis*. *Canis lupus*, the gray wolf, is their common ancestor.



Species is a biologic classification for a grouping of individuals that have the same biologic characteristics and can interbreed.

The term *genera* (plural of genus) is a biologic classification for a grouping of several species that have similar characteristics.

Genetic diversity indicates an expanded *gene pool*.

Gene pool is the collection of genes from all the individuals in a population that interbreeds.

Selective breeding is the process of breeding for specific traits.

Development of Different Breeds

Domesticated dogs have retained many of the wolf's characteristics (Figure 1)—social structure, territoriality, hunting skill, even herding abilities. It's likely that the domestication of canines occurred at various times in many geographical areas. As tribes of people moved, the genes of their domesticated canines mingled with those of dogs domesticated by other tribespeople. In this way *genetic diversity* developed. *Selective breeding* combined with this genetic diversity resulted in the evolution of breeds.

Over the centuries, humans began to selectively breed dogs for specific traits. Dogs prized for their ability to retrieve, hunt, herd, or chase were bred with similar dogs to produce “specialized” dogs. Today, more than 300 different breeds of dogs exist, although not all are formally recognized by the American Kennel Club (AKC).

FIGURE 1—Domestic dogs have retained many of the same canine characteristics of their wolf ancestors.



Today, domesticated breeds are either of mixed parentage or purebred. The main distinction is a fixed *pedigree* (record of ancestry indicating that the dog is “purely bred”). Although it’s still possible to know, or at least guess at, the parentage of mixed breed dogs (mongrels or mutts), there’s no formal recognition or records. Purebred dogs, on the other hand,

usually have meticulously recorded pedigrees. For many people, the biggest advantage of buying a purebred puppy is that you have a very good idea how it will look and act as an adult. Purebred dogs generally inherit from their parents the physical and personality traits characteristic of their breed (Figure 2).



FIGURE 2—This Labrador Retriever puppy has the characteristic look and behavioral characteristics of its breed.

The American Kennel Club

In 1884, the AKC was founded to oversee the breeding and showing of purebred dogs in America. Because the AKC records or registers each purebred dog, it's referred to as a *registry*. Although other registries exist, the AKC is by far the largest in the United States. In addition to registering each purebred dog, the AKC also keeps track of ownership and transfers this ownership when a dog is sold.

The AKC sets the *standard* for each dog breed. The standard describes what the ideal dog of each breed should look and act like if such an animal existed. The AKC classifies or



Conformation relates to the form, structure, and arrangement of the parts of the dog and how closely these factors meet the breed standard.

groups dog breeds. Dogs from different groups sometimes compete against each other at dog *conformation* shows. In addition, the AKC

- Promotes the improvement of purebred dogs
- Sponsors more than 15,000 dog conformation competitions each year held by licensed and member clubs. Only dog clubs may become AKC members.
- Sanctions dog events that promote interest in, and sustain the process of, breeding for type and function of purebred dogs.
- Gives awards to dogs that compete in these shows

For more information about the American Kennel Club and AKC-recognized dog breeds, contact this organization at the following address:

The American Kennel Club
5580 Centerview Drive
Raleigh, NC 27606
919-233-9767
<http://www.akc.org>

The United Kennel Club (UKC) is the second largest registry in the United States. The UKC recognizes many of the same breeds as the AKC, but this organization also recognizes additional breeds that the AKC doesn't (e.g., Alaskan Klee Kai, Bracco Italiano, Pudelpointer).

For more information on UKC standards, write to

The United Kennel Club
100 East Kilgore Road
Kalamazoo, MI 49001-5598
616-343-9020
<http://www.ukcdogs.com>

In this study unit, you'll learn about the breeds recognized by the AKC. Remember, as previously mentioned, that there are many other purebred dogs. Also, breeds that are recognized in other countries aren't recognized in the United States. This non-recognition is partly due to the fact that the populations of these animals living in the United States are small.

The Standard

How closely a purebred puppy measures up to the standard for its breed is a factor in determining how much money a breeder can sell it for. Breeders usually classify puppies as either *show* puppies, *working* puppies, or *pet* puppies.

A show puppy will have physical conformation very close to standard and would be expected to win at shows. Because show puppies will command the highest prices, breeders are often reluctant to sell them to first-time dog owners. Some breeders will sell the puppy but retain showing and breeding rights. Purebred puppies can also compete in performance-based shows (e.g., agility, tracking, obedience hunting).

Working puppies are bred for how well they perform. The working dog breeder's puppies are sold to people who will place them in competitions and other scenarios where the puppy will hunt, herd, and perform other work-related activities. Working dog breeders try hard to maintain a dog's original instincts. Some show dog breeders look down upon working dog breeders because the physical appearance of working dogs may not be close to standard. In turn, some working dog breeders consider dog shows to be little more than beauty pageants.

Purebred puppies who fail to meet the AKC standard in some way that will prevent them from winning in the show ring are sold as pets. A reputable breeder will require you to spay or neuter such a puppy as a condition of the sale. The defect will probably be so slight that it wouldn't be noticeable to the average dog lover. Only those persons dedicated to improving the breed would notice such small imperfections. Coat and eye color, markings, the positioning of the ears and tail, and subtle bone structure are some of the criteria show breeders use to assess the conformational quality of a puppy.

Examples of some of the criteria that working dog breeders use are ability to take directions, point, and flush.

Some breeders refuse to classify their puppies. These breeders feel that no one has the right to limit the potential of a puppy by labeling it. Instead, these breeders sell all their puppies for the same price to the best homes they can find.



Points are scoring units used to evaluate each dog in competition.

Pricked ears are ears that stand erect.

Faults are traits that are atypical and undesirable in a certain breed. Typically, dogs lose *points* for faults in the show ring. For example, a spotted tongue is considered a fault for the Chinese Shar-Pei. *Disqualifications* are traits that are so undesirable for a particular breed that a dog with these characteristics can't even compete in the show ring. For example, ears that are pricked up (known as *pricked ears*) disqualify a Chinese Shar-Pei from the show ring. Regardless of the breed, a dog that's overly shy or aggressive toward people is automatically disqualified from the show ring. Also, a male dog who has one or both testicles missing is disqualified.

Cropping and *docking* are controversial cutting procedures generally done to enhance the appearance of the animal. With some breeds like the Doberman, the ears are traditionally cropped to make them stand erect. In other breeds like the Basenji, the ears naturally prick up (Figure 3). If a dog's ears naturally stand erect without being cropped, they're said to *prick up*. Many breeders have their dogs' tails docked as well. Breeders usually have tails docked within three to five days after the puppies are born. The *dewclaw* (Figure 4) is the extra toe high on the inside of each paw. Although most breeds have no rear dewclaw, some may have as many as three rear dewclaws (e.g., Great Pyrenees). Because the dewclaw is of no use to most dogs and can cause medical problems, it's



FIGURE 3—The Basenji's ears naturally prick up.

commonly removed when puppies are very young. Keep in mind, however, that some breed standards require one or more dewclaws.

The AKC classifies different dog breeds into groups based on their appearance, performance, and the function for which they were originally developed. With so many different breeds, this classification is very helpful. Understanding how the different breeds are classified will help you remember and identify them. The AKC has divided the different breeds into seven groups.

1. ***Sporting Group***—includes breeds that locate and retrieve game and water birds
2. ***Hound Group***—includes breeds that trail rabbits, foxes, and raccoons by scent as well as breeds that locate their prey by eyesight and then run that prey down with speed
3. ***Working Group***—includes breeds that guard livestock and homes, pull carts and sleds, perform mountain or water rescue, or serve in the military
4. ***Terrier Group***—includes breeds that kill rats and flush foxes and otters from their dens
5. ***Toy Group***—includes tiny companion breeds
6. ***Non-Sporting Group***—includes breeds that don't fit into any of the other categories
7. ***Herding Group***—includes breeds that herd sheep and cattle

Be aware that this study unit doesn't contain descriptions of all existing dog breeds. Many breeds are

- Too rare
- Not well recognized in this country
- In the process of receiving recognition

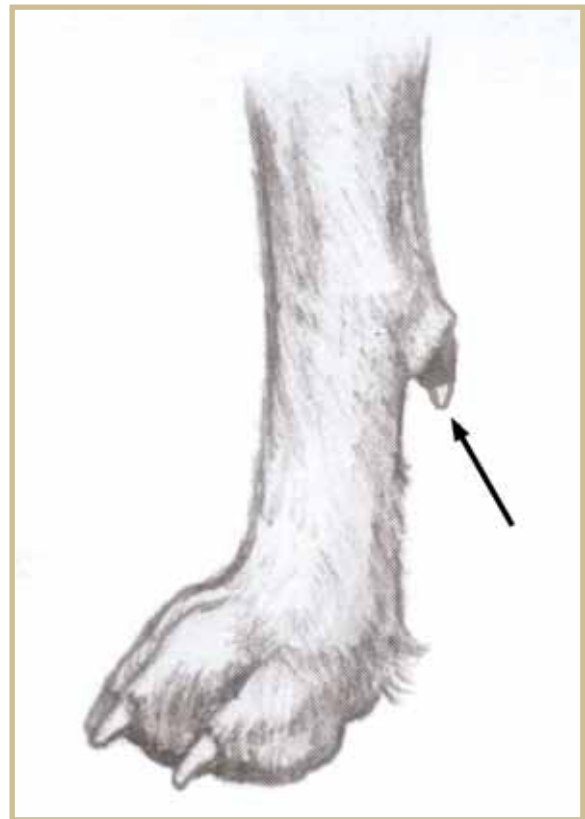


FIGURE 4—Dewclaw

The purpose of this study unit is to familiarize you with those dogs *most likely* to be encountered in your career. Also, you may find slightly different breed descriptions in other sources because

- Breed standards change over time
- Different kennel clubs may have different standards
- Other countries often have different standards
- Various books almost always describe the standard somewhat differently

In most cases, the descriptions found in this study unit follow the current AKC standards.

Coat and Color Types

Most dogs have two hair types that make up their coats—the *outer guard hairs* and the *undercoat*. The texture and length of each hair type can vary. For example, dogs originally bred

in cold climates, like the Alaskan Malamute, usually have thick, dense undercoats (Figure 5). Most hunting dogs, on the other hand, have sleek, soft outer coats.



FIGURE 5—The Alaskan Malamute has a dense undercoat that acts as insulation against the cold.



Self-Check 1

At the end of each section of *Dog Breeds*, you'll be asked to pause and check your understanding of what you have just read by completing a "Self-Check" exercise. Answering these questions will help you review what you've studied so far. Please complete *Self-Check 1* now.

1. A dog with a fixed pedigree is called a
 - a. mixed breed.
 - b. purebred.
 - c. domesticated breed.
 - d. mongrel.
2. Describe three functions of the American Kennel Club.

3–6: Indicate whether the following statements are True or False.

- ___ 3. A puppy that's very close to the standard for its breed is said to be a working puppy.
- ___ 4. A puppy that's bred to perform well at herding trials is a show puppy.
- ___ 5. A puppy that fails to meet the standard in some way that keeps it from entering the show ring is said to be a pet puppy.
- ___ 6. A defect that keeps a puppy from competing in a show is called a disqualification.

7–13: Match each of the dog groups on the left with its correct definition on the right.

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|----------------------------|--|
| ___ 7. Sporting Group | a. breeds that round up sheep and cattle |
| ___ 8. Hound Group | b. tiny, companion breeds |
| ___ 9. Working Group | c. breeds that don't fit into any other group |
| ___ 10. Terrier Group | d. breeds that kill rats |
| ___ 11. Toy Group | e. breeds that trail rabbits and foxes by scent or sight |
| ___ 12. Herding Group | f. breeds that locate and retrieve game and water birds |
| ___ 13. Non-Sporting Group | g. breeds that guard livestock and homes |

Check your answers with those on page 111.