

About The Saluki

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Saluki is a graceful balance of beauty and function. Salukis are typically 24-29 inches tall at the shoulder and generally weigh between 40 and 65 pounds. Salukis are swift, agile, and very graceful in motion. As a member of the sighthound group, the Saluki hunts by sight, not scent. They were bred to be longdistance runners, having both speed and endurance, whereas their cousins, the greyhound and the whippet, were bred to be short distance sprinters. Salukis have been clocked at over 45mph. They were streamlined by evolution for one task: coursing game. Their long-distance eyesight is exceptional. They have deep chests, for plenty of room for heart and lungs (the heart and lungs are larger than normal, to supply air and blood at an increased rate during the chase). Their sleek bodies have a very low ratio of body fat, as weight is mass that must be moved and every pound slows them down. Their long legs, seemingly fragile, are tough, coiled springs for maximum acceleration. Their pasterns are strong and flexible, able to withstand the impact of their entire weight as they do the double suspension gallop. Their rear legs are well muscled, for the strength to propel them at such speeds. Their hocks are low to the ground for maximum spring. Their bone is a tough, bladed bone, giving strength without weight, instead of the heavy, round bone of most dog breeds. Their long tail acts as a rudder in high speed turns. Even though their heads are slender and elegant, they possess strong jaws, capable of bringing down and holding large prey. Their fur is silky to the touch and is normally short throughout the body.

They are the only breed of dog with a single layer coat no downy undercoat for surviving the heat of the desert. Because of this lack of oily undercoat, they never develop a "doggie smell!" The ears, long tail, and legs are feathered except in the smooth variety. Their skin is thin and dry. Their "hare foot", thickly feathered between the toes, gives them the ability to run in deep sand. They are a perfect example of how nature designs an animal for a specific task. The engineering of their bodies is superb for a galloping hound, needing the ability to produce quick acceleration and sustained running for a long period of time. Nature also gave them great beauty and variety. No other AKC breed has the number of variations of type (northern type, southern type and everything in between) that is correct, or variety of color. The lighter colors were more prevalent in the southern lands, where they blended well with the desert; the darker colors were more often found in the northern lands.

Some of the colors available include: Cream, Fawn, Golden, Grizzle, red grizzle, deer grizzle, silver grizzle, golden grizzle, and black grizzle, Red, Tri, White, the blacks (black and tan, tricolor, which is black, white and tan, and black and silver), chocolate, and the parti-colors (cream body with any of the above colors in a spotted pattern). Many of the solid colors are also Irish - marked (having a white collar around the neck and some having white running down the front legs from the neck collar.) Black fringing on ears and tail is also seen on many fawns and reds. All colors and combinations of colors are acceptable.

The Saluki looks like fine porcelain and is built like tough rawhide. Their fragile-seeming appearance is deceptive.

Artists have long loved painting the Saluki because of their clean lines and graceful symmetry.

TEMPERAMENT

The Saluki was bred to be a pack animal. From earliest times, they were kept in packs and hunted in groups of 2-6. It is amazing to watch two Salukis coursing a hare, to watch how they work together to turn the hare toward the strong jaws of the nearest hound. The nature of the terrain dictated what they had to be physically; the nature of the hunt and the life style of the tribes dictated what they had to be mentally. The hunters, mounted on their Arabian horses with a hawk on their wrist, and a Saluki up before them, would go into the desert to hunt. At the selected area, the hawks would be sent out questing for game. When the hawks found a herd of gazelle or oryx, they would circle high in the sky above the herd.

The watching Salukis would be released and would race toward the place where the hawk circled, often miles from the waiting hunters. The Salukis would then single out their target and the chase would begin. Sometimes the chase was short and fast; but at other times, the chase lasted for many miles, testing the stamina and heart of the Salukis.

Once the prey was caught, it was brought down by a firm grip on the animal's throat by the strong jaws of the Saluki. In Islamic religious practice, the hound must not kill the prey; it must be ritually dispatched by the hunter for the meat to be consumed. The hounds were trained to hold the prey but not kill it. That death grip on the throat cut off oxygen and forced the prey into unconsciousness, awaiting the arrival of the hunter. If the hunt was for hares, and the hunter was on foot, the Saluki would bring back to him the unmarked, unconscious hare.

Since the Salukis were always operating in the hunt without the direct supervision of their masters, it was vital that they have the intelligence and independence to do so successfully. So, heart, intelligence, independence were qualities greatly valued (and bred for) by the Bedouins.

Tribal life in the desert also dictated several other requirements. The Bedouins prized their Salukis highly, even allowing them to sleep in the masters' tents. So they did not want them stolen by rival tribes. Thus, they bred for an aloofness, a wariness with strangers, to protect against theft. Yet the hospitality of the Bedouins was legendary and their hounds could not be aggressive toward visitors and other members of the tribe. The result of this selective breeding and training is a hound who is at ease and affectionate with people he knows but aloof with strangers. They also understood that their hounds could not be aggressive with other animals, since they had to live with other Salukis, horses, camels, goats and all manner of animals. The Saluki operates well in such situations, particularly if they are raised in them. It is important that Saluki puppies be well socialized because they can have the tendency, due to such aloofness and independence, to be shy with strange people, places and animals they don't know. A well socialized Saluki is comfortable anywhere.

Intelligence in a dog is often a double-edged sword. Such a problem is exemplified by the concept smart trainable. In the dog world, it is not necessarily so. A certain amount of intelligence is necessary to be trainable; too much intelligence and independence can be a problem. A really smart dog is not always the most

trainable dog. Like cats, who have known this always, they are smart enough to realize they don't have to do this to gain your affection. So "trainability" is a deceptive word. Salukis are not noted for their "trainability", i.e., for behavior that suits their owners. In this, they are astonishingly cat like. They generally see no reason to do things they don't want to do. There are well trained Salukis out there, even obedience and agility titled Salukis. However, these require different training methods from the usual ones, a sense of humor, and a lot of patience. It is not that Salukis don't understand what you want them to do; it is that they don't understand why you expect them to do that.

Most dog training is based on an "approval reward" system, that is, the dog wants to please you, so it does what you want. This doesn't often work with Salukis. Their need for your approval is not high; they are convinced that your affection isn't based on doing this trick correctly. So alternate approaches must be used. The two most successful are: bribery (training with food as a reward), or making it into a fun game. Salukis love games and are often willing to play them. Intelligence also creates curiosity and the Saluki is one of the most curious breeds there is. This trait leads them into all kinds of situations one doesn't usually expect from a dog. The intelligence also produces boredom. A bored Saluki is one who is going to get into trouble, seeking something creative to do. The temperament of the Saluki makes them a unique breed. They are smart, curious, inventive. They are joyous, playful and affectionate. They are stubborn, have a strong sense of humor (and many are prone to playing jokes on their owners), and have the unsettling ability to reason (they should be labeled the engineers of the dog world you have only to watch them solve a problem to see why.) They believe, all of them, that they are the royalty and you are here to serve them. They believe they should be a law unto themselves. If you gain their trust and their respect, they will shift the authority to you but it has to be earned. They have very, very long memories, for both good things and bad. Intelligent and clever, they are also sensitive, their feelings hurt by harsh words. Harsh discipline sends them into a mental withdrawal that, if severe enough, can take a long time to come out of. Physical discipline is always a mistake with a Saluki. The tougher ones grow more stubborn; the more gentle ones withdraw into themselves.

There is also a considerable difference in the temperament of the dogs and the bitches. The dogs tend to be more easy going, more tractable, more affectionate. The bitches of this breed are the tough ones, generally. The Alpha male of the household will exert his authority over every hound there except the Alpha female and he has the good sense to leave her alone! The bitches are the most aggressive hunters, the most pack-oriented, and the most clever.

If a person is looking for a dog who will follow adoringly at his heels and is anxious to please his master by obeying his commands, the Saluki is not the right dog for that person. To live with Salukis, you need to have an understanding and an appreciation for what and how they are - and revel in their unique qualities, and not try to make a Saluki behave like a golden retriever!

Judy Simpson - Bob Krieger
www.Saluki.com/breeddes.htm

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