

I am a Lhasa Apso

By Ellie Baumann

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I am a small dog whose ancestors managed to adapt to the rigors of the Himalayan plateau. The fittest survived, prospered and, eventually, some of the descendants reached this country in the early Thirties. I am descended from this stock. Adverse conditions high in the mountains of Tibet forced my evolution to follow paths on which other high altitude dwellers were also embarked. Since the area from which I came is an especially cold one with killing frosts as early as August, my body structure had to adapt to the cold as well as to the height of my homeland. I have a shorter tail, shorter limbs, and shorter ears than dogs who live in the tropics. My body is very sturdy and solid with short, heavy bones. I look as if I could go long distances and not tire easily

Under my coat is a sound body that is quite heavy for its size. People are surprised when they find that under all that hair is an animal who is put together like a tank. I need heavy construction to stand the stress of cold and altitude.

I have not been in this country too long compared to some other dogs you see at a dog show, but those who already know what I look like will probably remember very clearly where you first ran into me. I am not like any other dog that you would meet on a city street or a country lane.

I have a long coat that stretches down to the ground and completely covers my feet. Some people call me the "Jelly Bean" dog because I come in all colors. I can be one solid color or a blending of several colors. I can be plain, or I can be spotted. Of course, with a long-haired spotted dog, the coat just keeps growing and the spot stretches out into a stripe instead. If that happens, I'm called a parti-color. I'm even brindled but again, as the coat grows longer and longer, those brindle lines all run together and you have something like layers of different colors – an overlay.

My head is a little hard to see sometimes for there is so much hair on it. I have a beard. Yes even our ladies are bearded – and my ears blend right into the beard and all the rest of the coat. And, unless the hair is out of my eyes, you wouldn't know that I could actually see you for my eyes are well hidden by what my owner calls the "head fall." My tail is generally up, carried in a curl over my back and it's often hard to know if I really do indeed have a tail. It can be held so tight to my back that you don't know that it is really there, until I straighten it out and stretch it out on the ground behind me when I sit down ...



CH Everglow Zijuh Tomba

Sometimes I can be found in a pet shop, but I hope that if you go looking for a Lhasa, you will go to a breeder who is trying to produce the perfect dog rather than the one who is out to sell a litter a month or so many dozen puppies a year.

I am a breed that was raised to be an indoor dog. In Lhasa – the capitol of Tibet – I used to live in the palace of the Dalai Lama before the Communists took over, and in almost every big monastery in Tibet there were a lot of my relatives living right there with the monks. Some people call me the “The Holy Dog of Asia” because of this, but all that I really did was to keep the monks company in their lonely and cold cells. Some people say that I am the faithful dog who followed the Lord Buddha around and who could be turned into a ferocious lion in the twinkling of his eye. I guess that is why so many call me the “Lion Dog.”

The AKC Standard calls for me to be the golden colors of the lion, but the Tibetans say that their lion is the mythical snow lion who is always white with a blue mane. I haven’t seen any white Lhasas with a blue mane so far, so I guess we’ll just have to stick with the western idea of how a lion should be colored.

I can live a long time if you care for me properly and my breed generally outlives the great big dogs, like the Saints and the Danes, or the little ones like the Chihuahuas and the Pomeranians.

There aren’t any bad personality traits in my breed that have to be beaten out or trained out of me in order for me to live in close contact with all kinds of people. I have an even, obliging disposition.

Of course, when I’m going to a dog show, then I look super beautiful because that is first of all, a beauty contest, and I want to look my very best. But with general care and brushing, I can stop traffic on any street, for I am a beautiful, graceful and elegant animal.

After all, I AM A LHASA APSO!