

# The World of Dogs

## Introduction

### ***The History of Dogs***

Although the exact origin of the domestic dog (*Canis familiaris*) is unknown, it is clear that the dog existed in proximity with humans as far back as the Stone Age. In fact, it is the dog's close association with man throughout the world that distinguishes it from all other animal species.

It is impossible to pinpoint the actual beginning of the man-dog relationship, but it generally is agreed that the dog was probably the first animal to be domesticated and that this domestication probably took place somewhere in the Middle East or southwestern Asia. The interesting fact remains, however, that the single earliest domestic dog known (10,500 years old) was found at the Jaguar Cave site in Birch Creek Valley, Idaho. For additional information, see "The Pre-History" on page 1.

### ***The Wolf Theory***

Although at one time it was believed that jackals and wolves both figured in the ancestry of modern dogs, today the wolf is assumed to be the lone ancestor of our modern friends. While wolves and dogs can interbreed, they are distinct species. Dogs differ physiologically from the wolves in that they possess shorter muzzles, crowded premolars, and smaller brains. See also "When the sites of ancient human remains are excavated..." on page 1.

Although a small species of wolf from the southern hemisphere is believed to be the ancestor of most mainstream domestic dogs, Roger Caras believes that a larger species of wolf from the northern latitudes was probably the direct ancestor of the spitz dog.

### ***The Pre-History***

It is theorized that during the Eocene epoch (50 million years ago), *Miacis*, the ancient ancestor of weasels, cats, bears, and dogs, roamed the earth. By the time the Oligocene epoch (35 million years ago) came about, *Miacis* had given rise to the more specialized *Daphnaenus*, the ancestor of bears, and *Cynodictis*, the ancestor of canines. *Cynodictis* saw the rise of *Cynodesmus*, which evolved into *Tomarctus* during the Miocene epoch (20 million years ago). *Tomarctus* is believed to be the ancestor of wolves, foxes, wild dogs, and jackals.

### ***The Archeological Record***

Dog remains have been found in Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age sites on every continent throughout the world, and most of these remains point to selective breeding. Very large hunting dogs, food-source pariah dogs, and even companion toy dogs have been found in these ancient sites.

When the sites of ancient human remains are excavated, archeologists can accurately determine if canine remains are those of a dog or a wolf by examining the size of the skull and the position of the teeth. As canines are domesticated, their brains shrink. The size of a dog's brain is 20% to 30% smaller than that of a wolf the same size. The muzzle also becomes shorter, and the teeth become crowded in the jaw.

# **Classification**

## ***Classification by Morphology***

Jean-Pierre Megnin categorized dogs into four major groups based on physical resemblance and behavior. The four classification groups are: the Greyhound family (Graioides), which exhibit an elongated line, cone-shaped head, small ears, and lean musculature; the Mastiff family (Molossoides), which have round craniums, deep, wide chests, and a solid bone structure; the Wolf family (Lupoides), which have pyramidal craniums, pointed muzzles, small eyes, erect ears, and tufted tails; and the Hound family (Braccoides), which have oval craniums, large lips, protruding eyes, and slightly curved hindquarters.

## ***Classification by Function***

The earliest known system of classification was developed by the Romans, who divided dogs into categories by their function. The Roman classification categories included house dogs, shepherd dogs, sporting dogs, war dogs, dogs that ran by scent, and dogs that ran by sight.

The modern classification system divides dogs into seven groups: Sporting Dogs, which are employed primarily for flushing and retrieving; Hounds, which are used to track and kill game; Working Dogs, which are used as guards, draft animals, guides, and herders; Terriers, which go to earth after burrowing prey; Toys, which are small enough to sit on your lap; Non-sporting Dogs, which are bred primarily as pets and companions; and Herding Dogs, which are used primarily for herding and which once were part of the Working Dogs group.

## ***Herding Dogs***

Herding Dogs actually are a sub-classification of Working Dogs, whose primary function is to herd cattle and sheep.

## **Australian Cattle Dog**

This medium-sized herding dog was originally bred in Australia as a cross between two now-extinct breeds. Dalmatians and Smooth Collies were later introduced into the breed to enhance the dog's herding ability, and today it ranks among the world's best herding dogs. It is also known as the Australian Heeler because of its habit of nipping at the heels of stray cattle to direct them back to the herd. The Australian Cattle Dog stands from 18 to 20 inches high at the shoulder and weighs about 33 pounds. Puppies are born white, but become any of several colors when they mature.

## **German Shepherd**

This large dog resembles the wolf in appearance and is known by many names, including the Alsatian Wolf Dog, Belgian Police Dog, French Police Dog, or simply Police Dog. In Germany, the breed is known as the Deutscher Schaferhund (German Shepherd Dog) and is called the Polizehund (Police Dog) only when it has received police training. This dog is a descendant of the long-haired shepherding and farm-stock dogs of South Germany. Shepherds stand about 25 inches high at the shoulder and weighs between 60 to 85 pounds.

## **Shetland Sheepdog**

This small breed of herding dog was perfected in the 19th century in the Shetland Islands off the coast of Scotland. The Shetland Sheepdog is a scaled-down version of its nearest relative, the Collie. They tirelessly and efficiently drive and gather sheep and can be trained to respond to whistles of varying pitch. Shelties are highly intelligent and have taken a considerable

number of top honors in obedience competitions. They stand from 13 to 16 inches high at the shoulder and weigh about 15 pounds.

## **Hounds**

The classification Hound designates dogs that are bred to hunt animals. Quarry may be as large as bears or elk or as small as vermin. Most of the dogs in this classification hunt by scent,, although several of the breeds in this group hunt mainly by sight.

### **Afghan Hound**

The origins of this breed go back 5,000 years to ancient Egypt, where it was bred by sheiks to hunt in the desert. The Afghan Hound hunts by sight and has highly developed vision. The hipbones of the Afghan Hound are set higher and wider apart than other dog, which gives them unmatched ability at turning, leaping, and traversing mountainous terrain. The long coat suits the dog to almost any type of weather. The Afghan Hound stands between 24 and 28 inches high at the shoulder and weighs between 50 and 60 pounds.

### **Basenji**

This moderate-sized breed comes from central Africa where the pygmies of the Ituri Forest used them to track down small game. The Basenji is unique among dogs because it does not bark. Although the breed is often referred to as the barkless dog of Africa, it is not totally mute and can emit a sound that has been described as a soft yodeling. The coat is chestnut or black and is silky and lustrous. The Basenji stands about 17 inches high and weighs around 23 pounds.

### **Ibizan Hound**

Historians believe that this breed originated on the island of Ibiza off the coast of Spain; however, some of the best specimens of the breed are found in Majorca. Ibizan Hounds were bred as hunters and can hunt by sight or sound, but also will track by scent. The Ibizan stands 22 to 28 inches at the shoulder, weighs about 50 pounds, and has a short red coat with white markings.

### **Scottish Deerhound**

This breed was developed in the 16th and 17th centuries in Scotland and was originally owned and bred exclusively by Highland Chieftains. The Deerhound has a keen nose and can run down deer, jackrabbit, coyote, and wolf, and can kill them alone and unaided.<sup>1</sup> The Deerhound stands between 28 and 32 inches at the shoulder and weighs between 75 and 110 pounds.

## **Terriers**

The classification Terrier designates dogs that were originally bred to flush small game and vermin from their burrows or to go to earth and kill their prey. Today, terriers are raised chiefly as pets.

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<sup>1</sup> William A. Bruette and Kerry V. Donnelly, *The Complete Dog Buyers' Guide*, T.F.H. Publications, 1979.

## **American Staffordshire Terrier**

The American Staffordshire Terrier was bred for well over 200 years in England, then brought to the United States and bred with American dogs. In 1972, the breed was given the name American Staffordshire Terrier. Staffordshire Terriers, which are still bred in England, are considered a separate breed. The American Staffordshire Terrier is also known as the Pit Dog, the American Bull Terrier, and the American Pit Bull Terrier. It is thought that the breed was developed by crossing Bulldogs with White Terriers, Manchester Terriers, and Fox Terriers. American Staffordshire Terriers stand about 20 inches high at the shoulder and weigh about 50 pounds.

## **Bull Terrier**

The Bull Terrier can be various colors, although white and brindle are the most popular. They originally were bred for dog fighting and badger baiting. The breed originated by crossing Bulldogs and country terriers, and the first specimens had short faces. Later, Pointers and Dalmatians were introduced into the strain, resulting in a longer-faced, white dog that resembles the variety that is popular today.

## **Fox Terrier**

The starting point for this popular breed is the late 1860's, although the exact source of the breed remains a mystery. Some theorize that Fox Terriers came from crossing white English Terriers or Manchester Terriers with either Beagles or Bull Terriers. Fox Terriers come in two varieties: the Smooth Fox Terrier and the Wirehaired Fox Terrier. It is not uncommon to get both types from one litter. The Fox Terrier stands about 15 inches high at the shoulder and weighs from 16 to 19 pounds.

## Ten most popular breeds in the US

According to the American Kennel Club (AKC) the Labrador Retriever is the most popular dog in the United States. The following table ranks dogs based on their registration numbers in 2006.



**Top Dog in US - Labrador Retriever**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Breed</b>	<b>2006 Count</b>
1	Retrievers (Labrador)	123,760
2	Yorkshire Terriers	48,346
3	German Shepherd Dogs	43,575
4	Retrievers (Golden)	42,962
5	Beagles	39,484
6	Dachshunds	36,033
7	Boxers	35,388
8	Poodles	29,939
9	Shih Tzu	27,282
10	Miniature Schnauzers	22,920

Source: [American Kennel Club](#)

## Top 5 Dog Breeds for Families

Considering a dog for your young family? Here is a list of the 5 best dogs for active families.

1. Siberian Husky
2. Golden Retriever
3. Labrador Retrievers
4. Collie
5. Beagle

Source: [Associated Content](#)