

About the Hokkaido

The Hokkaido is a medium-sized, strongly-built dog. They have longer, thicker coats than the other Japanese breeds, and also have wider chests and smaller ears. Like all the Nihon Ken, they have a double coat made up of protective, coarse outer guard hairs, and a fine, thick undercoat that is shed seasonally. The breed comes in several colors: white, red, black, brindle, sesame, and wolf grey. With early training, the Hokkaido is a very loyal and dedicated companion who wants to please his human family. They are incredibly intelligent thinkers and problem solvers, and they excel at tasks given to them. If not socialized properly, however, Hokkaido can become wary of strangers and protective of their families. The breed is extremely rare outside its native country. In Japan, there is an estimated population of around 10,000-12,000, and yearly registrations of between 900-1000.





History

The Hokkaido is one of the oldest of the six native Japanese spitz breeds that also include the [Akita](#), [Shiba Inu](#), [Kai Ken](#), [Shikoku](#), and [Kishu Ken](#). They are said to have originated from medium-sized Japanese dogs that accompanied the Ainu people from Honshu, the main island of Japan, to Hokkaido during the Kamakura era in the 1140s, when exchanges were developing between Hokkaido and the Tohoku District.

Over time, the Ainu people and their dogs adapted to survive the severely cold winter climate and rugged landscape. The dogs were revered by the Ainu people for their devout loyalty, bravery, and large-game hunting ability. The Ainu were bear and deer hunters by culture, and their livelihood depended on their renowned bear dogs.

The Hokkaido was classified as a Living Natural Monument by the government of Japan in 1937. There are two main breed registries: the Hokkaido Ken Hozonkai (Hokkaido Dog Preservation Society) and the Hokkaido Ken Kyokai (Hokkaido Dog Association). Almost no Hokkaido are registered outside of these two clubs.