

About the Kai Ken

Kai Ken are athletic and intelligent with a strong desire to hunt. The Kai is an independent thinker and can form a strong bond with their family. They are excellent swimmers and climbers and have been known to climb trees and swim rivers in pursuit of game. Kai have a distinct brindle coat that comes in three colors: Black Brindle (Kuro-Tora), Brindle (Chu-Tora), and Red Brindle (Aka-Tora). Red brindle is the rarest of the coat colors. The distinct coloring and brindle pattern enabled the dog to blend in to the mountainous forests in which it hunted, camouflaging it against prey and predators in ancient times. The amount of brindle will vary from dog to dog as well as the brindle pattern. Most puppies are born completely black and their brindle will emerge as they age and will continue to change for around the first five years of their life. In the home, the Kai Ken requires basic canine care. They can be kept in an apartment setting provided they receive regular exercise in the form of leashed walks. Being a naturally clean breed, bathing should be limited to only when dirty. Brushing is recommended, especially during twice-a-year coat blowing.



History

The Kai Ken is one of the six native Japanese breeds. The breed was discovered in 1929 in the mountainous regions of Kai province near Mount Fuji. In 1931, the Kai Ken Aigokai was formed and is the oldest and largest Kai Ken registry. Due to the breed's hunting prowess and agility, it was traditionally used to hunt a wide range of game from pheasants to bear.

The Kai was recognized in 1934 by the Japanese Kennel Club. Because of the language barrier, there is very limited information on the breed, but it is believed that the first Kai Kens were brought to the United States in the 1950s by US servicemen in the military. A pair was also sent to Salt Lake City. It is not known what happened to these dogs or if there are any surviving offspring. The next known arrival of the breed was in 1990 when a four-year-old male was brought over and, shortly after that, three female puppies. In 1991, six more puppies were brought over and in the following year, one more male puppy was imported. These dogs made up the genetic pool for all the American bred Kai Ken; they are the foundation of the Kai we have today.

There were originally two types of Kai Kens from two great foundation studs. KAIKURO willed the "shishi-inu-gata" type which is a thicker, stockier dog with a more bear-type face. DAIRO, famed for his deer hunting, is credited for the thinner, longer bodies with foxier faces called the "shika-inu-gata" type. Each dog gave strength, speed, agility and quick thinking to its descendants as evidenced in the breed today. Currently in Japan, the Kai is regarded very highly by the Japanese people, they do not distinguish the two types anymore, and no one type is preferred over the other. The Japanese describe the Kai as a trustworthy guardian, extremely devoted to his master, and they say a Kai will lay down its life to protect its master. They are very loved and protected in their native country and is considered a natural treasure in Japan.



