

# The SHIBA INU



Canadian Kennel Club Standard (2006)  
with Comments and Illustrations

Presented by Shiba Inu Canada, the National Breed Club





# THE SHIBA INU

Effective January 1, 2006, a new Standard came into effect for the Shiba Inu breed in Canada. This new Standard is far more explicit than the original Standard, but the intent is the same. As in all breed standards, there is much room for interpretation. Shiba Inu Canada has produced this booklet to help judges and fanciers better understand the breed.

The breed was recognized in Canada in 1992, and in the United States in 1993. The breed has not become an overnight sensation, but has slowly grown in popularity as people who appreciate a dog of this size and personality become aware of them.

Breeders are fortunate to be able to import bloodlines from the country of origin when desired, and Canadian and American fanciers compete and cooperate equally to maintain, and in some areas, improve the breed. The increasingly global outlook has seen the Shiba distributed to all countries, with quality animals distributed around the world.

Studying a breed involves learning the little nuances of the breed that are not necessarily mentioned in the standard. Some of these things will be cited during this presentation but are not meant to replace any of the precepts put forth in the Standard, only to enhance an individual's understanding of the breed. The Standard is always the foundation by which to gauge the quality of any given dog.

In no part is a Shiba an extreme dog, and its balance and symmetry are part of the breed's general good health as well as natural beauty. Although the word cute is almost always heard when someone describes a Shiba, it never appears in the Standard and the Shiba is never to be considered a Toy dog.

Sincere thanks to the National Shiba Club of America ([www.shibas.org](http://www.shibas.org)) and Chris Levy for allowing the use of their presentation materials in the creation of this brochure.

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The official standard is printed in bold letters, with *comments in italics* following.

## Contents:

<b>Origin &amp; Purpose</b> .....	1
<b>General Appearance</b> .....	2
<b>Temperament</b> .....	2
<b>Size</b> .....	2
<b>Coat &amp; Colour</b> .....	3
<b>Head</b> .....	6
<b>Neck</b> .....	8
<b>Forequarters</b> .....	8
<b>Body</b> .....	9
<b>Hindquarters</b> .....	9
<b>Tail</b> .....	10
<b>Gait</b> .....	11
<b>Faults</b> .....	11
<b>Disqualifications</b> .....	11



***Thank you for attending this seminar,  
we hope you have found it a worthwhile  
and educational experience.***

Although the Shiba Inu Canada Board of Directors has approved this booklet, it is considered a "work in progress." Any questions, comments or suggestions should be directed to the Seminar Coordinator at [sunojo@shaw.ca](mailto:sunojo@shaw.ca).

The club website is: [www.shibainucanada.com](http://www.shibainucanada.com)

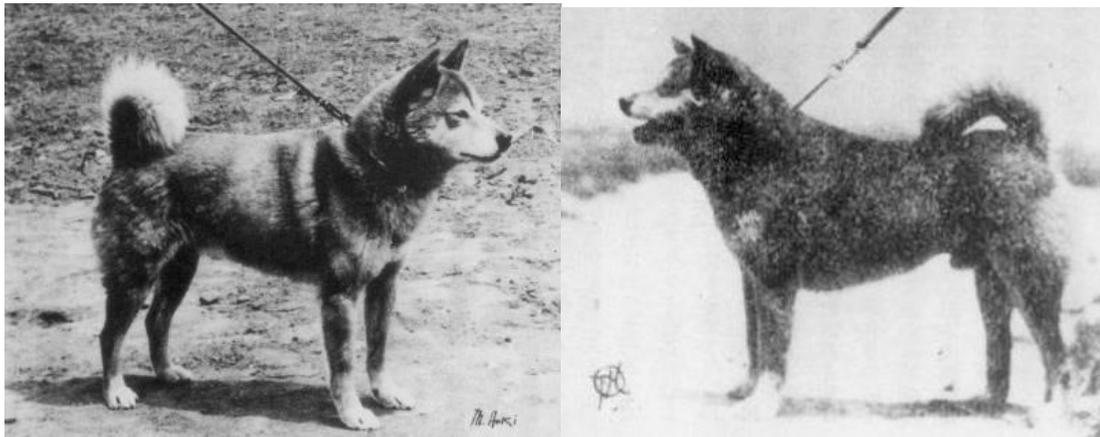
## SHIBA INU STANDARD

Effective JANUARY 1, 2006

### ORIGIN & PURPOSE

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The Shiba was developed in Japan, and is the smallest of the native Japanese breeds. Developed as a hunting dog for boar, rabbit, grouse and other small game in dense undergrowth, the Shiba needed strength, agility and a coarse thick coat, as well as courage and tenacity. While still retaining these hunting skills, the Shiba is now primarily an excellent companion.



(above photos circa 1930)

*Around 7000 BC the ancestors of today's Japanese breeds accompanied the earliest immigrants to Japan. Archaeological excavations show that the Jomonjin people had small dogs in the 14.5 to 19.5 inch range. In the third century BC, a new group of immigrants brought their dogs to Japan, and these dogs bred with the descendants of the Jomonjin dogs, and produced canines known to have pointed, erect ears and curly/sickle tails. In 7 AD, the Yamato Court established a dogkeeper's office which helped maintain the Japanese native breeds as an integral part of Japanese culture. Although the country was closed to foreigners from the 17th through 18th centuries, some European and Chinese dogs were imported and crossed with native dogs living in the more populated areas. Dogs in the countryside, however, remained relatively pure.*

*From the original Japanese native dogs, six distinct breeds in three different sizes developed. They are the Akita (large size); Kishu, Hokkaido, Shikoku, Kai (medium size); and the Shiba (small size). All were used for hunting different types of game – the Shiba was used on birds and rabbits, and also wild boar. The Japanese boar is not as large as the European, but is still a tough, wily foe.*

*The Japanese method of hunting does not involve the human hunter giving direction for locating, flushing, or retrieving the game. The dogs are hunted in male/female pairs, and turned loose to find, flush and trail the game, using their own instincts. They are keen bird hunters, using both sight and scent to flush. They are NOT retrievers. Rabbits and squirrels they can flush and catch with amazing speed and agility. They are silent hunters and give voice only when the game is treed. If the game goes to ground, one dog will dig in, while the other watches for other escape routes. When hunting boar, the Shibas are expected to hold it at bay until the hunter arrives on the scene, not to actually bring it down.*

## GENERAL APPEARANCE

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The Shiba is a small dog of Spitz type, just off-square, well balanced and muscular, with erect ears, dark slanted eyes, tapered muzzle, and coarse standoff coat. Males and females display both strength and elegance, neither coarse nor fine, while retaining obvious differences.

The overall impression conveys a spirited boldness, good nature, alertness and agility.

## TEMPERAMENT

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Spirited boldness, good nature, and independence characterize the Shiba temperament. Extremely lively and fun-loving with their families. While sometimes aloof with strangers, aggression to humans or extreme shyness to be severely penalized. Shibas may not tolerate other dogs' intrusions, and will display aggression if challenged.



(Above: well balanced, good head type, bold, alert)

*The breed displays a wide range of personalities, while retaining the above characteristics of boldness, good nature and independence. Some may be calm and quiet, while others are more active and excitable. Some are snooty, some sweet and congenial. All these aspects are seen in the breed and sometimes in the same dog. Shibas tend to think of themselves first and all else after. The face and expression of the Shiba reflect the dog's soul. The gaze is calm and confident with strength, good nature, and maybe a bit of mischief.*

## SIZE

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**Height: Dogs 39.5 cm (15 1/2"), bitches 36.5 cm (14 1/2"). There is a tolerance of 1.5 cm (5/8") shorter or taller.**

*The height is now in both metric and Imperial measurement. Dogs can range from 38cm (14 7/8") to 41cm (16 1/8"). Bitches 35cm (13 7/8") to 38cm (14 7/8"). The shortest dog will therefore always be taller than the tallest bitch.*

*While weight is not discussed in the Standard, males generally weigh in the 22lb range, with females in the 18 lbs range. This should be a trim, athletic dog – not overdone in substance, bone or bulk, but also not weedy or frail.*

## COAT & COLOUR

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Double-coated, with the outer coat harsh and straight, and undercoat soft and dense. Guard hair approximately 1" on body, 1 1/2—2" on withers. Hair on tail slightly longer and forms a bristle, not a plume.



(Red, Sesame and Black & Tan)

*As with many breeds, their coat is the Shiba's crowning glory. It is a full double coat with the outer guard hairs being stiff and straight and the undercoat soft and thick. This undercoat is shed twice a year, and without it, the Shiba loses much of its "look." The guard hairs are supported by the undercoat and stand off from the body at about a 45° angle. The coat on the ventral side of the tail is the longest and should be in an open brush or bristle. The skirts are longer than the body hair but usually not as long as the tail hair. Body guard hairs are longest on the neck ruff and on the withers. Some Shibas have a very full and fluffy juvenile coat as puppies, but as an adult will carry the proper stiff and straight guard hairs. Please note there are measurements and requirements of harsh guard hairs, to make long hair and wooliness unacceptable.*

**Colour: Red, Sesame, Black and Tan.**

These are the only acceptable colours, and are to be given equal consideration. Colour is clear and intense, with undercoat of cream, buff or gray. "Urajiro" (creamy white ventral colour) is required on all three allowed colours, in these areas: side of muzzle, cheeks, inside ears, on underjaw and upper throat, inside of legs, on abdomen, around vent, ventral side of tail. Cream does not extend over nasal bridge. Cream spots above eyes, on tip of tail, and on forechest permitted but not required. White markings known as socks permitted but not desirable. Spots of colour in the urajiro are highly undesirable. "Reverse mask" (all cream/white face) is a fault.

**Red:** light red to deep orange red.

**Sesame:** red with black tipped hairs scattered evenly on body and sometimes head, with no concentration in any one area. A widow's peak may be seen on the forehead, leaving the bridge and muzzle red.

**Black and Tan:** Black has rusty cast, not blue, and extends over the entire dog. Clearly defined tan markings located over the eye, sides of muzzle, "bowtie" pattern on forechest, outside of forelegs from carpus to toes, outside of hindlegs from stifle down to toes, leaving black on rear of pasterns. Black penciling on toes permitted. Tan may be found inside of ears and underside of tail.

**Yes, we realize this is a black and white publication!  
For judging seminars, a colour insert has been included.**

**Red**

*Of the three allowed colours, red is most frequently seen and easily understood. It is not "Irish Setter Red", or a pale grocery-bag tan, but a fiery red-orange. Guard hairs deliver the main body colour of the dog and should be present all around the torso. The guard hairs are banded: red tips, a white band in the middle, and a lighter red band near the root. If a substantial portion of the middle of the hair shaft is white, it can make the coat appear lighter, even though the tips may have good colour. A lack of guard hairs will allow too much cream undercoat to show through, making the dog look pale. These dogs will usually have more guard hair at the spine creating a darker stripe down the back. A coat that is shed out or about to shed may also appear dull and washed out. A scattering of dark hairs is acceptable on the back and on the dorsal side of the tail on a red dog.*

**Sesame**

*Sesame is possibly the most misunderstood Shiba colour, both by judges and fanciers. This is because there are so few correctly coloured sesames, both here and in Japan. The rich red background of the proper sesame colour is not always seen, with many "sesames" more fawn or tan underneath, giving the whole a rather washed-out appearance. Once a sesame with an excellent coat colour is encountered, it is not soon forgotten! The ideal sesame has an even distribution of black tipped hairs on the body and head over a rich red background, highlighted by proper urajiro. A sesame can be quite dark, but not over 50% black. There is no concentration of black anywhere on the body and the black hair should be down the sides to the top of the legs and on the head down to the muzzle. The correct sesame pattern is very similar to that of the black and tan, with the black tipping appears in all the same areas that the black appears in the black-and-tan Shiba. Exceptions are that the upper legs and bridge of the muzzle of the sesame are not always tipped. Occasionally the tipping ends on the forehead in a widow's peak rather than continuing down the bridge of the muzzle as in a black-and-tan Shiba. It may take up to two years for good urajiro to form on a sesame Shiba.*

*Sesame or Sable? Sable is defined as: "A coat colour produced by black tipped hairs upon a background of silver, gold, gray fawn, or brown." All sesames are sables, but not all sables are sesames. Red dogs with a scattering of black hairs in varying degrees of density on the back and down the sides, not covering the entire torso and head are not true sesames, which are evenly tipped. A sable with a small amount of black tipping is acceptable under the standard, but sable that takes the form of a black saddle, like a German Shepherd, is very undesirable. This black is in varying degrees and does not truly have a definition by the Japanese. They may call it "red with black inserts" and register it as a red, while others call it an "incorrect sesame" and register it as a sesame.*

**Black with tan points and urajiro.**

*Although commonly termed black and tan, the black Shiba is always a tri-colour. It is not a black and tan dog like Rottweiler or a Doberman, nor is it a black and white dog like a Boston Terrier. The ideal black-and-tan coat colour is a three-coloured coat, with black base coat, tan points and white urajiro areas. The individual hair shafts are tri-colour as well, giving the dog a sooty black appearance. Each guard hair holds some degree of all three colours: a white/cream root, graduating to reddish/buff before changing to the dull, sometimes rusty black, not shiny blue black, on the tip. The undercoat is reddish buff to light gray, which shows through when the dog is viewed from behind or the coat run backwards. It is not unusual for a black and tan puppy at birth to appear almost solid black with the gradual lightening of the urajiro taking place as the dogs matures.*

*The coat is black in most of the dorsal area, with tan points and urajiro as described: The back of the ears, skull, forehead, and bridge of the nose are black, and the inside of the ears is reddish-tan to white. A few lighter hairs around the eyes are often seen, but the appearance of "spectacles" is not*

## Shiba Inu CKC Standard and Comments 2006

*allowed. Urajiro can travel down the throat to connect with the triangular spots on the chest but should not extend to the left or right of the chest beyond the shoulder. It can continue onto the belly and is always on the inside of the thighs and around the anal area blending into the tail. The guard hair on the ventral side of the tail (part uppermost when curled over the back) is straight, bushy and white in colour. There is some tan between the black and urajiro. Black is permitted on the rear of the pasterns, the back of the hock and as a small amount of black penciling on the toes.*

### **Undercoat**

*The cream undercoat is most common with the difference between cream and buff a matter of degrees and semantics. The undercoat of some black and tans and sesames may be somewhat tan, while the undercoat of some reds is almost white. The smoky gray undercoat is commonly found as an undercoat on the forehead, on the mid dorsal line of the back and tail, as a shading under the cream on the sides and neck and, occasionally, under the urajiro on the skirts and tail. This gray undercoat on the head is often partially responsible for the "widow's peak" look on the forehead of a red that is shedding.*

### **White Markings**

*Most Shibas are born with small amounts of white markings on their feet and legs, chest and belly, and occasionally tail tip. White socks are permitted but not desired on the forelegs up to the elbow and on the hind legs to the hock. White markings present at birth are not urajiro. On an adult, urajiro may blend into short white socks and white on the chest and belly, so to make them indistinguishable from one another. Freckles appearing in the white socks are not desirable. White markings on the neck, body or head other than in the specified places are a serious fault.*

### **Urajiro**

*The word urajiro has been mentioned without explanation. Since this is a term peculiar to the Shiba standard, it needs some definition. It is a four-syllable word, pronounced öö/rah/gee/roo. Loosely translated from the Japanese, urajiro means "undersurface white" which is a reasonably good description. It is a creamy colour, that does not form an abrupt line, but slightly blurs as it approaches the coloured part of the coat.*

*Urajiro must be present on all colours. It is required on the sides of the mouth and cheeks, the jaw, neck, chest and stomach, and on the forechest, extending to the shoulder joint, but not onto the shoulder itself. Urajiro is also on the ventral side of the tail, insides of the legs and the inside of the ears. On black and tans and sesames, urajiro is commonly seen as somewhat triangular marks on either side of the forechest resembling a bow tie. It is occasionally seen on reds. This bow tie shape is common and pleasant to see, but is not required as long as urajiro is present on the chest of all three colours. Light dots above the eyes are permitted on all colours but only required for the black and tans.*

*Shibas are not born with urajiro, but are born anywhere from grocery bag brown to almost solid black, depending on their eventual colour. Most reds and sesames have black muzzles, which fade as they age. These black muzzles fade to the typical markings with proper urajiro by the time the dog is 18 months old.*

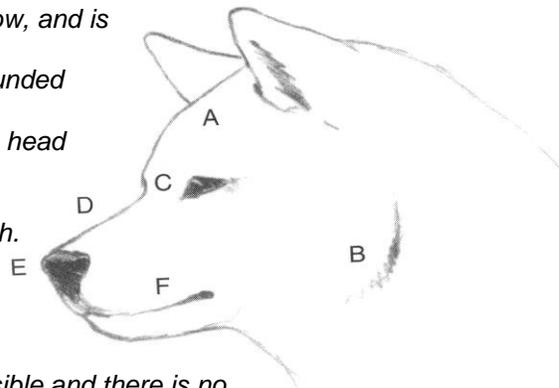
## HEAD

**Skull:** broad and flat with slight furrow, cheek muscles well developed, and stop moderate. **Muzzle:** full and round, tapering slightly to black nose, being 40% of total head length. The nasal bridge straight, lower jaw strong. The lips tight and black.



(Left: parallel planes, flat skull, tight lip line. Right: Wide cheeks, tapering muzzle, furrow)

- A: Forehead is broad and flat, with a slight furrow, and is on a perpendicular plane with the muzzle.
- B: Cheeks are full, and the head will appear rounded from the front.
- C: Stop is moderate - too much stop makes the head Toy-like.
- D: The muzzle is full and round, with a strong lower jaw, and is 40% of the total head length. If there is any leaning toward a variation, it should be towards a longer rather than shorter muzzle.
- E: Nose is black.
- F: Lips are tight and black. Both lip lines are visible and there is no looseness of flew nor does the upper lip cover the lower lip



© M. Flynn

It is most important to have a full, rounded muzzle with a strong lower jaw and firm, black lips. Slackness or looseness of skin, especially on the head, is undesirable. There are no wrinkles on the forehead except the furrow between the eyes. The head is "dry" with no excessive skin around the mouth, under the chin or on the neck. Viewed from above, the head forms a blunt wedge

**Teeth:** large, strong with scissors bite and full dentition. Missing teeth to be faulted (note that premolars are the most often missing), with five or more missing a disqualification.

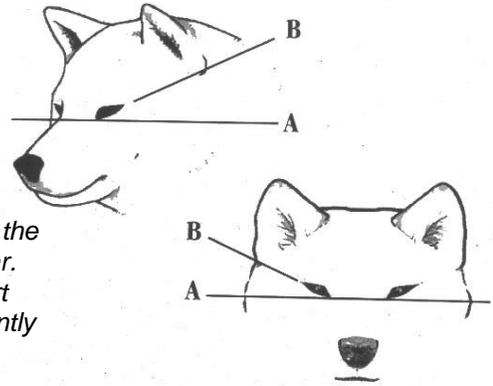
The Standard allows for up to four missing teeth without serious penalty. Most breeders strive for full dentition and are appreciative of judges who take the time to examine the teeth. This can be done by lifting the lips from the sides to view the incisors, canines and premolars. It is not necessary to open the mouth as in the Doberman or Rottweiler examinations. Sometimes seen are "dropped" bottom incisors, which do not necessarily indicate undershot.

**Eyes: small, triangular, set well apart and oblique (slanting up at outside corner). Dark brown in colour, with black eyerims.**

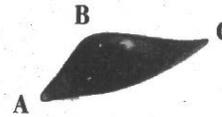
*All eyeballs are round - eye shape is determined by the structure of the skull, size and placement of the eye socket, eye lids, and muscling.*

*The "triangular" Shiba eye (see drawing at lower right) is not an equilateral one – the high point is off center, closer to the nose. The underline is almost straight, with the outer corner narrowing and angling to the base of the ear. Skull and eye shape are related - a round skull with short muzzle will house a rounder, protruding eye, and frequently too much loose skin around the head. The small, very oblique eye is usually found on the more narrow, lupine head with a longer muzzle and high set ears.*

**PROPER SLANT OF EYE**



**PROPER SHAPE OF EYE**



from the Total Shiba  
© 1997

**Ears: small, thick, triangular, well-furred, inclining forward and firmly pricked.**



*The shape, set and balance of the ear are slightly more important than the size.*

*Ears should be triangular with the base as wide, or nearly as wide, as the sides. The inside line of the ear is straight, while the outside line has a slight outward curve. Many ears are seen to be the other way around, with the curve on the inside and the straight line on the outside. The ear leather is thick and well furred, and the tip of the ear is rounded, not pointed. The ears have good cupping and are well-rounded front to back. An ear that is too tall and upright usually will not have adequate cupping. The ears are not set on the top of the head, nor do they hang off the sides. Viewed from the front, the outer line of the ear will not extend past the widest part of the cheek. The ears are mobile, and when alert, point directly forward.*



*From the side profile the ear has a forward tilt that follows the curve of the arched neck. The ears do not have such an extreme forward pitch as to appear to cup over the eyes, but look smooth and harmonious with the rest of the head.*

*(Above left: wide base, straight inner edge, well furred. Also note the lovely oblique eye on this dog. Below left: well cupped, thick leather, rounded tips)*

## NECK

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**Thick and muscular, blends into shoulders.  
No dewlap.**

*Relatively short, with a pronounced crest.*

*(Right: thick, strong neck,  
correct proportion to body length)*



## FOREQUARTERS

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**The shoulders moderately sloping, well developed. The elbows set close to body, and forearms straight. The pasterns slightly inclining. Feet are catlike with well-arched toes fitting tightly together and thick pads. The nails hard and darker colour desirable. Front dewclaws may be removed.**

*From the front, the ideal is represented by two straight lines perpendicular with the ground, in the classic "H" structure. The shoulders are clean, not bulging, with elbows fitting snugly but not tightly, to allow for proper movement.*

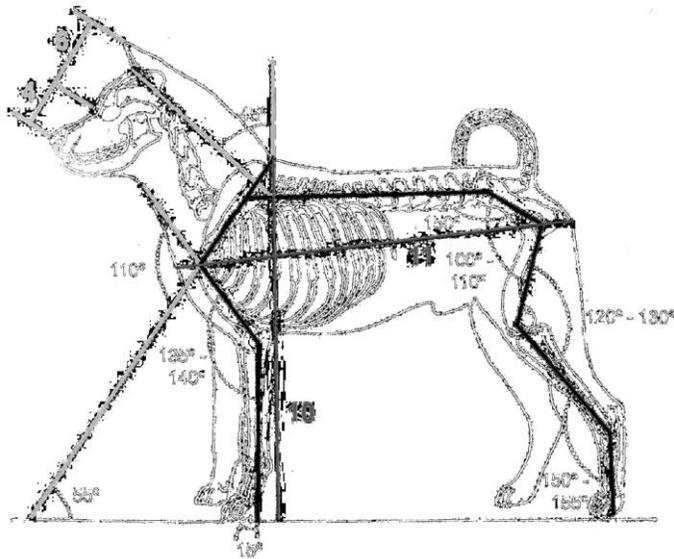
*Front dewclaws may or may not be present*

*(Right: clean shoulders, elbows close fitting, straight legs, cat feet  
Below left: cat feet)*



## BODY

Body is tight-skinned and well muscled. Height to length ratio of 10 to 11, measured from withers to ground, and point of shoulder to point of buttock. Bitches may be slightly longer. Chest depth from withers to elbow one-half or slightly less of total height. The chest deep, ribs moderately sprung. Back straight and short, the loins broad and muscular, the abdomen firm and well tucked-up.



*The frame represents a rectangle, not a square, with the height of the leg remaining in proportion to the length of back. The topline is level and firm, with the ribs being well carried back. The brisket drops to, but not below, the elbow. The torso in cross-section is egg shaped. All is firm and dry, without excess fat or loose rolling skin. Bone is moderate. Several distinct body types appear in the Shiba. The extremes range from a dog short legged and long bodied in stature to dogs which are usually lean, with a rangier stature. These are characteristics reflecting the regions where these dogs developed in Japan. Of course, the ideal is in between with balance and moderation being the key.*

## HINDQUARTERS

The upper thighs long, and lower thighs short and well developed, with a wide natural stance. Angulation in balance with the forequarters. The hock joint strong. No dewclaws. Feet as in front.

*A line dropped from the ischium (furthest boney protrusion of the pelvic assembly) will fall just in front of the rear toes (see above diagram). When viewed from the rear the hocks are strong, parallel and well let down. Note the wide natural stance in the dog at right – this gives the impression of not only owning their ground, but also of having a firm grip on it.*



## TAIL

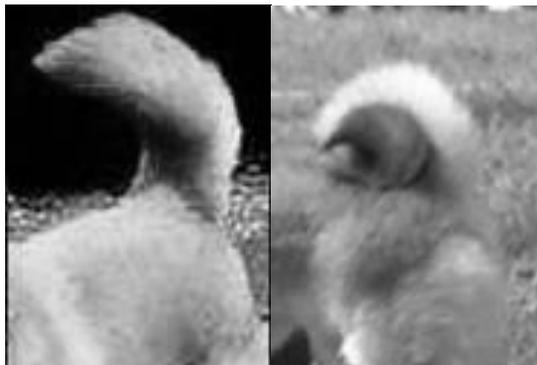
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**Strong thick root, set high, carried in a loose curl or curved as a sickle over back. The tip nearly reaching hocks when let down**



*The tail of the Shiba has many nuances. The primary consideration is the vigor of the tail. It shows the inner feeling of the dog and does not appear weak or poorly set. The hair of the tail is thick and full, ideally forming a brush with the hair on the outside of the curve (ventral) longer than that on the inside (dorsal). Wispy hairs do not extend out beyond the outline of the tail so as to blow in the breeze. The fullness of the tail is not so lacking that the guard hairs come to a point and form a pronounced peak which breeders call praying hands. A tail may curl to either side of the dog, but it is preferable that the curl is loose enough and high enough that daylight can pass through it. Fanciers say that they should be able to "place an egg" inside this opening. An exception to this is the sickle or stick tail. These are among the preferred tail sets and the curve will not meet at the back forming the egg shape. A tail that snaps back or lays sideways on the back is not desirable. When the standard says that the tail reaches nearly to the hock when extended, it means the tip of the hair, not the end of the tail itself.*

*Acceptable Tails:*



## GAIT

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**Light, quick and elastic. Forward reach and rear drive are moderate. Viewed from the front or rear, there is a tendency to single track. Topline remains level and firm.**



*The natural terrain of the Shiba is mountainous, often with very dense vegetation. The Shiba should be able to reverse direction in the hunt or leap over an adversary to avoid injury by sharp tusks or claws, seemingly without loss of speed or control. Overangulation is a detriment to a breed that should be agile and quick. Extreme extension is faulty. But a lack of extension or a heavy-footed step is just as faulty.*

*Movement is light, quick and elastic. In this context, the term elastic utilizes Webster's definition of having the property of immediately returning to its original size, shape or position after being stretched, flexed, expanded, etc. At a trot the legs angle in towards a center line. The ideal movement combines reach and drive with nimble and graceful movement.*

*The Shiba should be evaluated on a loose lead at a brisk business-like trot.*

*(Left: straight legs, elbows in, slight convergence)*

## FAULTS

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**Light eye colour.**

**Level or extremely overshot bite.**

**1 to 4 missing teeth.**

**Reverse mask**

*Reverse mask is an all white face, lacking colour on the bridge of the nose and around the eyes.*

## DISQUALIFICATION

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**Under or over height.**

**Coat colours other than described.**

**Ears not pricked.**

**Tail not carried over back.**

**5 or more missing teeth.**

**Undershot bite.**

*Colours "other than described" could be (but not limited to) cream, white, pinto, solid black. CKC Rules and Regulations addresses the issues of two normal testicles, and temperament.*