

## FACTS ABOUT AKITAS

The Akita is a Japanese Breed and in his native country, the Akita has been declared a national treasure. An Akita in a home is believed to be a symbol of good health, prosperity and good fortune. Helen Keller brought the first Akita to the US in 1937.

Akitas do not bark unless there is a good reason. When an Akita is barking, PAY ATTENTION. They are silent hunters who hunt low to the ground without growls or noise, similar to cats. Akitas may consider small animals prey and hunt them. This may include cats, rodents, birds, small wildlife and smaller dogs. Akitas can be raised to tolerate animals in residence. Many adult Akita's can fit into a home where other animals are already established. It is, however, imperative that the Akita be closely watched around the other animals until you have established a peaceful co-existence. Chickens, ducks, and other birds are a meal for an Akita, so do not expect the Akita to befriend fowl!

Akitas are natural guardians of the home and SHOULD NOT be trained as a guard dog. When there is a reason to protect family and property, your Akita will act to do so. Guests welcomed in your home when you are present will NOT be welcomed by the Akita when no one is home. Your gates should be padlocked at all times to protect the Akita and to keep unwelcome neighborhood children from entering and teasing the Akita.

Akitas can be inherently aggressive towards other animals and for this reason, they should never be allowed to run free or roam at will. You can exercise your Akita off leash only in a protected area, being sure to follow your state/county/town leash laws at all times. Male Akitas show aggression towards other male dogs, and female Akitas usually will not tolerate another female. There are always exceptions to these rules, but it is safer for the Akita to not mix same sex dogs. Akitas can live peacefully with opposite sex dogs, although some Akitas prefer being an only dog!

Some Akitas may be very food possessive around others. If you have other pets, be sure the Akita is given its own food and water bowls and keep these and other treats away from other animals. Be certain no animal, small children, or strangers are allowed near the Akita until its dinnertime is over.

Akitas not raised with children are not always tolerant of them. NEVER leave an Akita alone with a child even if the Akita appears to love all children. Accidents can happen with an animal as large as an Akita. Often Akitas raised with children will tolerate their OWN children but not strange children so it is wise to never leave an Akita, or any large dog, alone with children without adult supervision. Akitas do NOT like being teased and may respond by biting or growling. Some children treat animals unkindly (some adults are not much better!) and these children should be kept away from an Akita whose large size and hunting instincts can endanger the child's life.

Some Akitas consider eye contact a challenge and may react aggressively. It is strongly advised NOT to get down on the Akita's eye level, close to the Akita's face or to allow strangers to hug an Akita. These positions have triggered aggressive responses in Akitas. Akitas like to take charge. An inherited trait from their wolf ancestry and may at some time, challenge you for the dominant position in your family life, This behavior cannot be tolerated and a consistent correction should be your immediate response.

Akitas with good temperament accept discipline well from those it loves -not beating, but intelligent discipline. A good scruff shaking is an effective form of discipline for an Akita. Frequently, a firm verbal command will be all that is needed.

Akitas should be obedience trained BY THEIR OWNERS and NEVER sent away to school. A good obedience class will guarantee you a firm bond with your Akita and a well- behaved Akita in the end.

Remember though, that Akitas are extremely intelligent and bore easily. They learn quickly so short training periods are suggested. This keeps the dog from becoming bored.

Akitas are also very stubborn and when the dog thinks it's a waste of time to "sit" or "stay" one more time, it will simply walk away! Be sure you are working with an obedience trainer who understands Akita temperament and has patience.

Akitas may respond with aggression if treated harshly-do not hit or kick any dog, that sort of behavior means YOU have lost control of the situation. Akitas are dogs, and unlike humans do not have the same short term memory as humans. Do not discipline your dog hours after an incident-the dog will NOT associate the discipline with an incident which occurred hours earlier in the day. If you can see and catch your Akita getting into mischief, discipline should be firm and immediate for it to be effective.

Do NOT call your Akita to you for discipline that encourages your dog to not come when called. Do NOT use its name when disciplining it; you want the Akita to associate its name with love and affection, not punishment. The "come" command is important and someday may be a life saving command for the dog. Do not jeopardize that safety factor. Each time your Akita comes to your side, it should be rewarded with praise and love.

Some Akitas are talkers! They may grunt, groan and mumble to entertain themselves. Many Akitas "woo" to greet you and others it loves and tills should not be interpreted as growling. Akita 'woo' is an endearing trait and should not frighten you. After living with your Akita you can easily distinguish between "woo" and growl.

Most Akitas enjoy carrying things in m their mouth, including your hands wrist. They may take you by the wrist to lead you the cookie cupboard or to the front door for a walk. It is NOT an aggressive act, it is an endearing trait.

Akitas are VERY family-oriented and are not happy when kept apart from their family. If you do not plan on having your Akita live inside your home, you should not consider adopting or buying an Akita. When left alone in a yard, the Akita will regress in socialization and boredom may cause destructive behavior. If you want a dog simply as a yard ornament, one made of clay would do just fine!

Akitas are not usually hyperactive and fit into a sedentary household but exercise is important so plan on giving your Akita walking time or playing in the yard with your Akita. Dogs left alone outside simply sleep until you return for them.

Akitas can live for 10-14 years with good care and proper nutrition. Feed only a good all natural food that contains no ethoxyquin or soy and is low in protein. The origin of the Akita is Japan where rice and sea plants are a diet staple and the ideal diet for an Akita. If possible, they should be fed twice a day to avoid bloat. Their diet should be supplemented with kelp, digestive enzymes and a multivitamin daily for optimum nutrition. Obesity is dangerous for many health reasons. Treats should be carrots, ice cubes, fruit other vegetables you have found your Akita likes, not cookies and fattening "doggie" treats.

A high number of all Akitas in Akita Rescue are affected with hypothyroidism which is easily treated by inexpensive twice-daily replacement thyroid hormone therapy. This condition is often the TRUE reason the Akita has lost its home in the first place. A simple thyroid panel will determine the existence of the condition.

*Author: Jodi Marcus  
Reprinted with permission from  
Washington Akita Group – 09/08*



[www.akitaclubofpugetsound.com](http://www.akitaclubofpugetsound.com)