

# Congratulations on your new Briard!



## Briard Club of America

*The Briard Club of America (BCA) welcomes you to the family of Briard owners and invites you to learn more about the breed. The BCA founded in 1928 is the parent club for this special French herding breed. If you'd like to learn more about the breed and the BCA, we've included contact information at the end of this flyer.*

## History

The Briard, or Chien Berger de Brie, is an ancient working breed of France, dating back to the eighth century. The Briard has been used since early times as a guardian of the flocks and a herding dog. Tapestries depict similar large shaggy dogs with the Emperor Charlemagne. Napoleon was also reported to have had Briards. Thomas Jefferson wrote of his admiration of the herding abilities of Briards and is credited with bringing them to the United States. Once the official dog of the French army, Briards served in both world wars as sentry dogs and were used to carry supplies and messages to the front lines. Due to their keen hearing, Briards were used by the medical corps to search for wounded soldiers.

## General Appearance

Vigorous and alert, powerful without coarseness, strong in bone and muscle, exhibiting strength and agility required of the herding dog. The Briard gait is described as quicksilver, permitting abrupt turns and springing starts. The gait is elegant but powerful and gives the impression of gliding without touching the ground. Distinguishing features of the Briard are the two dewclaws on each rear leg and distinctive tail ending in a j-shaped crook. The Briard's ears may be cropped or left natural.

Males should measure between 23 to 27 inches height at the withers (shoulders); and females between 22 to 25 1/2 inches. Weight ranges between 50 and 100 pounds. The adult double coat is coarse and dry outside which repels dirt and water; puppy coats are softer. Colors include black, various shades of gray, and various shades of tawny (ranging from tan to reddish gold).

## Character

Bravery, loyalty and intelligence form the basic character of the Briard. His herding instincts and well-balanced character make him both a companion and a guardian of the home and family. He is never too old to play and is especially devoted to his family. To those

who know him, he has been called a "heart wrapped in fur." Each Briard seems to be an individual personality.

The many remarkable qualities of the Briard character can be developed only by the willingness on the part of his owner to devote time and affection to his early training.

There are many other bonuses with this breed. To mention a few, he is usually quiet in the house and adapts readily to the differing household routines. While large, he is agile and active—amazingly fast when he is going places—but he has none of the constant motion of some other breeds. The Briard seems equally at home in the city or the country, provided he can be with his family and receives sufficient exercise. He is an excellent watchdog, aware of changes in his environment and lets little go by unnoticed. The instinct to protect in time of danger comes naturally.

## Socialization and Training

Early socialization and introduction to varying situations and environments help develop a happy, confident and mannerly Briard. The Briard learns quickly, has an excellent memory, and is eager to please, but must be taught right from wrong at an early age. Having been bred for centuries as a guard and herding dog, Briards are naturally aloof with strangers, and this instinct will have a strong influence on his temperament as an adult dog.

You can do much to determine the type of disposition he will have. As a pup, the Briard should be taken with you as often as possible, encouraging people to pet him, letting him become accustomed to strange people and familiar with the world around him. This should begin as soon as you receive your puppy and should continue throughout his life



Taking a Puppy Kindergarten class, or a beginning obedience class, are two of the best ways to accomplish some of this important socializing. Don't wait until he is six months old to start this training that will do so much to assure you of having a Briard with a good disposition: calm, aloof and dignified. You will not destroy his natural instinct to be a guardian, but you will mold him into a dog you will be proud to own. If you give him time and love, the Briard puppy will grow reflecting every minute of kindness you have given...and he will return it to you, many times over.

Once you have begun training your Briard you will find many ways to enjoy your dog in the world of canine sports. Briards do extremely well in Agility, Obedience, Rally, CAT, Fast CAT, Dock Diving, Flyball, Barn Hunt, Carting, Nosework, Tracking and Herding. Briards excel in swimming and boating if started at an early age and can be your water sport companion if you let them. Your Briard is talented in so many areas so take advantage of the fun things you and your dog can do together.

## Upbringing

Although he has the physical requirements for the outdoor life, the Briard is, at heart, a house dog. Briards do not do well when kept away from their family. He is happiest when he can be at his master's side. He is a companion, who follows, pushing at your knees, then running ahead, checking back constantly; one who has a deep capacity to join in family rituals, and will follow you from room to room as you go about your business.

The Briard lives life with an air of independence. He is apt to look on you more as a companion than a master, and like all companions, there will be times when you will have a difference of opinion. On these occasions, the Briard can be quite stubborn. As a sheepdog, he was depended upon to make decisions, and he still does. You will find that you cannot successfully convince a Briard of your superiority with harsh treatment, any more than you could use such methods with a friend. Consistent, gentle persuasion and praise are much more advisable and effective. If you find you are having a problem with your new Briard be sure to consult with your breeder without delay. It is far better to deal with a problem sooner rather than later when it may have escalated into a major one.

## Responsible Dog Ownership

As a sheep-herding dog, the Briard shows an uncanny ability to keep his flock within the unfenced boundaries of his master's property. This instinct is strong and the well-raised Briard is not inclined to wander from home. Of course, no dog should be permitted to roam the neighborhood or be left outside unsupervised even in a fenced yard. A properly controlled and supervised dog is a good neighbor that does not annoy the others with barking or by becoming destructive and is safe from potential harm.

## Grooming

Regular grooming is essential to assure good health of the coat and skin. The Briard's distinctive coat is coarse and strong, often referred to as a "goat's coat." Dirt and water do not readily cling to a proper coat and if well groomed, it sheds very little but must be brushed

regularly to avoid tangles and mats.

However, the joy of owning a shaggy companion can be cut short if you neglect his long coat. We can't say that you must love combing and brushing, but you will have to take time for it if your dog is going to be attractive and healthy. The usual time required is two or three hours per week but may be much longer if you have been remiss about your job and allowed your Briard to become matted. The well-groomed Briard is a beautiful animal and more important, a comfortable one.

## Health Issues

Briards, as a breed, are not without health and physical problems, but these are not any more or less prevalent than in most other of the larger dog breeds. Bloat/torsion and cancer are leading causes of death in Briards. Hip dysplasia and eye problems are genetic diseases that are or have been seen in the Briard.

The responsible breeder will make sure both parents have been thoroughly screened for genetic problems, as well as any other health problems. Responsible breeders only do so to improve the quality of the Briard, as breeding dogs is not a profitable undertaking.

Intelligent and obedient, the Briard learns quickly, has an excellent memory and an ardent desire to please those he loves. He has the ability to learn and understand an enormous range of commands as well as tonal qualities and body language. Because of this, Briards enjoy participating in events such as conformation and obedience competition, therapy work, herding, tracking, flyball and agility trials, or simply being your devoted companion and joining in family activities giving both you and your Briard hours of pleasure and satisfaction from the togetherness.

## The Briard Club of America, Inc.

The Briard Club of America, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization, whose members are united in their love for the Briard and dedicated to protecting the best interests of this ancient and unique breed of herding dog. The membership is varied—from those who have a Briard only for companionship, to those who also show—so the club serves all aspects of breed ownership. You may wish to request a sample copy of the *DewClaw*, the official BCA magazine from the Corresponding Secretary, email to:

**[bcacorrsec@gmail.com](mailto:bcacorrsec@gmail.com)**

To learn more about Briards and joining the BCA, visit:

**[www.briardclubofamerica.org/](http://www.briardclubofamerica.org/)**



Or contact:

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***Good luck and enjoy your Briard!***