

## Official Standard of the Japanese Akitainu



**History:** The Japanese Akitainu's history parallels that of the other five existing native Japanese breeds, shifting from the brink of extinction to becoming a natural monument, a cultural symbol and a source of national pride. In the mountainous terrain of the Tōhoku region, where Akita Prefecture is located, traditional village hunters called Matagi developed the Matagiinu (Matagi Dog), a slightly larger than medium-sized dog to hunt large game. The Matagiinu is considered the ancestor of the modern-day Akitainu. Due to civil unrest in the Ōdate area, noblemen began to use their hunting dogs to guard their homes and property. Across various historical periods (Edo to Meiji and Taisho), some Akitainu were crossed with larger western breeds to yield winning results in dog fight rings. By the Meiji era, there was a push to preserve all native Japanese breeds, but the Akitainu was deemed as the most impure due to its mixing with western breeds. In 1927, Akitainu Hozonkai (AKIHO), the world's first and most influential Akitainu registry and organization, was established in the city of Ōdate, ushering in a concerted effort to restore and preserve the characteristics of the original native Akita dogs. The Akitainu was officially designated Tennen Kinen Butsu (Natural Monument) of Japan in 1931; however, continued restoration efforts were interrupted by WWII. It is believed that only 18 Akitainu existed by war's end and some were said to have been crossbred to military German Shepherd Dogs while a few pure specimens remained in remote villages in northern Japan. Japanese Akitainu breeders again began to restore the breed away from the transitional mixed Akita dogs to their native origin. Finally, with fewer external interruptions, throughout the post-war decades, breeders made great strides restoring and preserving the Akitainu. With encouragement from Japan, the first overseas AKIHO club was officially established in 1970 in the US, and with encouragement from AKIHO North America, the Japanese Akitainu Club of America was formed in 1997.

**General Appearance** - The Japanese Akitainu is the largest of the native dog breeds of Japan and was originally used for hunting game in the mountainous terrain of the Tōhoku region where Akita Prefecture is located. The Japanese Akitainu is a large, sturdily built, well balanced Spitz-type dog whose head, triple coat, and curled tail are defining physical features of this unique breed. Males and females are clearly distinguishable from each other with males possessing a more robust body structure and masculine facial features, and females, a more refined body structure and feminine facial features. The moderately angulated Japanese Akitainu is exhibited naturally without trimming of whiskers, styling, or color enhancements.

**Size Proportion, Substance** - Males 25 to 27½ inches at the withers; females 22½ to 25 inches at the withers. The preferred size is the middle of the range for each sex. Weight at preferred size is approximately 65 to 75 pounds for males, 55 to 65 pounds for females. Males have a height to length ratio of 10 to 11; females have a slightly longer body length. Bone is moderate.

**Disqualification** – Males under 25 inches; females under 22½ inches.

**Head** - *Expression* is alert, spirited, and intense. The shape of the *head* is a slightly rounded octagon when viewed from the front. The fullness of the cheeks, as well as the coat on the cheeks and neck, support this shape. *Eyes* are dark brown, deep-set, almond-shaped, relatively small, and slightly raised at the outside corners. Eye rims are thick and black. The eyes should not appear too close together or too far apart. Faults – Round eyes. Light colored irises. Light colored eye rims. Droopy or loose eye rims. *Ears* are wide-set, equilaterally triangular in shape, pricked, rather small in size, and somewhat rounded at the tip. The leather is thick and slightly cupped. Ears are angled forward off the back of the head and face. From the profile view, the forward tilting ears are at a 75 to 90 degree angle to a line drawn along the bridge of the muzzle. Disqualification – Dropped ear or ears. *Skull* size is moderate and in proportion to the body. The forehead is broad and flat, preferably with a distinct furrow extending from the stop to the top of the skull. Stop is moderate. Fault – Wrinkled or loose skin on the forehead. *Muzzle* is round, full, moderate in length with a broad base tapering towards the nose. Muzzle length is 40 percent of the total head length from occiput to nose tip. It is preferred that whiskers remain intact. Fault – Overly narrow or heavy muzzle. Lips are tight and black. Fault – Loose, saggy lips. Nose is black. For white dogs, faded black and snow noses are acceptable. Black is always preferred. Disqualification – Butterfly nose. *Bite* is scissors, with a full complement of strong, substantial, evenly aligned teeth. Fault – Missing teeth, unhealthy dentition. Tongue is pink. Fault – Black or spotted tongue. Disqualification – Overshot or undershot bite.

**Neck, Topline, Body** - *Neck* is short, thick, arched, and is in proper angle and in balance with the head. Fault – Dewlap or loose skin on neck. *Topline* is straight and level to the base of the tail. *Body* is well muscled without the appearance of looseness or coarseness. Chest is well-developed reaching to the elbow; width is neither too narrow, nor too broad; depth measured from the withers to the lowest point of the chest is approximately 50 percent of the height of the dog at the withers. Ribs are moderately sprung. Tuck-up is tight and well-drawn. Back is strong and level. Loins are muscular. Tail – *Tail* is high-set with a strong, thick root well-curved over the back. Size of curled tail should be in balance with the head. The ideal tail curl forms a nearly complete circle. When let down, the tip of the guard hairs on the tail reaches almost to the hock or extends past. The following tail curls are acceptable: single and double curl. The tail may lay on top of the back or on either side. Fault – Short tail. Disqualification – Sickie tail or uncurled tail (while dog is in motion, not at rest).

**Forequarters** - Shoulders are moderately sloped forward and nicely developed. Adequate or moderate bone is essential. Elbows are set close to the body and turn neither in nor out. Forelegs and feet are moderately spaced, straight, and parallel. Pasterns are slightly slanted with 15 degrees being ideal. Presence of front dew claws preferred, but not necessary. Feet are round, tight, well-knuckled, and have a firm grip, often described as cat-like. Individual toes are similar in length. The nails should be short and strong. Pads are thick. Fault – Flat or splayed feet.

**Hindquarters** - Angulation of the hindquarters is moderate. Hind legs are thick and well developed, with a powerful grip, thrust, and stance. Upper thighs are well developed. The hocks are straight when viewed from the side and rear. Feet as in forequarters. Fault – Cow or bow hocks.

**Coat** - Triple coated with the outer coat consisting of coarse, straight guard hairs that stand off the body. The two inner coats are under coats. One is thicker and somewhat soft, generally matching the coat color. The second is closest to the skin and is generally thicker and wool-like in texture and can be a different color than the guard coat. Tail guard hairs are much longer and fuller. The Japanese Akitainu should be presented in a natural state without trimming or shaping. Fault – Short, flat coat. Disqualification – Long coat.

**Color** - Coat color is as specified herein, with the three allowed colors given equal consideration – red, brindle (of varying colors) and white. All colors are rich, clear, and bright. Red and brindle

coats must possess urajiro (light cream or white underside shading).

For reds, the color should be vivid and rich. The white on the face should not be excessive.

Omotejiro is the white or cream shading found on the sides of the muzzle and cheeks. Urajiro may appear on the underside of the jaw, neck, abdomen and tail, and on the inside of the legs; the red on the legs will fade in gradient to the white. A white-tipped tail is preferred. Serious Fault – Black saddle.

For brindles, the pattern is defined as clearly marked dark fine streaks or stripes laid over a lighter background color. A brindle coat is identified as red brindle (of varying shades), black brindle, or a subtype called Shimofuri (grey/silver). Brindles may be self-masked or possess a white blaze that extends up the muzzle. The preferred brindle possesses roppaku (six points of white markings) which may be of varying degrees, on the muzzle, four paws, and tip of the tail. Urajiro for brindles may appear on the underside of the jaw, neck, abdomen, tail, and on the inside of the legs.

For reds and brindles – Faults – White blaze that extends from the muzzle to the back of the head (hachiware). Excessive ticking on legs or muzzle. Serious Fault – Wide white collar marking extending completely around the neck. Disqualification - Pinto markings. Hachiware blaze that connects to a complete white collar.

For whites, color should be as bright as possible. Fault – Biscuit coloring on the ears, rear legs, back, shoulders and tail on a white dog. Disqualification for all colors– Albinism. Black mask.

**Gait** - Conveys stamina through brisk, powerful, and agile movement. Dogs of this breed take efficient strides, with moderate reach and drive as the back remains level.

**Temperament** - The Japanese Akitainu is an alert, independent, dignified, and self-confident breed. They are loyal and protective of their family members. They can be reserved and aloof around non-family members, especially strangers, and some may be intolerant of other dogs, particularly dogs of the same sex. The Japanese Akitainu's outward appearance reflects its inner spirit of calm, quiet strength, and courage. Disqualification – Extreme shyness or aggressiveness.

**Summary** - The most important breed characteristics of the Japanese Akitainu are: proper head, triple coat, curled tail, moderate angulation, moderate bone, well-balanced proportions, and confident disposition. Any appearance of excessive or inadequate bone or weight that would hinder the original breed function for mountain hunting should be penalized. Form, color, movement, and temperament must all be in harmony.

### **Disqualifications**

*Males under 25 inches; Females under 22½ inches.*

*Dropped ear or ears.*

*Butterfly nose.*

*Overshot or undershot bite.*

*Sickle tail or uncurled tail (when in motion).*

*Long coat.*

*For reds and brindles - Pinto markings, Hachiware blaze that connects to a complete white collar.*

*For all colors – Albinism, Black mask.*

*Extreme shyness or aggressiveness.*

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