
The breed of the month is...

Saluki



History

The saluki is perhaps the oldest known breed of domesticated dog. As a purebreed, its history can be traced back almost 7000 years. The earliest known findings of the saluki are on carved seals from the Tepe Gawra region in what is now Iraq. [1] [2] A study published in the May 21, 2004 issue of Science confirms the Saluki's antiquity through DNA analysis identifying it as one of the earliest breeds to diverge from wolves.

Widely admired for its beauty, speed, and endurance, the Saluki historically traveled throughout the Middle East with nomadic desert tribes over an area stretching from the Sahara to the Caspian Sea. As a result, different Saluki subtypes, varying mostly in color and coat, can be found across this widely scattered area.

The Saluki resembles the Azawakh or Sloughi, which were commonly known as the Royal dog of Egypt. Until the designation of Sloughi as a breed, it was commonly mixed with Sloughis in England and some other European countries.



The Saluki is a sighthound bred especially for grace and speed. Although the greyhound is widely viewed as being the fastest dog breed with a top speed of around 45 mph, the Saluki is said to be faster, with top speeds of 48 mph. Testing this has proved difficult as Salukis show no interest in "electric hares" and therefore won't race greyhounds on a track. However, as their original use was for hunting desert gazelles with top speeds of up to 50 mph, the speed claim could be true.

Appearance

The overall appearance of the Saluki is one of grace, symmetry, and a well conditioned athlete. Salukis are the endurance runners of the dog world and when in top physical condition they can run 50-60 miles (citation needed) per hour and keep it up for approximately five miles. Salukis are "sight" hounds which means they sight the quarry, run it down, catch and retrieve/dispatch it. The impression given should be one of the ability to hunt efficiently. While on the coursing field the impression becomes a reality with the addition of an intense desire, drive, and focus that is not seen in the show ring. Combined, these qualities comprise undeniable Saluki breed type and function.

There are two coat types evident in the Saluki gene pool; Smooth and Feathered. Smooth being a short coat over the entire body and feathered being long hair on the ears, backs of the legs and tail. This hair can be of varying lengths and sparseness is not to be penalized. Both coat type exhibits the same qualities. In both varieties males may range from 23 to 28 inches at the top of the shoulder with females measuring somewhat smaller.



Temperament

A true Saluki retains the qualities of hunting hounds and may seem reserved and aloof. They learn quickly but can get bored with repetition, so training sessions should be short and varied. Sensitive and intelligent, the Saluki should never be trained using force or hard-handed methods.

Salukis need regular exercise, but can behave quietly indoors. They are usually quiet and don't bark unless there is a reason, but they will "sing" (a high pitched howl, with oscillating volume) when they feel that something is wrong or when a member of the family is away for a long period of time. This "singing" can also be for bonding in the family (pack) group. There are salukis that have been taught to "sing" on cue. Salukis can get along well with children and can become protective, but the family must respect the dog's need for quiet and peaceful time alone to rest. Salukis have a fairly long life span, living an average of 12-13 years.



According to the National Veterinary Scholars, Salukis should not be allowed off leash. Salukis can have a strong prey drive as they are sighthounds and have an ancient heritage of hunting by sight (over 7,000 years). However, this does not mean that they cannot get along with smaller dogs, cats, or other small pets. Training and understanding of the individual saluki come into play when integrating a household of mixed species. The Saluki Club of America recommends a fence of at least five feet tall, as a Saluki can very easily jump anything lower than that.

Health

The Saluki is a very healthy breed. The biggest problem to worry about is their sensitivity to anesthesia as a result of their low levels of body fat. The Saluki tends to have large litters. Litters of ten puppies are not at all unusual.

If you are interested in the breed standards for the Saluki go to the AKC breed index page <http://www.akc.org/breeds/saluki/index.cfm> or the breed standards page http://www.akc.org/breeds/saluki/breed_standard.cfm.