

**Akita Judges Special Seminar**

# **Judging the Akita**



**WORLD UNION OF AKITA CLUBS**

< FCI Standard >

FCI Standard No. 255

AKITA

ORIGIN : Japan

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF THE ORIGINAL VALID STANDARD : 03.09.1999

UTILIZATION : Companion dog

CLASSIFICATION F.C.I. : Group 5 Spitz and primitive type  
Section 5 Asian Spitz and related breeds  
Without working trial

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY :

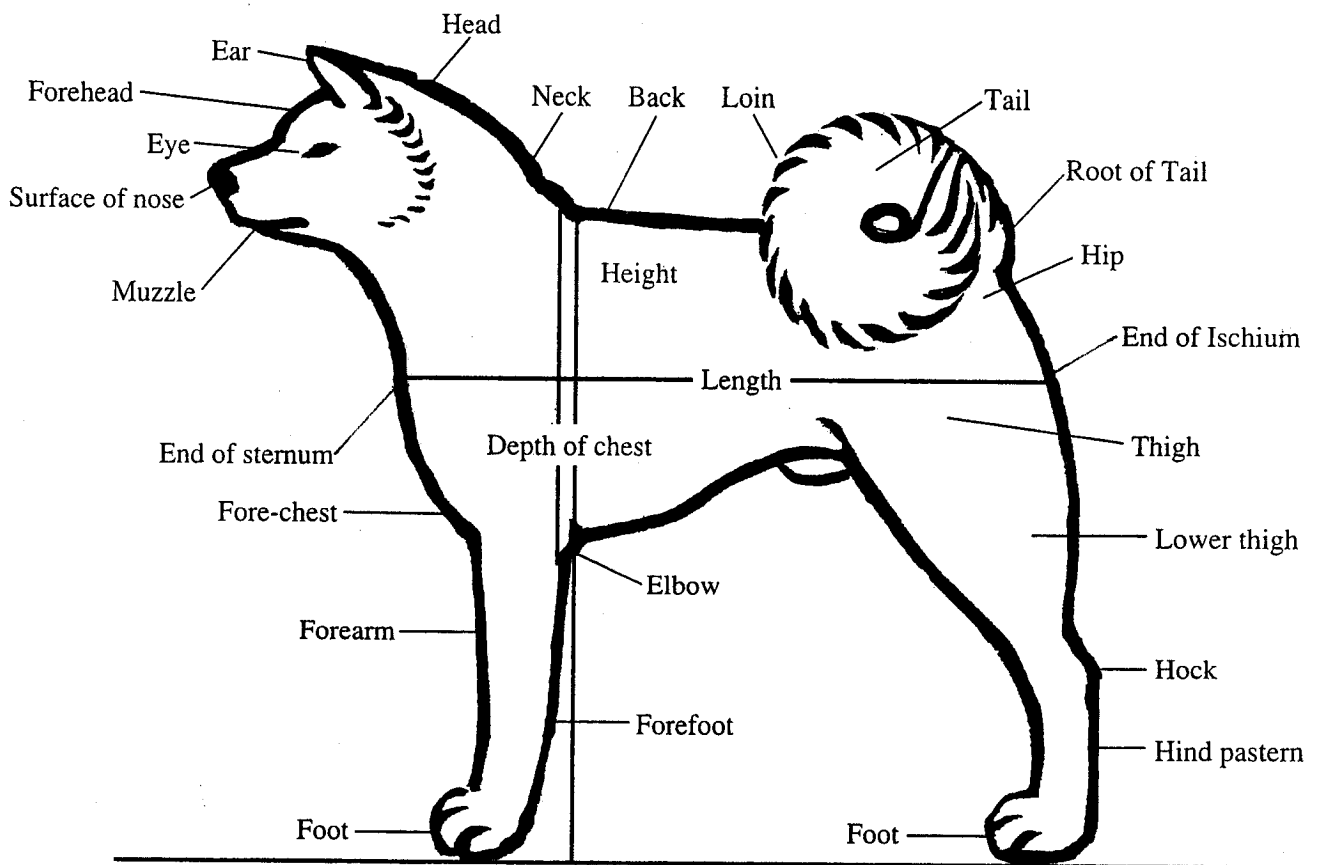
Originally Japanese dogs were small to medium in size and no large breeds existed. Since 1603 in the Akita region, Akita Matagis (medium-sized bear-hunting dogs) were used as fighting dogs. From 1868 Akita Matagis were crossed with Tosas and Mastiffs. Consequently, the size of this breed increased but characteristics associated with Spitz Type were lost.

In 1908 dog fighting was prohibited, but this breed was nevertheless preserved and improved as a large Japanese breed. As a result, nine superior examples of this breed were designated as Natural Monuments in 1931.

During World War II (1939-1945), it was common to use dogs as a source of fur for military garments. The police ordered the capture and confiscation of all dogs other than German Shepherd Dogs used for military purposes. Some fanciers tried to circumvent the order by crossbreeding their dogs with German Shepherd Dogs. When World War II ended, Akitas had been drastically reduced in number and existed as three distinct types; 1) Matagi Akitas, 2) fighting Akitas, and 3) Shepherd Akitas. This created a very confusing situation in the breed.

During the restoration process of the pure breed after the war, Kongo-go, a dog of the Dewa line, which exhibited characteristics of the Mastiff and German Shepherd Dog influence, enjoyed a temporary but tremendous popularity. However, sensible learned fanciers did not approve of this type as a proper Japanese breed, so they made efforts to eliminate the strain of foreign breeds by crossbreeding with Matagi Akitas for the purpose of restoring the original pure breed. They succeeded in stabilizing the pure strain of large sized breed as known today.

### Body parts of the Akita



< FCI Standard >

GENERAL APPEARANCE :

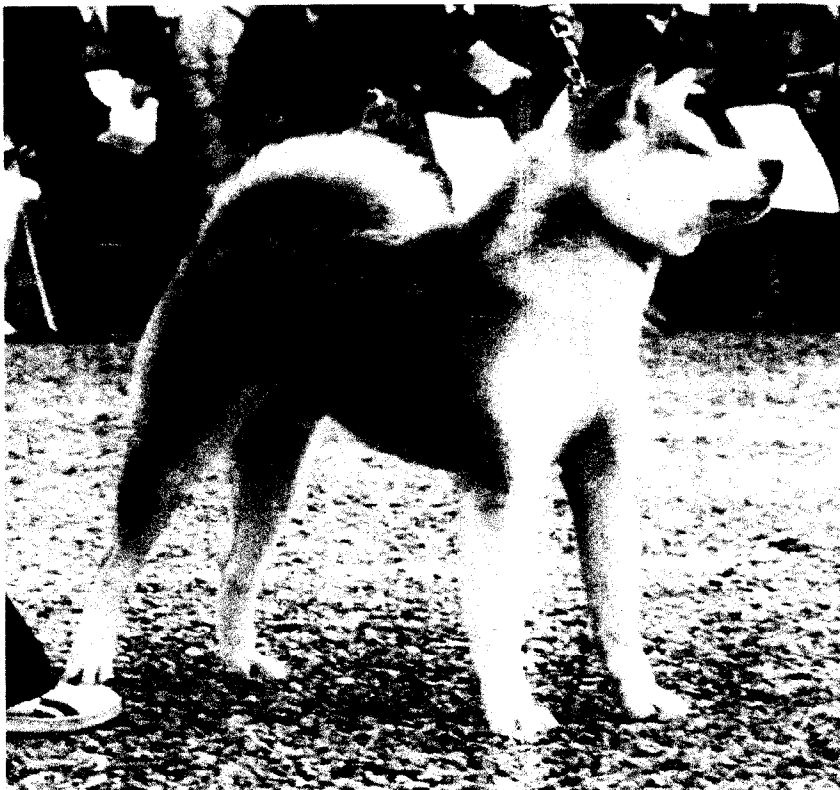
Large-sized dog, sturdily built, well balanced and with much substance; secondary sex characteristics strongly marked, with high nobility and dignity in modesty; constitution tough.

IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS :

The ratio of height at withers to length of body is 10 : 11, but the body is slightly longer in bitches than in dogs.

BEHAVIOR AND TEMPERAMENT :

The temperament is composed, faithful, docile, and receptive.



< Explanation on the breed standard of the Akita >

General Appearance

The color and condition of the coat greatly influence what we call "general appearance". More important, however, is the Akita's structure and conformation. Its size and proportions must be within the parameters of the standard. For excellence in both conformation and temperament, the Akita must possess other qualities as well. The Akita's ears must be set at the proper angle when viewed from either the front or the side. The position of the neck needs to express power. The back should be level with a strong loin. The Akita has to have a magnificent and well-curved tail. The proper tail contributes much to the dog's dignified appearance. Proportioned substance is characterized by well balanced legs with correct position. The stance must indicate self-assurance as well as dignity. It is, however, desirable for puppies and young dogs to have a happy and innocent attitude. Bitches are required to show grace and femininity.



< FCI Standard >

HEAD :

CRANIAL REGION :

Skull : The size is in proportion to the body. The forehead is broad, with distinct furrow. No wrinkle.

Stop : Defined.

FACIAL REGION :

Nose : Large and black. Slight and diffuse lack of pigment on nose is acceptable in white dogs only, but black is always preferred.

Muzzle : Moderately long and strong with broad base, tapering but not pointed. Nasal bridge straight.

Lips : Tight.

Jaws/Teeth : Teeth strong with scissor bite.

Cheeks : Moderately developed.

Eyes : Relatively small, almost triangular in shape due to the rising of the outer eye corner, set moderately apart, dark brown: the darker, the better.

Ears : Relatively small, thick, triangular, slightly rounded at tips, set moderately apart, pricked and inclining forward.

NECK : Thick and muscular, without dewlap, in balance with head.



## < Explanation on the breed standard of the Akita >

### Head

The shape of each part of the head contributes greatly to an expression of majesty, dignity and an esthetic simplicity, etc., while the position and balance of the head are a vital part of the total picture as well.

The Akitas ears are shaped like a scalene triangle (a triangle with unequal sides) with slightly rounded tips. If the set of the ears is too high, the distance between the ears would be too narrow. If the set is too low the tendency is toward so called Kanzashi Mimi \*1 (ornamental hair pin ears). These are ears whose openings face toward the side rather than the front and may be carried outward (airplane ears). The correct ear is one where a perpendicular line from the tip of the ear passes through the midpoint of the base of the triangle. The shape and expression of the eyes is an indication of the dog's temperament and has a decided influence over the total look of dignity and majesty. The shape of the eye is one of a scalene triangle which is longer horizontally. The inner corner is deep and the line of the lower lid extends upwards with the outer corner directly below the ear. If the distance between the ears is too small, it gives the Akita a very severe, close eyed and nervous expression. If the eyes are set too wide, the expression lacks alertness and intelligence. The eyes must be dark in color. Light eyes in an Akita lack dignity.

In the side view, the lines and angles of the head are quite important. The angle of the ear is acute relative to a horizontal line. The ideal angle is roughly parallel to the angle of the neck. If the angle is too wide, meaning the ears are too upright, the expression lacks concentration. On the other hand, if the angle is too acute the expression is one of dullness and lack of spirit.

The line along the nasal bridge should be almost parallel to the skull. The angle of the stop needs to be moderate. The depth of the stop along with the construction of the forehead is a critical element of the Akitas head to be observed. There should be a shallow but distinct furrow running between the eyes toward the back skull with no wrinkling of the forehead. If the lips extend back too far, the dog lacks the dignity as well as one of the important characteristics of Japanese dogs.

The official standard describes it as "powerful and of medium length; the base is thick and the tip is not pointed; lips tight." The upper lips should be tight and strong without drooping or loose flews. If the upper lips are even slightly loose, the muzzle cannot be of the proper shape. The shape of the muzzle can be roughly described as one of three types: circular, rectangular and triangular. The triangular muzzle lacks fullness. The bridge of the nose is narrow and gives the impression that something is lacking. The upper lips are also somewhat loose.

The rectangular muzzle is also called Hakoguchi \*2 (box mouth). A dog with a rectangular muzzle often lacks nicely defined cheeks and tends to have loose flews, giving the muzzle a very slack appearance.

The ideal muzzle is circular in shape, imparting to the face the classic fullness and desired expression without any looseness or droopiness of its features.

< FCI Standard >

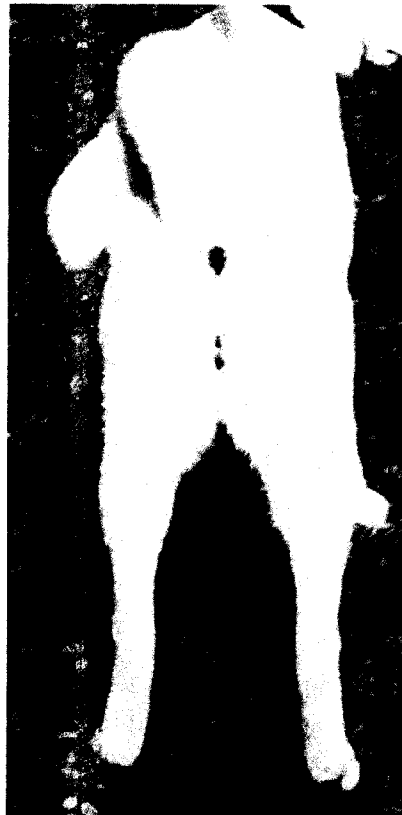
BODY :

Back : Straight and strong.

Loin : Broad and muscular.

Chest : Deep, forechest well developed, ribs moderately well sprung.

Belly: Well drawn up.





## < Explanation on the breed standard of the Akita >

### Body, Proportion and Posture

The side view of the normal and natural stance of the Akitas shows lines and angles of each part that are in harmony with each other and are correct. This stance accurately shows the angles for the head and neck, the level back, the proper position of the legs as well as the set of the well-curved tail. The preferred ratio of height at withers to depth of chest is ten to five (10:5), while that for height at withers to body length is ten to eleven (10:11) (Measured in terms of the proportion of height at withers to body length, bitches have slightly longer body than dogs). The feet should be planted on lines parallel to each other in both directions, i.e., from both front and side views.

In a stance called an assembled or gathered posture, the forelegs are placed too far back while, at the same time, the rear legs are positioned forward under the body. This posture is often the result of sickle hocks. Dogs that stand in this fashion tend to have a carp or roached back with the parts of the body not flowing smoothly into each other. The movement is one lacking in flexibility, and the whole visual picture is one lacking in strength, boldness and dignity.

Another stance called the dispersed, or saw horse posture, is the opposite of the gathered posture. Dogs lacking in condition, without a well drawn up belly and a weak topline will often appear this way. The visual picture is one of softness, general looseness and lack of strength.

In the front view, the proportions, shape and structure of the head, neck, forechest, elbows, forelegs and front feet are important. The harmony and balance between the thick and muscular neck, the well-built head, well-developed forechest as well as strong forelegs to support the whole, needs to be evaluated. Elbow joints must be properly set and the front feet need to be round, thickly padded and strongly knuckled. The distance between the two forelegs must be correct. If the stances too wide or too narrow, the resulting body conformation is unsound. Lower legs either too heavy or too light in bone, or feet that are flat are indicative of a lack of strength.

In the rear view, the distance between the hind feet as well as the structure of the hind legs in relation to the width of the hindquarters is very important. The muscles of the hindquarters need to be well conditioned in order to show fitness and power. The hind legs should be straight when viewed from behind, with the hocks turning neither in (cow hocks) nor out (bandy legged). Hind legs that are straight but too close together are also not desirable. Cow hocks, bandy legs and legs too close together are all an indications of weakness.

< FCI Standard >

TAIL : Set on high, thick, carried vigorously curled over back; the tip nearly reaching hocks when let down.

< Explanation on the breed standard of the Akita >

Tail

The tail of the Akita is indicative of both its dignity and beauty and must be large and well curled. A tail of proper length will roughly reach the hock when let down. Short tails usually do not have sufficient curl while long tails tend to be loose at the end. Various types of curls are found including left curl, right curl, Taiko Maki (drum curl or full curl) and double curl. But even tails of the same type are not always uniform. Some are small with too tight a curl, others are rolled low to the side and against the loin. There are also tails that have insufficient curl and are known as Nage-o. \*3 I believe that the ideal Akita tail is set high and forms an ellipse. An ellipse that is parallel to the angles of other body parts, particularly the neck, is especially pleasing esthetically. A high set, large and well-curved tail, along with the forward angled and prick ears are very important components of the body. Uncurled tails are a disqualification.



a tail with correct curl



a tail whose curl is too tight

< FCI Standard >

LIMBS :

FOREQUARTERS :

Shoulders : Moderately sloping and developed.

Elbows : Tight.

Forearms : Straight and heavy boned.

HINDQUARTERS : Well developed, strong and moderately angulated.

FEET : Thick, round, arched and tight.

GAIT : Resilient and powerful movement.

## < Explanation on the breed standard of the Akita >

### Forequarters

The forelegs need to support the massive head, thick neck and sturdy chest as well as allow for stresses associated with quick movements in all directions. Their skeletal structure is comprised of the scapula (shoulder blade), humerus (upper arm), radius and ulna (lower arm), carpal bones (carpal or wrist joint), metacarpal (pastern) and phalanges (foot). The pastern must have good flexibility and have proper slope in order to effectively absorb the shock caused by the weight of the dog as its feet strike the ground.

### Hindquarters

The hind legs provide the force and impulsion necessary for forward movement. The skeletal structure of the hind leg consists of the femur (upper thigh), tibia and fibula (lower thigh), tarsal bones (hock joint) metatarsals and phalanges (metatarsus and foot). Like those of the forequarters, the bones of the hind leg must be joined to each other at the proper angles. Correct structure requires firm, powerful and well-conditioned muscles. Lastly, both front and hindfeet need to be compact, tight and flexible, as well as thickly padded.



< FCI Standard >

COAT :

HAIR : Outer coat harsh and straight, undercoat soft and dense; the withers and the rump are covered with slightly longer hair; the hair on tail is longer than on the rest of body.

COLOR : Red fawn, sesame (red fawn hairs with black tips), brindle and white. All the above mentioned colors except white must have "urajiro". (Urajiro = whitish coat on the sides of the muzzle, on the cheeks, on the underside of jaw, neck, chest, body and tail and on the inside of the legs.)

< Explanation on the breed standard of the Akita >

Coat and Color

The first thing that strikes one's eye when looking at the figure of a handsome dog posing in the show ring, is its overall appearance and the color of its coat. The texture of that coat contributes a great deal to the overall impression and image. The Akita's coat must be thick and double : overcoat—straight coat (outer coat, harsh coat) and undercoat—soft coat. However, length of the overcoat varies depending on the part of the body.

Coat colors include red, brindle, sesame and white. The most common colors observed in the show ring today are red, brindle and white. Other colors are rarely seen. Except for white, all other colors must be shaded with an appropriate amount of Urajiro \*4 (The white, or near white shading that is present on the sides of the muzzle, on the cheeks, the underside of jaw, neck, chest, body and tail as well as the insides of the legs). The preferred color has elegance and purity as well as clarity. The coat, in addition to its quality and color, must be in good condition as regards its density and standoff characteristics. Furthermore, the condition of the coat may alter the color itself as well as affect the evaluation of the dog as a whole.

\*1 Kanzashi Mimi : Literally "ornamental hairpin ears." Ears facing to the side or out rather than forward. Airplane ears.

\*2 Hakoguchi : A blunt or square muzzle.

\*3 Nage-o : A tail with insufficient curl.

\*4 Urajiro : White or whitish coat color on the sides of the muzzle, on the cheeks, on the underside of jaw, neck, chest, body and tail as well as the inside of the legs.

