YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole
From *Dogs in Canada*, November 1992

THE SHIBA INU

Not yet accepted for registration by Canadian (or American) Kennel clubs, one of these four examples represents typical, another is untypical, and two lack degrees of type. All four are sound dogs. Study them, their ears, eyes, muzzles, weights, bodies, legs and angulation. Then, based on what you believe to be Japanese Shiba Inu type, decide which one best represents typical, followed by the order in which you would place the two lacking type. Decide if the untypical example is worthy of an award.

My graphic interpretation of typical is based on the National Shiba Inu Club of America standard (1987), the Shiba Ken Club standard (1990), and the British Interim Shiba Inu standard (1987). It is reinforced by the Shiba Inu observed while on judging assignments in Canada, the United States, England and Sweden. From what I have seen, I believe this attractive breed will rapidly increase in number.
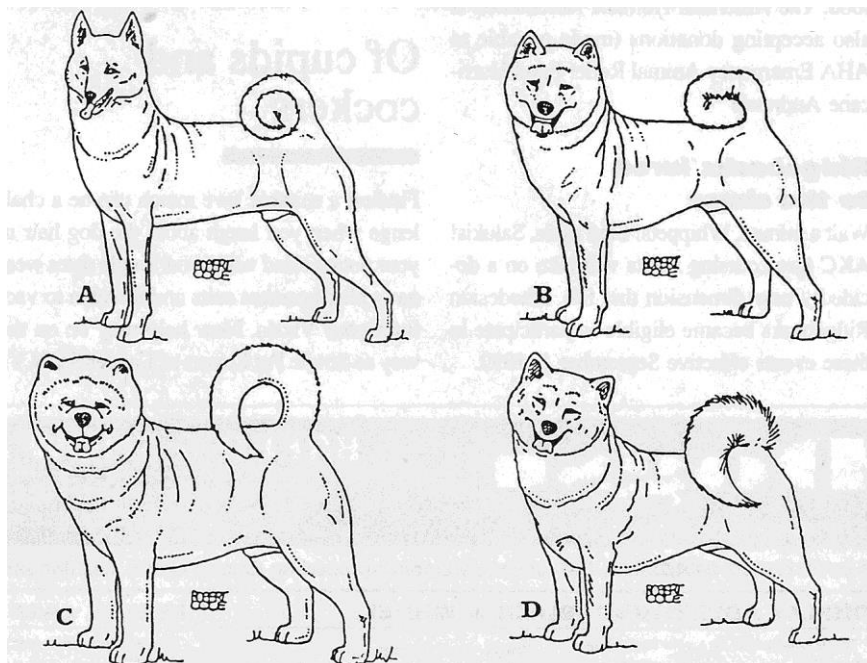
SIMILARITIES

All four examples are sound within the approximate 15-16 inch height range (bitches approximately 14 to 15 inches), and have scissor bites and all their premolars (missing premolars is a problem in this breed). All have a double coat, the outer coat being harsh and straight, the undercoat soft and dense. All tails are curled or curved as in a sickle. All feet are cat-like with dark nails.

DOG A

Small and light-weight, with high, sharply pointed, prick ears, bright eyes and foxy expression, he presents a very attractive picture. His head is longer than broad in a ratio of 7-4 (the same ratio as the Finnish Spitz). Viewed from above, the narrow muzzle tapers evenly to a black nose.

Moderately long neck and forelegs contribute to elegance. Body has good length, topline is level and there is a minimum tuck-up. Angulation front and rear is impressive. Curled tail is set on high. Cat-like feet are well padded and tight.

DOG B

His neck is moderate length, thick and muscular. Withers are high, shoulders moderately sloping. Back is level, loin is broad and muscular. Hindlegs are moderately bent. Chest is deep and moderately well sprung. Forelegs are of good length, the elbows level with brisket. There is a degree of forechest and the belly is well drawn up. Body is slightly longer than height at withers.

The head is shaped like a blunt wedge, the forehead wide, the cheeks well developed. Stop is rather abrupt, nose is black. Dark brown eyes are deep set, the eyelids close fitting and black, the opening triangular and sloping slightly upward. Small ears are triangular, pricked, and inclining slightly forward.

DOG C

A strong example with heavy bone and substance. Powerful for his size, yet agile. His skull is large but in balance with his body, free from excessive wrinkle, with the stop well defined. Muzzle is short in comparison with skull, broad from eyes to end of nose and of equal depth. Lips are somewhat full and slightly overhanging. Ears are small, rounded at tip and stiffly carried.

Body is well ribbed back and deep. Substance is obvious. Back is short, level and strong. Loins are broad, deep, powerful and let down in flank. Tail is large, full and carried over the back in a three-quarter curl, dipping below level of back. He is well angulated front and rear.

DOG D

This dog's deep-set, well-spaced, dark brown eyes have triangular shaped openings. His nose is black. His moderately thick muzzle is not too long, boxy nor pointed. Small, pricked, triangular ears are set well apart (ears not firmly pricked is considered a major Shiba Inu fault.)

Neck is medium length, thick and muscular. Back is level and strong. Legs are set perpendicular under elbow, with slight angulation at pastern. He is neither heavy boned nor light boned. Dewclaws have been removed front and rear. His cat like feet are strong. His straight forelegs are shorter than his body is deep and his firm elbows position slightly above bottom of chest.

FIRST

When describing Dog B and Dog C, almost every desirable Shiba Inu characteristic was mentioned. One of these two dogs represents typical. Do you know which one? The fundamental difference between the two is leg length, body depth, elbow position and ear set. My preference is Dog B. His moderate length of leg, elbow level with bottom of chest, half the height of dog and better ear set are more typical.

SECOND AND THIRD

If Dog A possessed the more typical, less foxy head of Dog D, you might award second place to Dog A. However, as in the show ring, you must go with what you have. You have two dogs (Dog A and Dog D) with totally different conformation – one with a correct head and one with a too foxy head. Which do you prefer? I prefer Dog D over Dog A.

FOURTH

You may withhold ribbons at any time. Should Dog C be bred from? This is what type (and judging) is all about. This example is sound for a heavy boned dog but not sound for a Shiba Inu, and his heavy muzzle is too short, broad and lippy, all depriving him of type. If he possessed Dog D's head he could be bred from. Not having a desirable Shiba Inu head, this heavy, too powerful example, having only soundness and coat going for it, must be left out of the awards.

TAIL

Description of either curled or curved tail in the Shiba Inu breed standards is almost all encompassing, so much so that I am able to depict four different tails, each of them correct. The standards require a tail set on high, thick and carried curled or curved as a sickle over back. All four examples conform to this requirement.

Which tail resembles that of an Akita? A Finnish Spitz? A Basenji? A Norwegian Elkhound? Why could I not use a Siberian Husky tail or a Samoyed tail? Dog C's tail resembles that of an Akita, Dog D a Finish Spitz, Dog A a Basenji, and Dog B a Norwegian Elkhound. I could not use a Siberian Husky because, although the Shibe's tail is usually carried over the back, it sets on just below the topline. I could not use the Samoyed's because it should not be high or low set.

LET'S SUPPOSE

If Dog D possessed Dog A's too foxy head, would you still prefer him over heavy Dog C? If Dog C possessed Dog D's more typical head, could you forgive Dog C's extra substance and heavy bone and put him up over Dog A and Dog D? If typical Dog B was steep in shoulder and steep in pelvis, would you put sound but shorter legged and deeper bodied Dog D up over him? If light boned Dog A possessed Dog D's typical head, would you then prefer the former for second place?

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From *Dogs in Canada*, September 2000

THE SHIBA INU
Based on the CKC Breed Standard
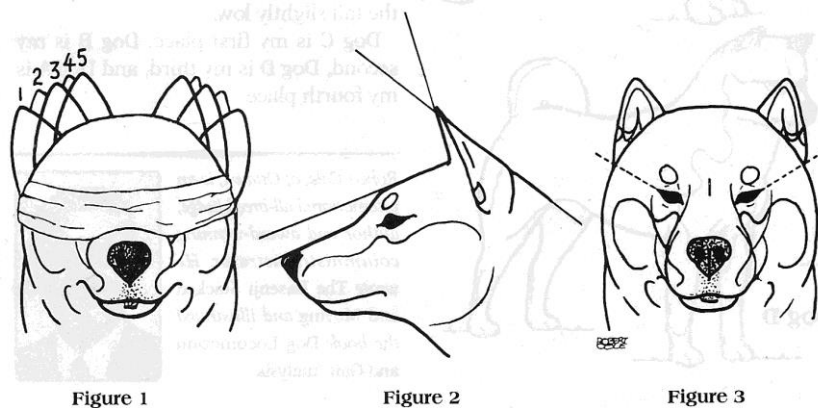

Figure 1   Figure 2   Figure 3

FIGURE 1

With Figure 1 blindfolded, the emphasis is on the ears. They should be "relatively small, triangular, slightly inclining forward and firmly pricked". The ears are also set well apart … how well apart? I have given you five choices; only one placement is correct, two are acceptable and two are faulty. Which is correct? Numbers 1 and 5 are faulty, 2 and 4 are acceptable, and 3 is correct.
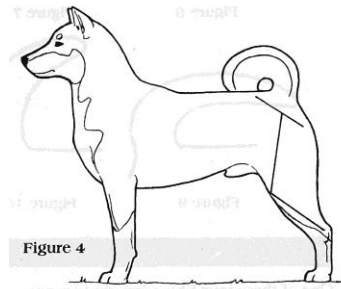
FIGURE 2 – IN PROFILE

From the side, the ears tilt directly forward, with the slant of the back of the ear following the arch of the neck. In profile, the stop is "rather abrupt with a slight furrow" and "the nasal bridge is straight". In addition, I find the muzzle length is 40 per cent of the total head length and that the skull and the muzzle are on the same plane. The lips and nose are black. The bite is complete scissors.
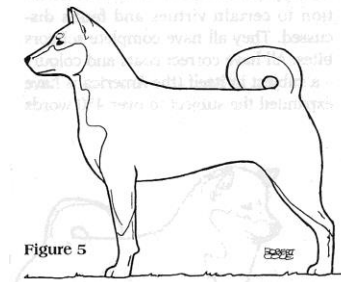
FIGURE 3 – EYES

Viewed straight on, the eyes are "relatively small, slightly triangular – and dark brown in colour". The corner of the eye is also upturned (FCI). I have drawn the slant of the eye projected toward the base of the ear. The rims of the eyes are black.

FIGURES 4 AND 5 – TYPICAL

Figure 4

Figure 5

This dog and bitch convey masculine and feminine qualities and demonstrate that the heads should balance with thick, strong necks and bodies. The dog's ratio of height to length is 10 to 11; the bitch is slightly longer. The shoulders are moderately sloping and the elbows are tight. The back is straight and short, and the loin is broad and muscular. The chest is deep, extending to the elbow, and the belly is well drawn up.

Instead of describing the hindquarter angulation as moderate, all Shiba Inu standards are more explicit in their direction: "The upper thighs long, and lower thighs short, well developed." This is an excellent way of requesting moderate as highlighted by the lines on the male's moderately angulated hind leg.
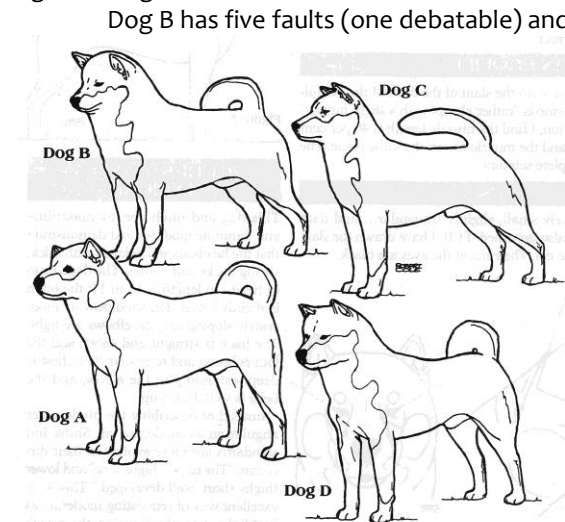
FIGURES 6 TO 11 – TAILS

The standard describes the tail briefly as "Set on high, thick and carried vigorously curled or curved as a sickle". The different ways the Shiba's tail is carried doesn't stop there. According to Japanese Shiba Inu specialist Mr. Hajime Watanabe, as published in the *Shiba Inu Club of Great Britain Journal*, there are a number of ways tails are carried – some desirable and some acceptable.

Two of these tails are desirable and four are acceptable. Which two are desirable? According to Watanabe, figures 6 and 9 are desirable, and Figures 7, 8, 10 and 11 are acceptable.
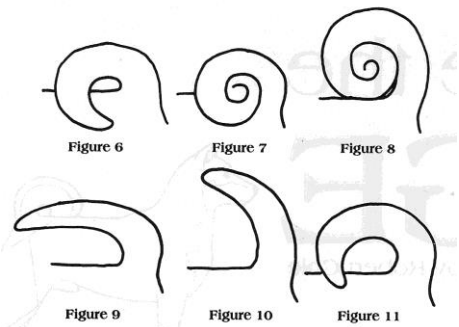
OPEN CLASS

One of these four Shiba Inu could represent typical, and three bring your attention to certain virtues and faults discussed. They all have complete scissors bites. All have correct coats and colours – a subject in itself (the Americans have expanded the subject to over 450 words in their revised 1997 AKC standard).

Dog A has a half-dozen faults. Can you identify them? The top of the muzzle is not straight; the ears are low; the shoulders are steep; the topline is poor; the tail is set on low; and the hind legs lack angulation at the stifle.

Figure 6   Figure 7   Figure 8

Figure 9   Figure 10   Figure 11

Dog B has five faults (one debatable) and many virtues. Can you identify the five faults? He has a domed skull; not enough tuck up; he is down on the front pasterns; I suspect he may also have too much rear angulation; and instead of a 'dry' neck, there is a little loose skin at the throat (dewlap).

Dog B   Dog C   Dog A   Dog D

Dog C represents typical. The carriage of his tail is, according to Watanabe, desirable. The AKC standard describes it as "A loose single curl or a sickle tail pointing vigorously toward the neck and nearly parallel to the back is preferred".

Dog D has a nice foxy head and catlike feet, moderate bone, strong front pasterns and a neck of moderate length. On the debit side, his head is too large for his body; he lacks forechest; his upper arms are steep, raising the body above the elbows; and there is a downward slope to the croup (steep pelvis), which positions the tail slightly low.

Dog C is my first place, Dog B is my second, Dog D is my third, and Dog A is my fourth place.