

Lochland Shetland Sheepdog Club Fact Sheet

The Shetland Sheepdog, or sheltie (as it is commonly known), resembles a Collie in miniature but has a charm and personality all its own. Its size and great devotion to the family make the Sheltie an ideal pet. Intelligent, responsive and eager to please, the Sheltie is a stand-out in all types of competition. The Sheltie truly deserves the often-used title, "all-purpose dog".

Shelties come in a range of colors and sizes. A conformation show dog must fall within the standard size range of 13 to 16 inches, but under- or over-sized dogs may compete in obedience and of course, size has no effect on a dog chosen for the family pet.

The colors you will see are:

Sable and White - with varying shades of sable from golden to darkly shaded or mahogany.

Black - can be bi-black with white collar, feet and face marking and no tan; or, more commonly, tri-color with black, white and tan markings.

Blue Merle - a mottled gray and black coat with various patterns and amounts of black; "blues" as they are called, may have tan markings like the tri-color or they may appear as the bi-blue with only white markings and no tan.

To see samples of these colors, [click here](#) .

Occasionally you may see Shelties with largely white bodies, though their head and facial markings are one of the normal colors listed above. These dogs are not competitive in conformation showing, but can certainly compete in obedience. These "color-headed white" Shelties are often very beautiful and, of course, make fine pets.

While the Shelties virtues of loyalty, brains, incomparable good looks make him seem ideal, the breed is not without its minor difficulties. One characteristic that some people find difficult to overcome is the Sheltie's natural urge to bark. As a herding dog, the Sheltie is among the most vocal of breeds, and although with training they can be encouraged to limit their barking, you might still expect a fair amount of noise. Barking can be viewed as an asset, of course, if protecting your home and property is important.

You may also be intimidated by the prospect of caring for the Sheltie's coat and concerned about shedding. Actually, the Sheltie sheds no more than most other dogs,

and with a regular weekly brushing, you will be able to maintain a well-groomed dog. The Sheltie coat is naturally clean, and minimum bathing is required. Spayed females and neutered males shed somewhat less than unaltered animals.

There are also a few health problems which occur in Shelties. Although these diseases are not rampant and reputable breeders make every effort to eliminate hereditary defects in their breeding lines you, as a consumer, need to be aware of these diseases. Ask the breeders you talk to if they have their animals tested. Feel free to ask for certificates of proof that the parent dogs have been tested.

The four main diseases to be aware of are:

Hip Dysplasia - Parents can be x-rayed and receive certification from the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals(OFA). Ask to see a certificate and expect parents to be certified at least "fair", "good", or "excellent".

Progressive Retinal Atrophy or PRA - A progressive degenerative eye disorder which can be completely eliminated by not breeding affected animal. Ask to see CERF certification.

Von Willebrand's Disease or VWD - A bleeding disorder which only rarely proves fatal.

Sheltie Skin Syndrome - A degenerative skin and muscle disease. Very devastating. Not regularly tested for unless it shows up in the line.

In some breeds there can be a noticeable difference in temperament between males and females with the female preferred as more trainable and less aggressive. This is absolutely not the case with Shelties. If your schedule is such that your dog will be regularly alone for more than a six-hour period, you may wish to consider starting with an older puppy (6 months or older) or an adult dog. A small puppy left alone suffers from boredom and can develop bad habits when left unsupervised. Older puppies and adult dogs are often available from breeders. They are sometimes less expensive, and they fit in beautifully in an active and busy family.

When choosing from a litter of young puppies (8-16 weeks), look for the puppy that is curious and friendly. It is okay for the pup to be momentarily reserved toward you. But, soon after first meeting you, it should feel comfortable playing with you and being held by you. Avoid the puppy who runs to the corner or under the couch; and be wary of one that quivers when held.

When looking at an older puppy or an adult dog, you should expect to see a more reserved animal. While the dog should not be actually fearful, do not judge too harshly the dog that is slow to warm up. The older pup or dog has closely bonded with its present owner, and it will naturally take longer for it to adapt. Be certain that you keep an older animal fenced or on lead until it has fully accepted its new home with you. Also, insist on a decent length of time as a trial period with this dog. Ask for at least 30 days -- preferably 90 days. Be sure to get a thorough list of the dog's habits and routines so that you can make its transition as easy as possible.

Before you even see the puppy or dog you may choose, you will talk to the breeder. While you may not feel that the breeder matters, in fact he/she makes a huge difference. You need to feel comfortable with the way your puppy has been cared for and raised prior to your purchase, and you need to feel that you can turn to that breeder for advice and assistance throughout the life of your dog. Be an assertive consumer and, if your impressions tell you something is not right, do not buy from this breeder. There are other puppies available from excellent sources and you need not be disappointed!

Here is a checklist of things to look for and questions to ask:

- 1) Is the place clean, are the dogs clean and happy?
- 2) Do you own the mother and father? (Do not expect them to own the sire. Most breedings are made using stud dogs from other kennels. Ask to see photos).
- 3) Insist on seeing the mother. She will be homely, hairless, and thin after whelping and nursing, but it is her temperament that you should be concerned with. Puppies are an equal genetic mix of their parents, but the mother who raises them is extremely influential on their personalities. Do not accept excuses for not seeing the mother when viewing a litter of young puppies. And be suspicious if "mom" is fearful or aggressive while it is claimed the "dad", many miles away, is friendly.
- 4) Insist on seeing where the puppies are housed. Ask to see where they have lived -- do not necessarily believe that they always look so squeaky clean and always live in a clean pen in the kitchen or front yard. If your puppy grows up in a dark and lonely out-building it will not be well-socialized with people. The breeder's need for space and cleanliness prevent the pups being loose in the house, but the puppies should spend as much time as possible near people. A main floor laundry room, kitchen, or porch are good locations for puppies.
- 5) Ask for a trial period during which you can freely return the puppy if it does not work out -- one week at a minimum, 30 days is better.

6) Ask for the puppy's health record. What shots has it had and when? Was it wormed? If so, when and with what medication?

7) What does the puppy eat and when? What are its other habits?

8) Ask for a written guarantee against genetic health problems for two years from date of birth.

If you are buying this puppy or dog for your pet, expect to be asked to sign a contract to have the animal spayed or neutered by one year of age. The benefits of an altered animal are many -- reduced risk of mammary and prostate cancer, deadly uterine infections, elimination of unwanted and messy heat cycles, unwanted pregnancies, males marking in the house and roaming. Your dog's coat will be fuller too and will shed less when it is spayed or neutered.

When searching for a puppy...

Be wary of requests by a breeder to keep your animal unaltered and to breed your pet for a puppy back, litter back, or stud service back. These arrangements are most inconvenient and can prove detrimental to your pet's health and jeopardize its relationship with you. Buy your pet with no such strings attached.

The selection of a conformation animal is a very detailed and specialized process. It takes much time and careful study as there is a lot of competition in the show ring for this breed. Attend as many shows as possible, and talk to as many people as you can - most people are willing to help. We recommend considering an older puppy -- at least four months of age, and we strongly recommend getting at least two qualified opinions other than that of the breeder's when buying a show prospect. Again, avoid contracts with a lot of strings attached, although it is not unusual for the sellers of a show female to request a puppy from one of her first litters.

Remember, you are buying a companion who will share your life for the next 12 to 15 years. So, buy the puppy who "knocks your socks off". Do not buy if you are not truly taken with the puppy, and do not buy if you are uncomfortable with the breeder.

We, as a club, understand the need for greater knowledge and care on the part of the prospective owner, and for protection of the breed on the part of those who raise them. These are two of the aims of the Lochland Shetland Sheepdog Club, Inc. If you are interested in a Sheltie, want to know more about the breed, or just want to "talk Shelties" with others who love them, please join us at one of our meetings. To find out when and where meetings are, [click here](#).

For more information, please call Marilyn Magnuson at 763-757-4647, Deborah Salmon at (651) 938-1226 or, [click here](#) to send an e-mail. For membership information, [click here](#) to send an e-mail on becoming a member.

Suggested Reading List:

Your library has many books available on shelties. Some of our favorites are: "SHELTIE TALK" by Betty Jo McKinney and Barbara Rieseberg (considered the "Bible" of the breed), and "THE BOOK OF THE SHETLAND SHEEPDOG" by Anna Katherine Nicholas.