



Pekingese

LIVING WITH PEKINGESE

For me and most Pekingese enthusiasts, living with Pekingese is more than sharing your life with a dog; it is as necessary as breathing and drinking. Once you have been captivated by this diminutive Emperor, there is no other dog who will do.

My love affair began as a toddler with my grandmother's Pekingese, Footsie. I was allowed to interact with him—worship him, that is—as long as I didn't complain if he occasionally gave me a little pinch. And he did (pinch), and I didn't (complain), as it was all worth it to be in the presence of such greatness.

Today, many years and many Pekingese later, the love affair is as strong as it ever was.

The Pekingese is a large dog in a small and very attractive package. Not only do they lift surprisingly heavy for their size, within that chest beats a heart surely as big as a lion's. They are brave to the point of foolish, regardless of the size of their opponent. When ill or injured, they are stoic to the point of endangering their own lives. They are quite intelligent, intuitive and sometimes stubborn like a petulant toddler. They truly have this bigger-than-life personality.

Living with Pekingese is one of the greatest joys of my life. My father once commented to me that they were charming little dogs in spite of their sense of self-importance. They



Pekingese: 1968 PCA national-specialty winner Ch. Nia Ku Tulyar of Orchard Hill, handled by Richard Bauer for owner Mrs. G. Blauvelt Moss

are a dog who doesn't require a lot of exercise; although most love to chase a ball, bring it back ... not so much.

There are many fallacies about Pekingese, as everyone seems to have an aunt or grandmother who kept a Peke back in the day, and they were always of the biting variety. Today's purposefully bred Pekingese is a wonderful family dog. Like any small dog, probably not a great choice for a home with toddlers, but do well with older children, teens, and adults.

Pekes are definitely a "people" dog; they require human interaction as much as they require fresh food and water every day. Pekes do tend to bond strongly with their family and initially be cautious of those they don't know. They are independent and strong-willed, and every one of them knows they have descended from Chinese royalty.

Just as people do, Pekingese have a variety of personalities. Some are outgoing and have never met a stranger, while others are aloof and take time to warm up to a new person. However, once you get to know this delightful breed, they will capture your heart. As a whole, they are a cheerful little dog whose entire being exudes joyfulness.

Pekingese are generally a healthy, long-lived, and sturdy breed. We are fortunate, as the breed is not cursed with genetic conditions such as PRA, and so on. Currently the

parent club has no recommendations for health testing. Breeders need to be constantly vigilant of potential breathing issues, as with any brachycephalic breed. Brachycephalic airway syndrome (BAS) refers to a particular set of upper-airway abnormalities that can affect brachycephalic dogs. Mildly affected dogs will have noisy breathing, especially with exercise, and most will snort when excited and snore when relaxed or asleep. Severely affected animals have more pronounced airway noise, appear to tire easily with exercise, and may collapse or faint after exercise. Symptoms are often worse in hot or humid weather. Because of conscientious breeders, this symptom is seldom seen in the show rings any more. Other health concerns include intervertebral disc disease (IVDD) and sebaceous cysts.

Pekingese require regular grooming. A dog with a correct harsh outer coat will generally only need to be brushed out once a week. They do benefit from regular bathing. If you have trained your dog to be groomed on the table and on his back, they will enjoy the grooming and the time spent with you.

Nigel Aubrey Jones, of St. Aubrey Elsdon fame, says, "*Breeding Pekingese is not for the faint-hearted. It is probably the most difficult of all breeds to produce consistently.*" I know this to be the absolute truth. C-sections are more often the rule than the exception, and at times the puppies

BREED COLUMNS

TOY GROUP

can be difficult to rear. Show breeders generally run puppies on for four to eight months to assess quality.

Pekingese generally enjoy the shows and even enjoy them long after their title is attained. Several years ago I showed a 14-year-old veteran bitch. Well, Busy hadn't forgotten her old tricks; when we came back up the diagonal mat to the judge, she walked into her stack and within five seconds stomped her foot and "woo—wooded" the judge. She had been out of the ring for at least 12 years at that point. Yes, she absolutely was Best Veteran that day—who would have ever said no to that!

My husband took our first homebred champion, Widget, to work with him every day for 12 years. After Widget passed, Baby Grace filled the position, and after she passed last year at 14 years old, the mantle passed to Fiona. They also are regulars at Home Depot and Lowe's. His office dogs have always been great ambassadors for the breed, as they are out in public and seemingly thrive on the attention.

In closing, I feel so blessed as to have these little dogs in my home and in my heart for all these years. What started as a love affair with a little exotic dog many years ago has bloomed into an all-consuming passion. I cannot imagine my life without the dogs and am grateful

every day that I am blessed with so many little flat faces, and every night I go to sleep serenaded by Pekingese snorts and snores. What could be any better than that?

—Susan E. Shephard, Deja vu Pekingese ROM,

www.dejavupekes.com

The Pekingese Club of America