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# The Kai Ken Standard

Kai Ken Aigokai Breed Standard, as translated by Shigeru Kato

### Introduction to the Standard v11

The Kai Ken Society of America aligned itself in 2011 with the American Kennel Club and coordinated that AKC would accept translated registrations from the Kai Ken Aigokai (the breed's preservation society in Japan, which registers nearly all Kai Ken in their native country) into the Foundation Stock Service directly. In this way, the AKC has supported our aims with regard to importing dogs into the current US population and increasing the diversity of our foundation stock to the maximum. In rare breeds, the gene pool is already severely limited by population size, and the KKSA is grateful that AKC understands and supports the needs of Foundation Stock breeds to have smooth registration access for the greatest number of Kai dogs possible, with the ability to register FCI, UKC and KKA Kai Ken all into the AKC-FSS.

While working on our standard for AKC submission, the KKSA has been through 11 revisions to date and many hours of discussion, research, comparison, and review with Kai owners, Kai breeders, breeders and exhibitors of other Japanese breeds, judges, and members of the Kai Ken Aigokai itself to produce the document before you. We looked at all current standards for the Kai Ken: KKA, NIPPO (the preservation society in Japan for the native breeds- but effectively only Shiba, Kishu and Shikoku), JKC/FCI, and UKC and the history and intention of each, as well as an article shared with us by our friends at the North American Kai Association (a UKC club) written by the past president of the KKA, Yanagisawa-san.

In our proposed standard, the KKA standard (as translated by Mr Shigeru Kato) always speaks first and as completely as it can, but it is a deliberately more broad standard than AKC requires for specificity of each body part. So we looked to the other standards to flesh out areas that needed greater description to comply. The NIPPO standard applies to all six native breeds from Shiba to Akita alike, except for size and color. The attempted homogeneity of the NIPPO standard provides a basic core description for all Japanese breeds, something the KKA standard takes a bit on assumption. History also tells us that the Kai Ken Aigokai standard split from NIPPO over two main points: that the height of Kai should not be increased to align with the other medium sized breeds, and that the tongue spotting tolerance of NIPPO was too strict for the reality of the extent of this feature in the population, which is very high. Since this attribute does not affect the historic shape or function of the Kai as a brindle mountain dog, the KKSA feels that tongue pigment is too marginal a feature to fault in the ring or in breeding decisions for such a small gene pool with an aim of diversity protection.

The FCI standard is useful because it provides a view of the realistic range of Kai heights in today's world population, and we are aware that as an American club representing and promoting the American population of Kai dogs, we don't have the numbers of exhibiting dogs as Japan does to put too fine a point on any single attribute. The UKC standard is also a valuable reference as it is the standard that has guided the breed in the US since 1990, and the population into which the last decades imports have been introgressed. Our standard needs to root itself in the authenticity of the country of origin standard, but where reasonable with an inclusivity that supports our diversity goals and gives voice to the broad interpretation of the KKA.

The beauty of the KKA standard and judging is that the Aigokai allows for variation in type and is not too strict in this regard. It specifically mentions the old "Shishi-inu-gata" or "boar type dog" and the "Shika-inu-gata" or "deer type dog" and while these two regional forms of the breed are by necessity now combined, the rangier deer type body with its higher tuck up, and the stockier boar type body with a slighter tummy are still evident in the population and should be given equal consideration in judging, neither preferred to the other. The Kai Ken is a rugged mountain dog of function and moderation and possessing a beautiful, wild simplicity and sincerity, and never of extremes, slickness or stylishness. It is our intention with this standard that the Kai Ken in AKC will also be admired, bred and judged for the same 'mountain country values' as it is in its homeland.

## The Illustrated Kai Ken Standard, v.11

for consideration in 2020 by the  
Kai Ken Society of America

This standard has as its foundation the standard of the Kai Ken Aigokai (KKA), which has been the primary registry and preservation society for the Kai in Japan, since its formation in 1931. The Kai Ken Society of America (KKSA) honors the mission of the KKA and the authenticity of its breed standard and has only elaborated upon it with specifics to illustrate clearly and conform to the requirements of the American Kennel Club for breed standard clarity and thoroughness. It is our aim that a dog who would succeed and qualify in AKC conformation would also meet the traditional standard for the Kai in Japan.

### HISTORY

In the early 1930's Japan designated six native, regional dog breeds within the Asian spitz landrace as National Natural Monuments: the Kai Ken is the brindle dog of mountainous Yamanashi (formerly known as Kai) prefecture, and a hunter of pheasant, deer and boar by both sight and scent. Protected locally in 1931 by the formation of the Kai Ken Aigokai, the Kai Ken is also known as the “Tora Inu” or tiger dog, for its striped coat. The steep, wooded terrain and isolation of Yamanashi that shaped the form and rustic temperament of this practical and sturdy hunting companion also shielded the Kai from much of the devastation of war that saw severe loss of numbers in the other Nihon Ken. The Kai Ken became established in the United States in 1990.

#### I. General Appearance

The Kai Ken is a medium-sized, brindle, spitz-type dog: well balanced and sturdily built. Its conformation points to the agility and nimbleness required for a dog living and working in steep mountains: particularly the strength of the hocks, the balanced center of gravity, the springiness of the round catlike feet.

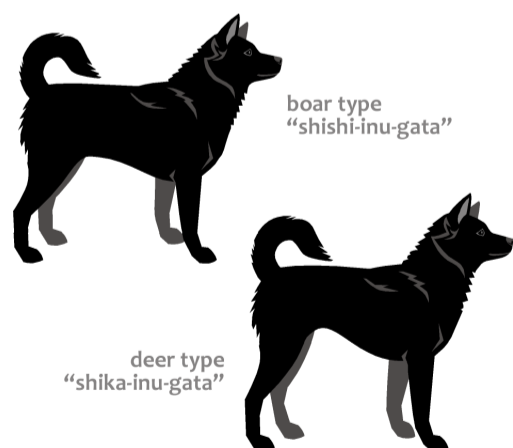


The Kai Ken Aigokai describes two body types: the rangier “deer type” and the broader “boar type” to be given equal consideration. While these types are not kept separate, they can still be detected in the breed as a small degree of range notable in the tuck up and substance of frame, distinct from the sexual dimorphism. All Kai should appear alert and keen, ready for action, and capable of climbing and balancing on ledges, leaping fallen logs and weaving their way through thick cover after their quarry, regardless of type.

#### II. Size, Proportion, Substance

Kai are slightly longer than tall, with a height at withers to length of body of 10:11. The height at the withers averages 17” for females to 19.75” for males, with an allowance of an inch and a quarter above or below. Kai are well balanced dogs, with good bone and agile limbs. There were originally two types of Kai from two great foundation males, Kaikuro founded the “shishi-inu-gata” (translates to “boar type dog”) lines which are a thicker, stockier frame with a more bearlike head. The other male, Dairo, was famed for deer hunting and his lines produce the lithe- framed Kai with foxier faces called the “shika-inu-gata” or “deer type dogs.”

**Faults:** height over 18.25” for females, 21” for males; below 15.75” for females and 18.5” for males.



#### III. Head

**i. Expression** – Showing sexual dimorphism, and an unadorned, unsophisticated air known as “soboku,” coupled with composed boldness. Soboku can be further described as straightforwardness, and honesty. Alert and keen, Kai should express a sense of wildness (called “yaseimi”), rustic and natural as opposed to appearing “cute” or highly-refined. **Fault:** lack of sexual dimorphism

**ii. Eye shape** is triangular, but not as extreme as the

other native Japanese breeds. Eye rims should be black in color, the iris dark brown. Gaze strong and confident. **Fault:** light colored eyes.

**iii. Ears** are firmly pricked, moderately thick, triangular in form and angled forward parallel to the line of the neck. Spacing between the ears is even. The ears are slightly larger than those of the other Japanese breeds.

**Disqualifying fault:** Ears not pricked.

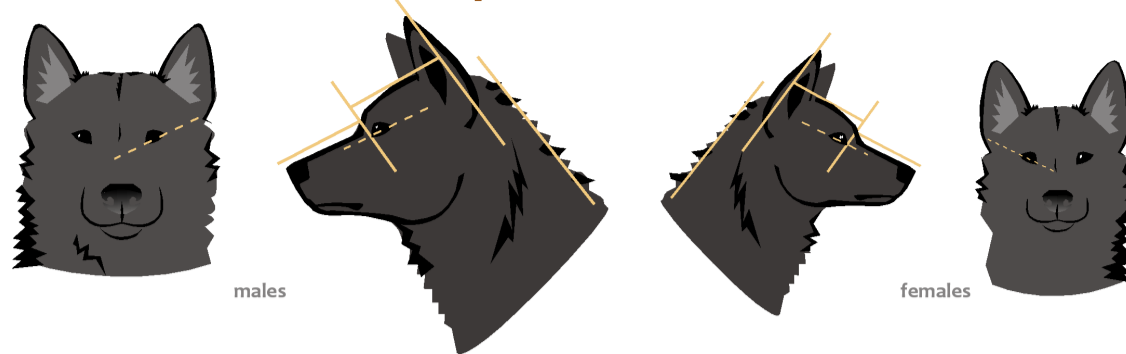
**iv. Skull** – Forehead slightly furrowed, wide falling to a moderate stop. The length of the muzzle, measured from stop to the end of the nose is equal to the length of the skull, from occiput to stop. The skull and muzzle are parallel to each other when viewed from the side. Cheeks are well-developed.

**v. Muzzle** is pointed, moderately thick. Lips tight and pigmented black. **Fault:** snipy muzzle.

**vi. Nose** – Black, nasal bridge straight. **Faults:** Light colored nose, lips or eye rims.

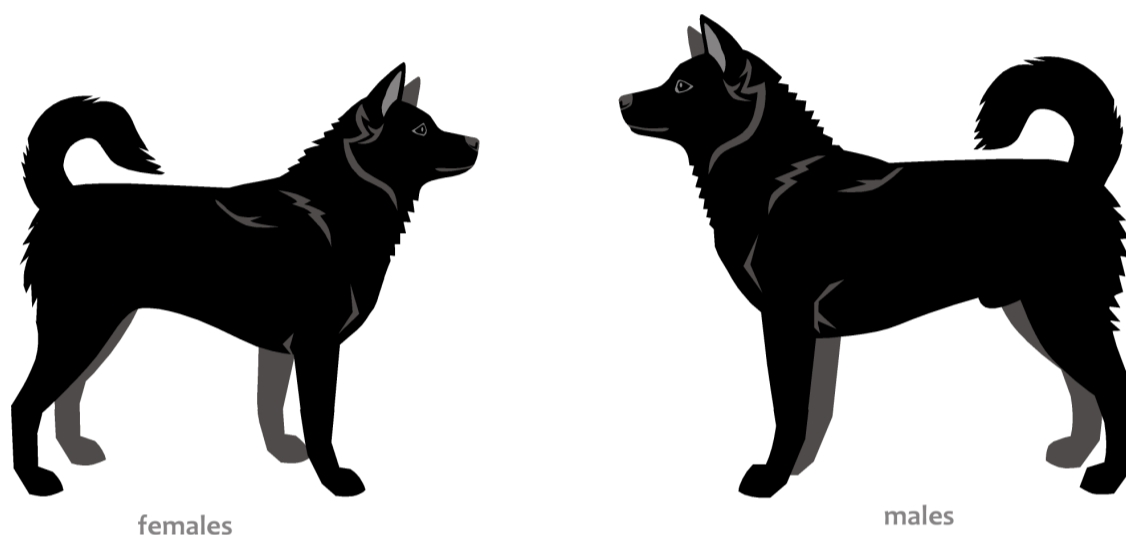
**vii. Teeth** – Strong with a scissors bite. The mouth and tongue is generally spotted, with pigmented areas increasing as the dog matures. **Faults:** missing teeth. **Disqualifying Fault:** over or undershot jaw.

## Sexual Dimorphism of the Kai Ken



### IV. Neck, Topline and Body

- i. **Neck** has appropriate thickness and length without looseness, powerful and muscular.
- ii. **Chest** is deep and oval. From the side, the lowest point of the chest is just behind the elbow, the forechest is well developed, the sternum should not be excessively pointed.
- iii. **Ribs** are moderately sprung.
- iv. **Tuck up** – The belly should be slightly (in boar type) to moderately (reflecting deer type) tucked up.
- v. **Back** – Well developed withers, inclining slightly downward to a firm, level back.
- vi. **Loin** is short, broad and muscular.



- vii. **Tail** is set on high, thick and strong. Either sickle, sword or curled when the dog is at ease and feeling confident, roughly reaching the hock when let down. The Kai has an expressive, flexible tail that lends balance when running, climbing or swimming. **Disqualifying fault:** a tail that cannot be held up.

## Tail types of the Kai Ken

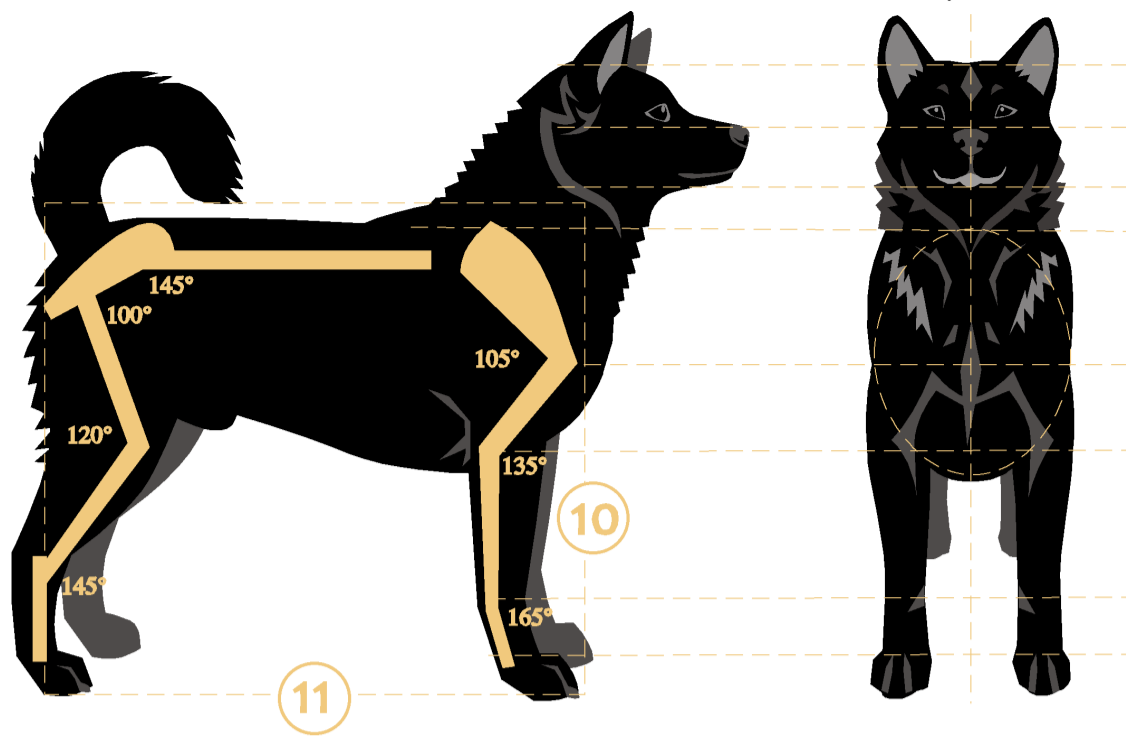


### V. Forequarters

- i. **Shoulders** are moderately sloping, well developed. The point of the shoulder forms a roughly 105-110° angle with the upper arm bone.
- ii. **Forelegs** are robust, straight and parallel, with strong, moderately short, sloping pasterns. The shoulder blade and upper arm are roughly equal in length. The arm lies close to the ribs but is still very mobile, with the elbow moving close to the body.
- iii. **Feet** – Toes well arched and tightly knit; pads thick and elastic, nails hard and preferably dark in color. All four feet should grip well, as the Kai is known specifically for climbing ability.

### VI. Hindquarters

- i. **Hips** are powerful and tight.
- ii. **Legs**- Robust, firm while providing for excellent leaping ability and speed.
- iii. **Thighs**- Upper thigh a little longer than the second thigh.
- iv. **Hock Joint**- 145°- 150°angle. Hocks are especially well-developed, tough and elastic, parallel to each other, perpendicular to the ground.
- v. **Toes** are well-arched and tightly knit; pads thick and elastic; nails hard and preferably dark in color.



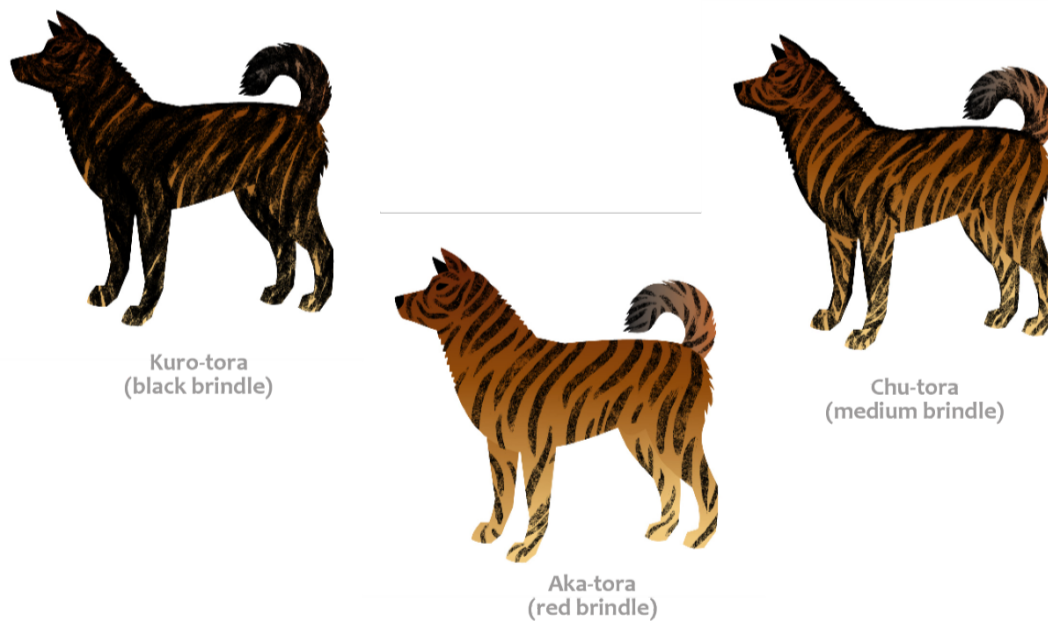
### VII. Coat-

The Kai has a medium length, double coat. The outer guard hair coat is coarse and should stand off from the body with a soft, dense and thick undercoat. Kai Ken have a mane. The hair on the head, legs, and ears is shorter than the coat on the body while the coat on the tail is somewhat longer and stands open in a brush. Kai should be presented in a natural state. **Fault:** long or wooly coat, lack of breed characteristic mane.

### VIII. Color-

The Japanese nickname for the Kai Ken is the Tora Inu, or Tiger Dog, so black stripes on a red ground are required. The function of the brindle coat is camouflage in the field, as ambush and flushing is a feature of Kai hunt style. The breed comes in three coat colors, given equal consideration: black brindle, medium brindle and red brindle. All densities of brindle have a relatively even distribution of clear but soft stripes like a charcoal drawing. The color behind the stripes is a rich red to deep mahogany. Pigment should be strong. A small white blaze is allowed on the forehead, between the front legs and on the belly but white should never blend up into the body coat, or produce socks. **Faults:** Faded coloration, socks. Pinto, cream or any non-brindle coat.

### Brindle variations of the Kai Ken



### IX. Gait-

The Kai should be gaited in the ring on a loose lead at a brisk trot. Movement nimble, light and elastic, with singletrack strides of moderate length. The topline remains level and firm, reach and drive are moderate and efficient. Weight should be balanced and responsive.



**X. Temperament-**

The Kai is a dog of exceptional astutenes and sensitivity. He is a natural hunter with a strong prey drive and while an independent thinker, he is extremely devoted to his owner, and it is from the depth of this relationship that his cooperation and workability springs. With strangers the Kai tends to be reserved, but friendly and affectionate with those it knows. Keen and alert, the Kai Ken has a strong homing instinct and propensity toward loyalty to one master for life. **Disqualifying faults:** Aggressiveness or severe shyness.

**XI. Faults-**

- Lack of sexual dimorphism
- Light-coloured nose, lips, eyerims
- Slightly overshot or undershot mouth
- Light-colored eyes
- Missing teeth
- Long or short hair
- Shyness
- Snipy muzzle
- White feet

**Disqualifying Faults:**

- Aggressive or overly shy
- Extremely overshot or undershot mouth
- Ears not pricked
- Hanging tail, short tail
- Faded colour
- Coat with many white spots, pinto color
- Cream or white coat
- Cryptorchidism. Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

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