



THE SHIBA INU

Supplement to the

National Shiba Club of

America's Approved Seminar



People must be willing to adjust to the Shiba temperament and work with it, not against it. All will be happier in the end.

The words moderate and moderately are used nine times in the Breed Standard.

Thank you for attending this seminar and we hope you have found it a worthwhile and educational experience.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NSCA website: www.shibas.org

NSCA Judge's education: www.shibas.org/judgesed/index.html

NSCA Breed education: www.shibas.org/about.html

NSCA Events: www.shibas.org/events.html

NSCA Magazine: www.shibas.org/enews.html

Books: The Total Shiba: Haskett & Houser – Alpine Publications – www.alpinepub.com

Shiba Inus: Laura Payton – www.amazon.com

Japanese Shiba: Andrew DePrisco – Published in the U.K.

Japanese Dogs: www.thejapanpage.com

The Complete Shiba Inu: Maureen Atkinson – www.amazon.com

THE NATIONAL SHIBA CLUB OF AMERICA

The NSCA Board of Directors has approved this seminar. Any questions, comments or suggestions should be directed to the Seminar Coordinator at judgeseducation@shibas.org. The seminar, including this booklet, may be viewed in its entirety on the NSCA website at www.shibas.org.

THE SHIBA INU

The Shiba Standard is fairly explicit in depicting the ideal for the breed, but, as in all breed standards, there is much room for interpretation. For that reason, the National Shiba Club of America has put together a Breed Seminar and this booklet to help judges and fanciers better understand the breed.

People who have not been breeding or studying Shibas for a long period of time are always interested to learn the little nuances of the breed that are not necessarily mentioned in the standard. Some of these things will be cited in this booklet but are not meant to replace any of the precepts put forth in the Standard, only to enhance an individual's understanding of the breed. The Standard is always the foundation by which to gauge the quality of any given dog.

Upon reading the Standard, the overall concept of balance and moderation becomes very apparent. In no part is a Shiba an extreme dog, and its balance and symmetry are part of the breed's general good health as well as natural beauty. Although the word *cute* is almost always heard when someone describes a Shiba, it never appears in the Standard and the Shiba is never to be considered a Toy dog. The last sentence in the Standard paints the mental picture a person should always carry with him when thinking of the Shiba: **“A harmonious balance of form, color, movement, and temperament is more critical than any one feature.”**

Stop here and take a little quiz. See how many times the words moderate and moderately (combined) appear in the Shiba Standard. Answer at the end of the booklet.



THE HEAD

The face and expression of the Shiba reflect the dog's soul. The gaze is calm and confident with strength, good nature, and a maybe a bit of mischief. It is preferred that a Shiba is given time to be stacked on the table before a judge begins the examination. Shibas would rather be chasing rabbits than standing in the show ring and they sometimes take the opportunity to embarrass their handlers, especially puppies. The patent "Shiba Shake" where the dog shows his distaste for collar and lead by tilting his head and

This tan starts at the nose leather and is more colorful along that point. It will gradually fade to a slight tan as it travels between the black under the eye and the white of the cheeks. On the outside of the forelegs, tan will be quite apparent from the carpus, or a little above, downward blending to the light white/cream urajiro on the toes. The same pattern is repeated on the outside of the hind legs, down the front of the stifle and broadening from the hock joint to the lighter cream/white urajiro on the toes. Black is permitted on the rear of the pasterns, the back of the hock and as a small amount of black penciling on the toes.

Although commonly termed black and tan, the black Shiba is always a tri-color. It is not a black and tan dog like Rottweiler or a Doberman, nor is it a black and white dog like a Boston Terrier, but in fact it is a gentle blend of white/cream, tan to reddish buff, and dull, rusty black.

Please refer to the coat color examples on the back of this booklet.

TEMPERAMENT

To hear people talk, you would think the Shiba is twenty different breeds with twenty different personalities. Maybe it is, depending on the individual dog and an individual person's perception of that dog. Some think the Shiba is a calm, quiet dog, while others believe the breed is hyper and excitable. Some think it is a snotty breed, while others believe it to be sweet and congenial. People may say the Shiba is aloof and reserved, while others have only seen those that are boisterous and playful. It is all those things.

Even the standard can be somewhat contradictory saying it has spirited boldness, good nature, unaffected forthrightness and an independent and reserved nature. All these aspects are seen in the breed and sometimes in the same dog. Overall, though, Shibas tend to think of themselves first and all else after.

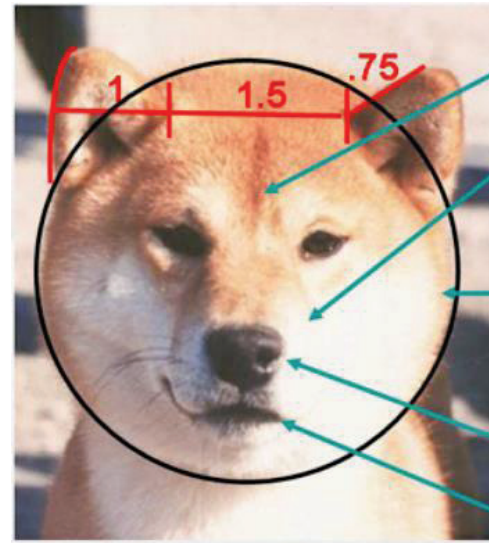


as the dog matures to be an adult. The coat is black in most of the dorsal area, with tan points and urajiro as described in the following paragraphs. The back of the ears, skull, forehead, and bridge of the nose are black, and the inside of the ears is reddish-tan to white. The urajiro ranges from light cream to white. On the face it will appear on the cheeks and the upper lip, chin and throat. It must not extend over the bridge of the nose or up around

the eyes. A few lighter hairs around the eyes are often seen, but the appearance of "spectacles" is not allowed. Urajiro can travel down the throat to connect with the triangular spots on the chest but should not extend to the left or right of the chest beyond the shoulder. It can continue onto the belly and is always on the inside of the thighs and around the anal area blending into the tail. The guard hair on the ventral side of the tail (part uppermost when curled over the back) is straight, bushy and white in color. There is some tan between the black dorsal side and where the white ventral meet.

Keeping in mind the progression of the three colors of black to tan to white, the tan points are seen on the face as two oval spots (about the size of a thumbprint) over each eye. They are never so large as to blend to the point of giving the impression of an eyebrow or half-moon over the eye. The tan eyespots may include white hairs, caused by urajiro or aging. Tan is also seen between the black on the bridge of the nose and the white of the upper lip.

shaking every few seconds is typical behavior. One must have a sense of humor when showing or judging the Shiba Inu.



The forehead is broad and flat with a slight furrow.

The muzzle is full and round, with a strong lower jaw.

The cheeks are full. Because of the full cheeks and the hair, the head from the front appears rounded.

Nose is black.

Lips are tight and black.

The eye: Discussions of the perfect Shiba eye can bring about a lively exchange. For a while, there were too many Shibas with round, bulging eyes, and now, as a backlash, some eyes are too small. Remember, nothing is extreme, even the eye of the Shiba.

Eye shape often goes with skull shape. A Shiba with a round, protruding eye will also have a short muzzle, wide skull with a bony eye socket and frequently too much loose skin around the head. The small, very oblique eye is usually found on the more narrow, lupine head with a longer muzzle and high set ears. The standard describes the eye quite well. Often confusion comes when a person expects the eye to be a definite triangle, rather than the "somewhat" triangular as stated in the Standard. Remember moderation.

The ear: A really good ear is not common. The shape and balance of the ear are a little more important than the size. Ears should be triangular with the base as wide, or nearly as wide, as the sides. The inside plane of the ear is straight, while the outside plane has a

slight outward curve. Many ears are seen to be the other way around, with the curve on the inside and the straight line on the outside. This can interfere with the expression of the face. When the dog is alert, the ear has a forward tilt that curves with the arched neck. The ears do not have such an extreme forward pitch as to appear as awnings over the eyes, but look smooth and harmonious with the rest of the head. The ear leather is thick and well furred. The ears have good cupping and are well-rounded front to back. An ear that is too tall and upright usually will not have adequate cupping. In the show ring, free baiting, with the dog looking up at the handler and the ears extremely alert, will give the eyes a rounded appearance and the ears will seem too upright. On the opposite side, a dog that is “strung up” and made to look down will appear to have smaller eyes and more ear pitch, and a wider ear set than normal. A natural stance with the dog looking straight ahead will give the proper perception of the eye and ear shape.



Forehead and muzzle: The forehead is flat and on a plane with the muzzle and the stop is moderate. Too much stop makes the

according to the Shiba Standard, not all sables are sesames.

Many people, including Shiba breeders, incorrectly label "sable" Shibas as "sesames". They are red dogs, frequently carrying the black and tan gene as a recessive, that have a scattering of black hairs on the back and down the sides, but not covering the entire torso and head (minus urajiro). The black tipping exists in varying degrees of density, unlike the evenly tipped true sesames, and extends only part way down the sides and is not present on the head. A sable with a small amount of black tipping is acceptable under the standard, but sable that takes the form of a black saddle, like a German Shepherd, is very undesirable. This black is in varying degrees and does not truly have a definition by the Japanese. They may call it “red with black inserts” and register it as a red, while the Americans call it an “incorrect sesame” and register it as a sesame. The rich red background of the proper red sesame color is not always seen either. Many “sesames” are more fawn, tan or brown underneath, giving the whole a rather washed-out appearance. Once a red sesame with an excellent coat color is encountered, it is not soon forgotten.

Black with tan points and urajiro: The ideal black-and-tan coat color is a three-colored coat, with black base coat, tan points and white urajiro areas. The individual hair shafts are tri-color as well, giving the dog a sooty or rusty black appearance. Each guard hair, if plucked from the back of a black-and-tan Shiba, holds some degree of all three colors as follows: Starting at the base with white/cream, graduating slightly to reddish/buff before changing to the dull and sometimes rusty black, not shiny blue black, on the tip. The undercoat is reddish buff to light gray and the black tipped guard coat stands away from the body allowing the undercoat to show through when the dog is viewed from behind or when running your hand backwards against the grain of the coat. The graduation of color on the coat of a black and tan puppy can be somewhat darker than on an adult, especially on the facial features. It is not unusual for a black and tan puppy at birth to appear almost solid black with the gradual lightening of the urajiro taking place

Sesame: is possibly the most misunderstood Shiba color, both by judges and fanciers. This is due to the fact that there are so few correctly colored sesames, both here and in Japan. The ideal sesame has an even distribution of black tipped hairs on the body and head over a rich red background. This is highlighted by proper urajiro. A sesame can be quite dark, but not over 50% black. There is no concentration of black anywhere on the body and the black hair should be down the sides to the top of the legs and on the head down to the muzzle. The correct sesame pattern is very similar to that of the black and tan because the black tipping appears in all of the same areas that the black appears in the black-and-tan Shiba. Exceptions are that the upper legs and bridge of the muzzle of the sesame are not always tipped in black. Frequently, the tipping ends on the forehead of the sesame in a widow's peak rather than continuing down the bridge of the muzzle as in a black-and-tan Shiba. Often it takes a couple years for good urajiro to



form on a sesame Shiba.

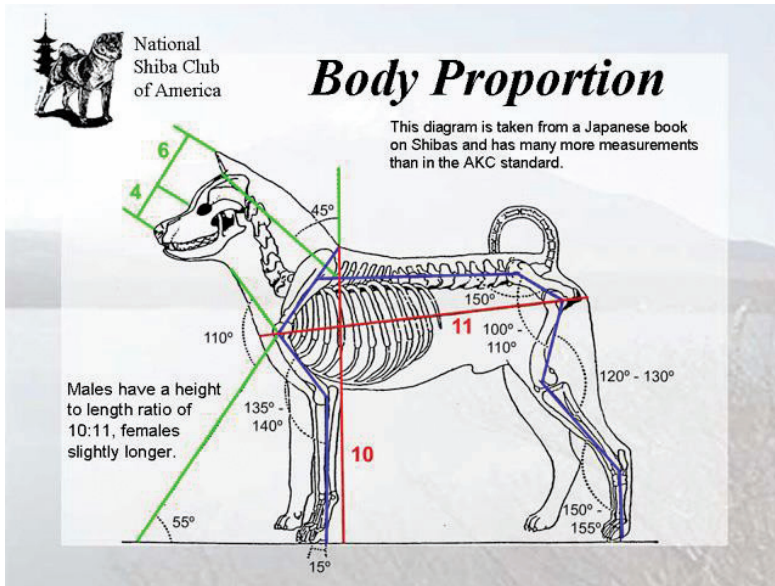
The term sesame is used to differentiate the sesame pattern from the sable. The *AKC Complete Dog Book* defines a sable as “A coat color produced by black tipped hairs upon a background of silver, gold, gray fawn, or brown.” According to the AKC’s definition of a sable, all sesames are sables, but

head Toy-like. The proportion of the muzzle to the base of the stop is 40% of the total head length. If there is any leaning toward a variation, it should be towards a longer rather than shorter muzzle. It is most important to have a full, rounded muzzle with a strong lower jaw and firm, black lips. Both lip lines are visible and there is no looseness of flue nor does the upper lip cover the lower lip. Slackness or looseness of skin, especially on the head, is undesirable. There are no wrinkles on the forehead except the furrow between the eyes. The head is “dry” with no excessive skin around the mouth, under the chin or on the neck.

Teeth: Teeth are another subject of discussion among Shiba fanciers. The Standard allows for up to four missing teeth without serious penalty. Most breeders strive for full dentition and are very appreciative of judges who take the time to count teeth. *It is critical that those who breed and judge Shiba Inu take pains to learn how to count teeth quickly and accurately.*

THE BODY

The desired proportion for the frame is 10:11, with the length of back slightly longer than the height of the legs. At a stand, the frame represents a rectangle, not a square. However, the height of the leg remains in proportion to the length of back. The topline is level and firm and the loin is approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the length of the back. The Shiba’s torso in cross-section is egg shaped. The wider portion of the egg represents the chest, while the narrower portion culminates in the tuck-up. All is firm and dry, without excess fat and loose rolling skin. Bone is moderate.



The front end assembly viewed in profile gives the appearance of a triangle. The point of the withers represents the first point, the sternum represents the apex, and the elbow represents the final point. Each leg of the triangle is symmetrically balanced and in proportion. From a frontal view, the ideal is represented by two straight lines perpendicular with the ground. The line extends from the inside of the tight foot, through the shoulder, culminating alongside the outer portion of the cheek. The line of the chest is slightly convex. Barrel or hollow chest is not desired.

The rear end viewed in profile gives the appearance of a triangle. The point of the hip represents the first point, the point of rump represents the apex, and the stifle represents the final point. Each leg of the triangle is symmetrically balanced and in proportion. When viewed from the rear the hocks are strong and well let down and the legs are parallel when the dog is at rest.

Several distinct body types appear in the Shiba. The extremes range from a dog short legged and long bodied in stature to dogs which are usually lean, with a rangier stature.

On young dogs, the presence of *urajiro* around the vent and up the ventral side of the tail for about 1/3 its length indicates that more *urajiro* will be infused into the proper places as the dog ages. This ventral white should be present by the time a puppy gets its adult coat. In an adult Shiba, a light tipping of red or dark hairs (black on a black and tan) on the end 2/3 of the ventral side of the tail is very acceptable.

Red: Of the three allowed colors, red is most frequently seen and easily understood. The ideal red coat is a clear, intense, candle-flame orange. It is not an autumn-leaf red or a pale grocery-bag tan, but the color of a forest fire. Several things can detract from this color, but it should always be sought. Sometimes a lack of guard hairs will allow too much cream undercoat to show through, making the dog look pale. These dogs will usually have more guard hair at the spine creating a darker stripe down the back. Guard hairs deliver the main body color of the dog and should be present all around the torso. Shibas with evenly distributed red guard hair from back down the sides is likely to also have good coat texture. The red Shiba's coat has banded guard hairs that typically are red tipped with a white band in the middle and a lighter red band near the skin, although varied distribution of this banding may be seen. If a substantial portion of the middle of the hair shaft is white, it can make the coat appear lighter, even though the tips may have good color.

A coat that is shed out or about to shed may also appear dull and washed out. A scattering of dark hairs is acceptable on the back and on the dorsal side of the tail on a red dog. It is more difficult to find the proper coat texture in a red dog as red coats have a tendency to be too soft and silky.

The line between the *urajiro* and the colored part of the coat, especially on the reds and sesames, is not abruptly defined, but is slightly blurred. This is because Shibas are not born with *urajiro* as Collies are born with their “Irish” markings. Shibas are born anywhere from grocery bag brown to almost solid black, depending on their eventual color. Most reds and sesames have black muzzles, which fade as they age. These black muzzles fade to the typical markings with proper *urajiro* by the time the dog is 18 months old. There is also a varying amount of black hair on the body that fades as *urajiro* appears. This is particularly apparent on the chests of sesames and reds with black and tan in their recent ancestry. Most Shibas are born with small amounts of white



markings on their feet and legs, chest and belly, and occasionally tail tip. White socks are permitted on the forelegs up to the elbow and on the hind legs to the hock. White markings present at birth are **not** *urajiro*. On an adult, *urajiro* may blend into short white socks and white on the chest and belly, so to make them indistinguishable from one another.

Freckles appearing in the white socks are not desirable. White markings on the neck, body or head other than in the specified places are a serious fault.

Urajiro must be present on all colors of Shiba. There is generally more extensive *urajiro* on a red than on a black and tan or on a sesame. The latter two colors often take longer to acquire a good undersurface of *urajiro*, but it should never be completely lacking.

These are characteristics reflecting the regions where these dogs developed in Japan. Of course, *the ideal is in between* with balance and moderation being the keys.

GAIT

Movement is light, nimble and elastic. In this context, the term elastic utilizes Webster’s definition of having the property of immediately returning to its original size shape or position after being stretched, flexed, and expanded, etc. At a trot the legs angle in towards a center line. The ideal movement combines reach and drive with nimble and graceful movement.

Although some Shibas may appear to move a little close in the rear, most look fairly good going away and the weak rears are easily discernible by anyone experienced with canine movement. As in most breeds, fronts are more problematical. Poorly moving fronts take many forms with flipping, swinging and paddling being the most common. Often the fronts that look true coming in, are the ones with the shorter stride when observed from the side. Those that appear to have more reach may actually be overreaching and have a flipping or paddling front. A front that looks good both coming in towards you and from the side is to be appreciated in the Shiba as in any balanced breed.

THE TAIL

The tail of the Shiba has many nuances. The primary consideration is the vigor of the tail. It shows the inner feeling of the dog and does not appear weak or poorly set. The hair of the tail is thick and full, ideally forming a brush with the hair on the outside of the curve (ventral) longer than that on the inside (dorsal). Wispy hairs do not extend out beyond the outline of the tail so as to blow in the breeze. The fullness of the tail is not so lacking that the guard hairs come to a point and form a pronounced peak which breeders call praying hands or prayer tail. A tail may curl to either side of the dog, but it is preferable that the curl is loose enough and high enough that daylight can pass through it.

Fanciers say that they should be able to “place an egg” inside this opening. An exception to this is the sickle or stick tail. These are among the preferred tail sets and the curve will not meet at the back forming the egg shape. A tail that snaps back or lies sideways on the back is not desirable. When the Standard says that the tail reaches nearly to the hock when extended, it means the tip of the hair, not the end of the tail itself.

THE COAT

As with many breeds, their coat is the Shiba’s crowning glory. It is a full double coat with the outer guard hairs being stiff and straight and the undercoat soft and thick. This undercoat is shed twice a year, and, without it, the Shiba loses much of its “look.” The guard hairs are supported by the undercoat and stand off from the body at about a 45° angle. The coat on the ventral side of the tail is the longest and should be in an open brush. The skirts are longer than the body hair but usually not as long as the tail. Dogs with a longer tail hair usually have a slightly longer hair on the skirts. These dogs may or may not have a little longer coat on the body. Body guard hairs are longest on the neck ruff and on the withers. There is a range of acceptable coat lengths with guard hairs being about 1 ½ to 2 inches at the withers. Dogs with either shorter or longer coat styles within this range must have sufficient undercoat to cause the guard hairs to stand off from the back at about a 30° angle. Some Shibas have a very full and fluffy juvenile coat in the 6 to 9 month puppy class, but as an adult will carry the proper stiff and straight guard hairs. Even though a Shiba may have a very full coat as a puppy, a long or woolly coat is a serious fault at any time. ***Any trimming of the coat must be severely penalized.***

Colors: The preferred colors are red, sesame and black and tan with no favoritism given to any one color. All colors are clear and intense with a cream, buff or gray undercoat.

The cream undercoat is most common with the difference between cream and buff a matter of degrees and semantics. The undercoat of some black and tans and sesames may be somewhat tan, while the undercoat of some reds is almost white. The smoky gray undercoat is commonly found as an undercoat on the forehead, on the mid dorsal line of the back and tail, as a shading under the cream on the sides and neck and, occasionally, under the urajiro on the skirts and tail. Extensive gray undercoat, especially into the urajiro, is more common on younger dogs and may disappear after the dog sheds a couple times. This gray undercoat on the head is often partially responsible for the “widow’s peak” look on the forehead of a red that is shedding.

Urajiro: The word *urajiro* has already been mentioned a couple times without explanation. Since this is a term peculiar to the Shiba standard, it needs some definite explanation. It is a four-syllable word: **u/ra/ji/ro**. An adequate pronunciation would be *öö/rah/geel/roo*.

Loosely translated from the Japanese, *urajiro* means “undersurface white,” which is a pretty good description. All Shibas are required to have *urajiro* on the sides of the mouth and cheeks, on each undersection of the jaw, neck, chest and stomach and on the forechest, extending to the shoulder joint, but not onto the shoulder itself. *Urajiro* is also on the ventral side of the tail, insides of the legs and the inside of the ears. On black and tans and sesames, *urajiro* is commonly seen as somewhat triangular marks on either side of the forechest resembling a bow tie. It is occasionally seen on reds too. This bow tie shape is common and pleasant to see, but is not required as long as *urajiro* is present on the chest of all three colors. Light dots above the eyes are permitted on all colors but not required, except for the tan dots on the black and tans.