

The Shar Pei



The **Shar Pei**, or **Chinese Shar-Pei**, is a breed of dog known for its distinctive features of deep wrinkles and a blue-black tongue. The breed comes from China. The name (沙皮, pinyin: *shā pí*; English name probably derived from British spelling of the Cantonese equivalent, *sā pèih*) translates to "sand skin" and refers to the texture of its short, rough coat. As puppies, Shar Pei have numerous wrinkles, but as they mature, these wrinkles loosen and spread out as they "grow into their skin". Shar Pei were named in 1978 as one of the world's rarest dog breeds by *Time* magazine and the *Guinness World Records*, and the American Kennel Club did not recognize the breed until 1991.

Appearance

Small, triangular ears, and a high-set tail also give the Shar Pei a unique look. For show standard, "the tail is thick and round at the base, tapering to a fine point" (AKC standard February 28, 1998). As puppies, Shar peis are a lot more wrinkly than adults and, although some adults can be wrinklier than their puppy self, an adult pei should have wrinkles mostly on the face, a few on their shoulder and at the base of the tail. A muzzle shaped like hippopotamus (hippo).

Colors

Their pigmentation resemble the Chow Chow as they've been crossed before, probably giving them the same blue-black tongue. There are over sixteen recognized colors in AKC. The coat must be solid in color, and any Shar-Pei with a "flowered coat" (spotted) or black and tan in coloration (i.e. German Shepherd) is a disqualification. Colors include black, blue, cream, fawn, red-fawn, red, sable, apricot, chocolate, and isabella. The nose may be black or brick (pink with black), with or without a black mask. A Shar-Pei can also have what is called a "dilute" coloration. Meaning the nose, nails and anus of the dog is the same color as the coat, (i.e. chocolate coat with chocolate nose, nails and anus). All of these color variations are acceptable and beautiful, but the coat color must be solid and well blended throughout the whole body of the dog.



Temperament

The Shar Pei is often suspicious of strangers, which pertains to their origin as a guard dog. It is a very independent and reserved breed. Nevertheless, the Shar Pei is extremely devoted, loyal and affectionate to its family and is amenable to accepting strangers given time and proper introduction at a young age. If poorly socialized or trained, it can become especially territorial and aggressive. Even friendly and well-socialized individuals will retain the breed's watch dog proclivities (like barking at strangers). It is a largely silent breed, barking only when it is playing or worried. The Shar-Pei were originally bred as palace guards in China. The breed is amenable to training but can get bored from repetition. Overall, the Shar Pei can be a dog that is loyal and loving to its family while being very protective and independent



History

The Shar Pei breed comes from the Guangdong province of China. The original Shar-Pei from China looked very different from the breed now popular in the West. People in southern China, Hong Kong, and Macau differentiate the Western type and the original type by calling them respectively 'meat-mouth' and 'bone-mouth' Shar-Pei.

The ancestry of the Shar-Pei is uncertain. It may be a descendant of the Chow Chow; however, the only clear link between these is the blue-black tongue. However, pictures on pottery suggest the breed was present even in the Han Dynasty (206 BCE). A statue on display at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts dating from the second century C.E. depicts a dog that strongly resembles a modern Shar Pei. For many years, the Shar-Pei was kept as a general-purpose farm dog in the Chinese countryside, used for hunting, protecting and herding stock and guarding the home and family. During that time, the Shar-Pei was bred for intelligence, strength and scowling face. Recent genetic research has suggested the Shar-Pei is one of a few ancient dog breeds, believed to have split from common ancestors earlier than other breeds. By mapping subtle differences in each breed's genes, searching for patterns of relationships and designing a tree to fit them, they could finally gain insight into this marvel of evolutionary engineering. In 2004, the foundational analysis of purebred dog genetics was published in Science (<http://www.britainhill.com/GeneticStructure.pdf>). The resulting tree was profoundly asymmetrical. After wolves, just four groups sat its base: Asia's shar-pei, along with shiba inu, akita and chow chow; central Africa's basenji; malamutes from the Arctic, along with Siberian huskies and samoyeds; and from the Middle East, Afghan hounds and salukis.

Later, it was used for dog fighting. The loose skin and extremely prickly coat were developed originally to



help the Shar Pei fend off wild boar, as they were used to hunt. Dog fighters used these enhanced traits to make the Shar-Pei difficult for its opponent to grab and hold on to, and so that if it did manage to hold on, the Shar-Pei would still have room to maneuver and bite back. The Shar-Pei's most intriguing feature, in this respect, is that if one grabs them by any loose wrinkle, they can actually twist in their skin and face in one's direction. This trait was used in fighting as a means for them to fight back; they would be bitten and twist in their skin to bite back at the offender.

During the Communist Revolution, when the Shar Pei population dwindled dramatically, dogs were rescued by a Hong Kong businessman named Matgo Law, who appealed to Americans in 1973 through a dog magazine to save the breed. Around 200 Shar-Peis were smuggled into America. The current American Shar Pei population stems mainly from these original 200.

DNA analysis has concluded that the Shar Pei is one of the most ancient dog breeds.

Information found at en.wikipedia.org and google images