

SHIH TZU

A breed standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance including the correct colour of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function. Absolute soundness is essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be careful to avoid obvious conditions or exaggerations which would be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed. If a feature or quality is desirable it should only be present in the right measure. However, if a dog possesses a feature, characteristic or colour described as unacceptable, it must not be rewarded in the show ring.

Most recent changes to this Standard have an effective date of 01/01/2026

ORIGIN

Tibet (China). (Patronage: Great Britain)

UTILISATION

Companion dog.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

[ed. from FCI Breed Standard No. 208]

People tend to get confused between the Apso and the Shih Tzu, but there are a number of very distinct differences. Roots of this breed are in Tibet but it was developed in China, where dogs like these lived in the Imperial Palaces. China became a republic in 1912, after which examples of the breed found their way to the West, though the first recorded importation to Britain was not until 1931. It was recognised as a breed separate from other Oriental breeds in 1934 and granted a separate register by the Kennel Club in 1940, with challenge certificates on offer from 1949. The chrysanthemum look to the Shih Tzu's head is most appealing, and this is caused by the hair growing upwards on the bridge of the nose.

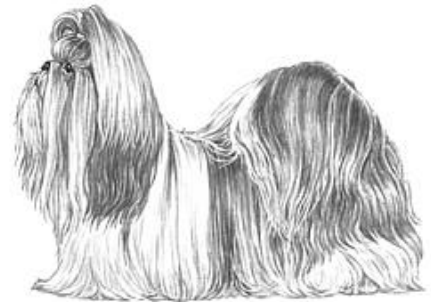


Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

GENERAL APPEARANCE

Sturdy, abundantly, but not excessively, coated dog with distinctly arrogant carriage and 'chrysanthemum-like' face.

CHARACTERISTICS

Intelligent, active, and alert.

TEMPERAMENT

Friendly and independent.

HEAD

Head broad, round, wide between eyes. Shock-headed with good beard and whiskers, hair growing upwards on the muzzle giving a distinctly 'chrysanthemum-like' effect. Not affecting the dog's ability to see. Muzzle of ample width, square, short, not wrinkled; flat, and hairy. Nose black but dark liver in liver or liver-marked dogs and about 1" (approx. 2.5cm) from tip to definite stop. Nose level or slightly tip-tilted. Top of nose leather should be on a line with, or slightly below, lower eye rim. Wide-open nostrils. Down-pointed nose highly undesirable, as are pinched nostrils. Pigmentation of muzzle as unbroken as possible.

Eyes:

Large, dark, round, placed well apart but not prominent. Warm expression. In liver or liver-marked dogs, lighter eye colour permissible. No white of eye showing.

Ears:

Large, with long leathers, carried drooping. Set slightly below crown of skull, so heavily coated they appear to blend into hair of neck.

Mouth:

Wide, slightly undershot or level. Lips level.

NECK

Well-proportioned, nicely arched. Sufficient length to carry head proudly.

FOREQUARTERS

Shoulders well laid back. Legs short and muscular with ample bone, as straight as possible, consistent with broad chest being well let down.

BODY

Longer between withers and root of tail than height of withers, well-coupled and sturdy, chest broad and deep, shoulders firm, back level.

HINDQUARTERS

Legs short and muscular, with ample bone. Straight when viewed from the rear. Thighs well-rounded and muscular.

FEET

Rounded, firm, and well-padded. Well-covered with hair.

TAIL

Heavily plumed, carried gaily well over back. Set on high. Height approximately level with the skull to give a balanced outline.

GAIT / MOVEMENT

Arrogant, smooth-flowing, front legs reaching well forward, strong rear action, and showing full pad.

COAT

Outer coat long, dense, not curly, with moderate undercoat, not woolly. Slight wave permitted. Hair not affecting the dog's ability to see. Length of coat should not restrict movement. It is strongly recommended that the hair on head is tied up without adornment.

COLOUR

- All colours permissible except merle, which is unacceptable.

* White blaze on forehead and white tip to tail highly desirable in parti-colours.

SIZE

Height at withers:

not more than 27cm (approx. 10½").

Breed characteristics of the utmost importance and on no account to be sacrificed to size alone.

Weight:

4.5kg – 8kg. Ideal weight 4.5kg – 7.5kg.

FAULTS

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog, and on the dog's ability to perform its traditional work.

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When judging this breed at FCI International Shows, use:

FCI Standard No. 208: SHIH TZU

FCI Classification: Group 9 – Companion and Toy Dogs.

Section 5.1. Tibetan breeds

Without working trial.