

About Siberian Huskies

The Siberian Husky is the smallest and fastest of the arctic sled dog breeds. It was developed by the Chukchi people of Siberia. A nomadic, hunting people, the Chukchi required a dog which could withstand both the extreme arctic winters and the warm Siberian summers; could work amicably as part of a large team; could pull light loads over long distances at moderate speed; and which could live happily in the tents and igloos with the Chukchi and their children. The Chukchi bred these dogs for some 3000 years. In the 1860's however, disaster struck and almost the entire population of Chukchi dogs were wiped out during the appalling famine of that time. The few remaining Chukchi dogs were bred with a variety of other native dogs and the result was the dog we now know as the Siberian Husky.

The breed started its new career as a working, racing, showing and pet dog after numbers were imported into the US, Canada and Alaska in the early years of the 20th Century, to work in the goldfields and compete in the developing sport of sled dog racing.

Siberians came to public prominence in 1925 when, amongst other sled dogs, they took part in the famous "Serum Run" race against time, to Nome, a remote coastal town in Alaska.

An epidemic of diphtheria had broken out and the only way of getting vaccine to Nome in the depths of the Alaskan winter was by dog sled.

Although many mushers and their dog teams took part in this heroic venture, history records that one man, Leonhard Seppala and his team of Siberian Huskies, played a pivotal role in its success. Seppala and his team ran more than six times as far as any other team – 340 miles in all—in the worst weather conditions that the Alaskan winter could throw at them. This feat of strength, stamina and fortitude, more than anything sums up the capabilities of the Siberian Husky.

Behind the beautiful exterior and friendly manner lie muscles of steel, a tireless spirit and a timeless desire to run.

The very first Siberians arrived in the UK in the 1940's, but it was not until the 1960's that more dogs were imported and their establishment as a breed here in the UK was assured.

Other sled dogs which can be seen in the UK today include Samoyeds, Canadian Eskimo Dogs, Greenland Dogs and Alaskan Malamutes. There are also a few Alaskan Huskies, but these are not purebred dogs, they are hybrids raised specifically for racing.

Siberian Huskies, to those who love the breed, are the most wonderful dogs in the world! They are not a dog for everyone however. Siberian huskies are not Labradors – they are an independent, 'primitive' breed which loves human company, but which is quite capable of surviving without it.



Their particular strengths and qualities sometimes make them difficult to live with. To start with, they are extremely clever escape artists. They can jump or climb over, dig under, eat through or break down most things you try to contain them with. They can be extremely destructive, although this is usually down to boredom - especially if left alone for long periods. Most huskies cannot be let off lead. They will run and run - not to get away from you, but simply for the pleasure of running (and maybe to get that cat or squirrel they just spotted!).

They are fierce and effective natural predators. During the summer, the Chukchi would let them loose to hunt for themselves and they have lost neither the instinct nor the ability. Life with cats and other small animals can sometimes be "interesting." Many Siberians come into rescue because they have killed cats but they were, literally, only doing what comes naturally.

Siberians are amazingly intelligent and can do anything a border collie can do (only better) - the difference is, a husky will perform a 'trick' once or twice and lose interest - a collie will carry on repeating it just to please its human!

On the positive side, Siberians are the most wonderfully affectionate and loving dogs you could ever hope to meet. Unconditional love is what they do best. Whether you are in a good mood, a bad mood, angry, depressed, ill or well, your husky will still love you and show it actively.



Although they are working dogs and really love to work, they are just as happy to take the occasional walk and live life as a couch potato. We often say that they have only two speeds - full speed and asleep!

Siberian Huskies are probably the world's worst guard dogs. They love everyone (including burglars) and will sell their soul for a cuddle or a tasty treat.

Their striking looks are sometimes their downfall as people are occasionally tempted to acquire a Husky without "doing their homework" on the breed. Then, later, when the puppy eats the sofa or destroys the garden, it is shunted off into rescue.

If you are tempted by a Husky, take some time to talk to other Husky owners before you take the big step into ownership. Huskies usually live to 15 at least. Are you willing to make a similar commitment to having a child???

Buying A Siberian Husky.....

If you decide a Siberian Husky is for you, how do you go about getting one? There are quite a lot of Siberian Husky breeders in the UK. Like most breeds the quality of dogs & breeders varies widely. Most breeders in the UK are reputable and responsible but some are not. Unfortunately to the inexperienced it is often difficult to tell the difference. There are several indicators you can use to check breeders out however.

Firstly, do they work and/or show their dogs. If not, why are they breeding? Most breeders breed litters to improve their stock for the show ring or the trail. If they are doing neither you have to assume that their main motivation is cash! - not the best reason for breeding dogs.

Secondly, how easy do they make it to buy a puppy? If you don't get the (friendly) third degree about your knowledge of the breed, the security of your garden & house etc. it is unlikely that they are a responsible breeder.

Thirdly, will they let you see the mum and dad and all their other dogs? You can learn a lot from the condition and temperament of the adult dogs in a breeder's kennel. On many occasions the breeder will have gone 'outside' for a mating so they won't actually own the stud dog, but they should be able to show you pictures, pedigree and health certification.

Fourthly, have they done the necessary health checks? Although as a breed, the Siberian Husky is very healthy, all responsible breeders will screen their dogs for hereditary defects. In particular, they should be checked for hip and eye defects. Ask if the parents of the puppies are tested and ask to see the results.

Fifthly, Will they expect you to sign a puppy contract in which you undertake to return the dog direct to the breeder if for any reason you cannot keep it? All responsible breeders will insist on this. **So** - that is what you look for in a breeder, but how do you find one?

One of the best ways is to visit large Championship Dog Shows and find the Siberian Husky benches. Here you will find a wide variety of Siberians, their owners and breeders. You will also be able to see loads of dogs and decide what 'type' of dog you would like. In the UK, Siberians range from the very slim sprint-racing dogs, through middle-of-the-road dogs who can succeed both in racing and showing (this is what we aspire to), to the US style Show dogs. You also need to decide whether you want a dog you can show and/or race as well as being a pet. At most big shows all types are represented. If you buy a catalogue you will have access to the addresses of all the husky owners at the show. Websites like www.pedigreedogs.co.uk have details of forthcoming shows in your area.

Similarly in the winter you can visit some of the racing events which happen all over the country.

Visit <http://www.snopeak.com> to find details of racing events near you.

You need to be extremely careful when choosing a breeder. The biggest safeguard you can have is doing your homework thoroughly before even approaching one. The fact that a breeder may be a member of the Siberian Husky Club of Great Britain or the Scottish Siberian Husky Club is no guarantee that the breeder is ethical. Nor is membership of the Kennel Club accredited breeder scheme. Over the years, we have come across some appalling puppy farmers who have been members.

You may have to wait to get the puppy you want as most reputable breeders only breed occasionally - If you are properly prepared, the wait will be worth it. The only problem then is you will want another, and another and another.....They are frighteningly addictive!!!