

Introduction

Kortmar Shiba Inu is Lyne Browning and Simon Kleyn.

I handle all the breed specific stuff and Simon makes sure we have the equipment and facilities to make it happen in a professional and practical way. Over this many years he has also absorbed a lot of information about the breed and will often form his own opinion — which doesn't always match mine! Simon is happy to go to shows, walk dogs, video and photograph but showing is seriously just NOT his thing!

Let me say up front that this is OUR handout – while it contains information from other sources, it is primarily about OUR experiences with the Shiba Inu over the last 10+ years and draws on the previous 20+ years with Alaskan Malamutes too. There are a lot of personality similarities between the breeds, hence why I moved from the Malamute to the Shiba as I got older and what I say may be MY OPINION and not the gospel about the breed according to other people – and that is ok – there is enough room for more than one opinion.

Now that we have fully retired (its taken almost 30 years but I am finally a full-time dog-mum!) Simon and I are home for puppies all the time (and in previous years, we couldn't have done it without the incredible support from my mum) and we welcome our Shiba Stay & Play guests and regular friends visiting during these times as well – our pups wouldn't be so well adjusted and well looked after without this whole team of love and support.



Kylie, Sarah and Georgia have also taken their turns at whelping and raising litters for me as well (and Selene and Dave & Doris might be up this coming year!) when we have had simultaneous litters – its all the parts of our incredible Kortmar team, showing, running on dogs for me, whelping litters for me – I am truly honored to work with all the fabulous people that are a part of our team in differing ways!

Talk to lots of people, meet lots of dogs and be very sure before you absolutely decide you want one – they are generally long lived so it's a long-term commitment.

These little dogs are super smart (mostly), can be challenging and feisty to live with, especially when interacting with other dogs and some are downright sneaky and opportunistic – they are NOT the breed for everyone but obviously I think they are a fantastic size, super clean and work equally well as active dogs in a backyard or as a couch-potato in an apartment.



Description

The Shiba Inu (柴犬) is the smallest of the six original and distinct Spitz breeds of dog from Japan.



Another way to visualize the size difference between the breeds is this:



A Spitz dog is any dog with prick ears, curly tail and a double coat – together with the Shiba Inu (Shiba) and the other Japanese Spitz, this includes breeds such as Siberian, Alaskan Malamute, Pomeranian, Chow Chow, Finnish and German Spitz and others.

The Shiba is generally acknowledged as the oldest of the Japanese breeds and it has been said that human remains from 3,000 BC were accompanied by canine remains that resembled the Shiba.

It looks similar to and is often mistaken for other Japanese dog breeds like the Akita Inu or Japanese Akita, but the Shiba is a different breed with a distinct blood line, temperament and smaller size than other Japanese dog breeds.







Name

Inu is the Japanese word for dog, but the origin of the prefix "Shiba" is less clear.

The word Shiba means "brushwood" in Japanese, and refers to a type of tree or shrub whose leaves turn red in the fall — this may mean that the Shiba was named with this in mind, either because the dogs were used to hunt in wild shrubs, or because the most common color of the Shiba is a red color similar to that of the shrubs — but another theory is that in an old Nagano dialect, the word Shiba means "small", referring to the dog's smaller stature.

The Shiba Inu is sometimes translated as "Little Brushwood Dog".





Hunting and Prey Drive

The Shiba was originally bred for hunting so this small, agile dog copes very well with mountainous terrain – they can jump when they choose too and climb if the desire takes them – it is a very individual preference.

We have a mix of 1200mm and 1800mm fences – some dogs would be contained with a 1m fence (they lack the desire or making the effort to get out) but others will climb – they can be remarkedly agile and more than a bit cunning.

I get pics of all fences before I allow a pup to go to a new home so I can check it out first – good fences with nothing up next to the fence that can be used to climb on is a must and consider that they might try to burrow under as well – some dogs will always think the grass is greener on the other side of the fence!

The hunting instinct may still be strong from dog to dog too – don't underestimate the prey drive for small animals and rodents and even for catching flies – although in my experience, they will tend to learn to live quite harmoniously with cats and often take over or share the "high" spots like the back of the couch, the table top or the cat perch.

Because they can tend to be aloof, very clean and like their personal space, I tend to say they are more a "cat dog".







(None of these are our dogs – thank you Google)

From a hunting point of view, we also have to recognize that this breed can be really REALLY possessive – about people and things. Not all Shiba Inu like toys and "treasures" but many do – sometimes this just translates to being ball obsessed (wanting to play fetch for hours and it might not really matter what state the ball or similar is now in) but for others it might mean toys, treats or other household objects or they might not want other people or dogs near you or members of the family.

Shiba Inu Property Laws

- 1. If I like it, it's mine.
- 2. If I saw it first, it's mine.
- 3. If it's in my mouth, it's mine.
- 4. If it looks like mine, it's mine.
- 5. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
- 6. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
- 7. If you have something and put it down, it's mine.
- 8. If I chew something up, all of the pieces are mine.
- 9. If it used to be yours, get over it.
- 10. If it's broken, it's yours.

With toys – Betty is obsessed with squeakers – in fact, we avoid her getting hold of anything with a squeaker in it if possible. When she first gets a toy, she systematically bites along every bit of it to see if there is a squeaker. If no squeaker, the toy, if well made, should

last a long time and be loved lots. If there is a squeaker, she will either surgically remove the squeaker (open up a seam to get it out) or she will chew on it so much that it breaks – we are talking within 5 minutes of her getting hold of something with a squeaker.

Betty will generally share her toys inside with others but it's mostly because she has so many (we go to the Op Shop several times a year to get a new batch for her and baby puppers) but even then, I wouldn't let little pups play with her toys while she is around — avoid the situation if possible. Her sister Ebony treats all her toys like babies — carries them outside and brings them back inside and gets quite agitated when they have been washed and sits there and watches them on the clothes line until she gets them back.

Teddy will systematically DESTROY everything he gets hold of and ANYTHING can become the new "treasure" which he will parade around in front of others, dangling it in their faces through the fence just so they know that he has something and they don't – usually with a whole lot of accompanying growling. This can deteriorate to quite a fierce fight over literally nothing and I will have to remove the offending bit of "stuff". As previously mentioned, Shibas can also be sneaky and out to cause trouble – Jack, who doesn't care a thing about "treasures", will grab something that Buddy might have dropped and parade outside his run with it on purpose – just to get a rise out of him (and it works).

A large piece of dry bed has been reduced to 10cm squares and each one of those pieces is just as valuable to parade around with in Teddy's eyes. Rope bones, old plastic bottles, an old thong – it doesn't matter – a new sack bed will last minutes or at best hours before he starts to destroy it and the "treasure" fetish seems to run in families – Buddy and Emmy (Teddy kids) are equally obsessed with "stuff".

If you see defensive "resource guarding", remove the item immediately and don't go down that path again — avoid situations rather than having to fix or deal with it later. I always put dogs away to feed them (never leave small children near a dog eating) and even with dogs I know that get along well, I will stand between them to stop one from going to the others bowl — even the best of friends will turn into fighting beasts if they think their food supply is under threat (or is being taken).

Treats like pig ears and stuff – if you have multiple dogs or little kids, make sure the dogs are locked away / separated or that the kids can't try and take it off them.

Some of our dogs also fence fight immediately after a meal – these are dogs that generally run the yard together with no issues – it's like a little "after dinner ritual" that they go through.

Biting – Shiba's can tend to be "bitey" when they are little, especially when teething. There is NO time that this is funny or acceptable – not one single time.

When you have a new puppy, if they are mouthy or biting you, simply grab and squeeze the muzzle (it's likely swollen and hurts while they are teething so it's effective) and a very firm NO.

You MUST control this / eliminate this as a youngster – **do not let them get away with it EVER** – if necessary, put them on their back and hold them there until they relax and submit.

Your Shiba may well be smarter than you or think they are – you must ALWAYS keep the upper hand and control the situation.



Temperament / Personality

Shibas tend to exhibit an independent nature and sometimes show dog aggression. This is more prevalent between female Shibas and is influenced by the breed's strong prey drive.

Some recommend that the Shiba Inu is best in a home without other small dogs or young children but like everything, we find this differs from dog to dog and have yet to know of a well-bred and socialized pup that wasn't good with at least its own family members.

Consistent obedience training and early socialization can make all the difference and if they want to please, they can be very easy to train – very smart and often food or treat/toy orientated.

One thing we don't personally recommend are dog parks – in our experience, Shiba's generally like to control who is in their space and that is pretty much impossible in a dog park - just too many other dogs in their personal space and they can feel overwhelmed. They may also not like other dogs getting close to you as they might well see you as their personal and exclusive property.

Shiba's like to meet another dog on their terms – they control the meeting and they control the level of interaction and they often consider themselves above other dogs. BUT some groups of Shiba's get together for regular successful social gatherings.

So, if you end up with a Shiba that is great in a dog park scenario – congratulations! If you don't, it's not a fault or a problem, it's a common reality with the breed. Shiba's are NOT always instantly sociable with others. I also do not advocate letting your dog sniff every other dog (or vice versa) while you are out walking – I always walk on a lead in a controlled manner and remember, most dogs will feel threatened/defensive if they are on a lead and are suddenly approached by a dog off lead – either bigger or smaller than them. Common sense is the key.

From the Japanese breed standard:

A spirited boldness, a good nature, and an unaffected forthrightness, which together yield dignity and natural beauty. The Shiba has an independent nature and can be reserved toward strangers but is loyal and affectionate to those who earn his respect. They can be aggressive toward other dogs.

The terms "spirited boldness" (悍威, kan'i), "good nature" (良性, ryōsei), and "artlessness" (素朴, soboku) have subtle interpretations that have been the subject of much commentary.



Appearance

I have included the breed standard used in Australia later in the handout but here are the more general attributes.

- The Shiba is an attractive small sized balanced dog generally 10kg =/- 10% (although mine tend to be a bit heavier than that) your dog is the right weight if you can feel the spine and the ribs with the flat of your hands if you have to go digging with your fingers or the dog "rolls" on the move, it's time to take some weight off.
- They are active and muscular with a strong constitution and generally a tough little dog. Shibas are generally pretty food motivated (although often less so with only a single dog) – if your Shiba suddenly goes off its food for no reason, you are best to get vet advice.
- They have small triangular eyes, dark brown and the corners are upturned an Oriental Eye is preferred.





• The ears are also relatively small and triangular and hooded – they should incline forward and be fully pricked – if a Shiba's ears do not come up, that would be a disqualifying fault in the show ring. Be a bit careful washing Shibas to ensure you don't get water in the ears – being a hooded ear, they can get ear infections if water gets in and stays in.





- They should have a scissor bite but as a pet, it's not an issue provided they can properly eat etc. An incorrect bite for the show ring is often why a potential show dog might suddenly become available for a pet home at around 6 months a good bite at 6-8 weeks can go "bad" (from a show ring point of view) and I have also seen a very overshot bite on a pup at 6 weeks, right up to 6 months that is now a scissor bite at 8 months of age.
- The back should be straight and strong with a deep chest, especially with mature males and legs tight and muscled.
- The tail should be high and thick and carried curled on the back or a sickle and should nearly reach the hocks when extended – a tail that is much too short is a disqualifying fault in the show ring. The hair on the tail is often longer than the rest of the coat and stands off.



- They have a light quick step often referred to as the Terrier of the Utility ring.
- The Shiba has a double coat with the outer coat harsh and the undercoat soft and thick.
- The size of a Shiba is that dogs are 40 cm (15¾ ins) and bitches are 37 cm (14½ins) at the withers there is tolerance of 1.5 cm (½ in) smaller or taller.
- Within the tolerance, a dog is 38.5cm to 41.5cm and a bitch is 35.5cm to 38.5cm.



Colours

Generally speaking, Shibas come in 4 colours – Red, Black and Tan, Sesame and White.



(not our dogs but a great representative of the 4 colours)

A red with black tipping on the coat is known as Sashige – it is not a sesame, it is still red.



All the above mentioned colours must have "Urajiro" which is the whitish coat on the sides of the muzzle and on the cheeks, on the underside of the jaw and neck, on the chest and stomach, on the underside of the tail, and on the inside of the legs.





"Urajiro" (裏白) literally translates to "underside white" – because of this, a White (Cream) coat is perfectly acceptable according to the British Kennel Club but it is not able to be shown or bred here in Australia, nor do I believe it is allowed to be shown in the USA.

I understand that some in Japan will breed with them (different schools of thought about what they add into a pedigree over other colours) but here, as the breed standard currently stands, all White/Cream pups are automatically on the Limited (Pet) Register.





We do have White running through our lines and have produced it. What is important to understand is that it must be present on both sides of the pedigree – so, for example, Ohchan does not carry it so even when he is mated to a bitch that carries White, he will not produce it – BUT, any or all of those pups might be carrying White and you wont know until they are mated to someone else carrying White.

Example – Betty carries White but never produced it – she had 3 litters – 2 x Ohchan and 1 x Buddy and neither of them carry it but she has produced pups from those litters that do produce it themselves in the next generation.



Cleanliness / Grooming

The Shiba is a relatively fastidious breed and feels the need to maintain itself in a clean state. They can often be seen licking their paws and legs, much like a cat and they will generally go out of their way to keep their coats clean.

Because they can be clean freaks, Shiba puppies are generally easy to housetrain and in many cases will housetrain themselves. We find our pups are already toilet training at 5-6 weeks of age – always put them outside as soon as they wake up or finish eating to do their business and then give them lots of praise for a job well done.

Our show dogs are likely washed and dried much more often than average dogs — if you have a dog living permanently in the house, I would recommend a bath once a month and maybe a bit more regularly when shedding. Although they are naturally waterproof, they still need washing if you have them in the house.

They have a thick undercoat that can protect them from temperatures well below freezing but like all Spitz breeds, they will shed – boys (entire and desexed) and desexed girls tend to shed according to the change of the seasons – an entire bitch will shed according to her own cycle. If hair bothers you in the house, regularly comb and bath them during this time to get the coat out fast.

Did I tell you already that they SHED? Seriously – hair comes out EVERYWHERE twice a year. If they are not desexed, they will literally drop down to the skin – it's like a whole dog comes out – expect several shopping bags full each time over about a 4-6 week period. It gets on your clothes, in your food, in your mouth and everywhere the dog lives.

I say twice a year, often the boys according to THE season and girls, according to THEIR season but others might also say twice a year – January to June and July to December!!



If you can't deal with not having a pristine house because there is hair around twice a year (or all year), seriously, don't get a Shiba.

A desexed coat may be thicker and require a bit more effort to get the old coat out and NEVER shave or cut the coat of Shiba Inu, as the coat is needed to protect them from both cold and hot temperatures. Do not use things like Furminators – they are essentially cutting the coat.

Stick with a comb.

Sometimes ours are washed weekly so as long as you use good shampoo and make sure you rinse it out properly, you can wash as much as you like. I recommend giving them a bath weekly when you first get a pup – get them used to the whole process while they are small so they are pretty casual about it once they have grown up a bit. Bathing an unwilling Shiba can be a lot like bathing a cat if they don't wish to participate.

Same deal with cutting nails — if you get on to it regularly when young, they should be ok but often Shibas don't like their feet being touched and nail clipping can be a whole new adventure and a side of your dog/puppy that you haven't previously seen. I prefer a Dremel for the adults — I find it easier to do little bits, often.

Oh-chan would take 3 of us to do his nails – one to hold him wrapped in a towel, one to hold his muzzle and stop any fighting feet and one to actually cut the nails – and through it, he would growl and be generally very pissed off at us but fine once it was over.

Often cutting nails (and you MUST persevere and don't forget the dew claws!) is when you will hear the "Shiba Scream". It differs from dog to dog but often when sufficiently provoked or unhappy, the dog will produce a loud, high pitched scream. This can occur when attempting to handle the dog in a way that it deems unacceptable. You will know yourself when the dog is acting out and screaming for little or no reason – for example, you are cutting nails and they are behaving like you have tied them to the clothes line and are beating them.... It's all noise and don't let them get to you or win!

You might also get a very similar sound during periods of great joy, such as the return of the owner after an extended absence, the arrival of a favored human guest or more daily basic stuff like dinner time or going for a walk. I find this is something that also follows in genetic family lines.

Health

Overall, the Shiba Inu is a healthy dog breed.

Health conditions known to affect this breed are allergies, glaucoma, cataracts, hip dysplasia, entropion, and luxating patella.

This is MY OPINION – I am NOT a vet and don't always agree with everything that is written and am entitled to form my own opinions based on my experiences.

Allergies – Sometimes I think it's the owner that needs the treatment more than the pet. I do know that some Shiba's suffer allergies and I am not dismissing those but wonder if some dogs are so mollycoddled that they are not in contact with all that general doggy type stuff that brings on allergies so then they react? I also believe that some owners diagnose via Google and tell vets what is wrong. I will leave that one to each of you to deal with if necessary and provide my feedback and advice on an individual basis as and if requested.

Patella's – many will only consider this to be genetic - I have cases of multiple dogs from the same litter having very differing results which brings that into question for me. I don't believe it is just genetic and believe there is sometimes an element of chance.

Different degrees of patella luxation are quite common in many small breeds and since many other Breeders don't test for it, it's hard to know how widespread it is. Same with hip and elbow x-rays – not all Breeders hip x-ray (historically it doesn't seem to be a problem in small dogs) so there isn't a lot of information publicly available to compare against. I use all my health grading information to assist me to make informed decisions – such as a dog with lessor hips being mated to a bitch with better hips – and the same with patella results.

If you do get patella issues, curb the exercise — if for any reason they come back limping from a walk, check for an injury and if none, consider that you might need to walk them less? Many things can contribute to hip and patella problems — such as too much exercise too young, rough play, accidents, lots of stairs, slippery floors and at the end of the day, it might also just come down to bad luck.

Shibas should be walked or otherwise exercised daily but note the weather and remember – some are happy with a stroll and others love being active.

Eye problems – we have regular eye testing in place, sparked by a puppy several years ago that had retinal detachment.

It is a congenital issue (she was born with it, not caused by an accident) and at 6 months, she was effectively blind. Neither we nor the vets picked up anything until almost 6 months of age so I am actively looking out for issues with puppies and its one reason I move the toys and tunnels in the Puppy Yard ②.

Life span

Their average life expectancy is 12 to 15 years.

The oldest known Shiba, Pusuke, died at age 26 in early December 2011 and was the oldest Shiba alive at the time.

History

The Shiba Inu has been identified as a basal breed that predates the emergence of the modern breeds in the 19th Century.

Originally, the Shiba Inu was bred to hunt and flush small game, such as birds and rabbits. Despite efforts to preserve the breed, the Shiba nearly became extinct during World War II due to a combination of food shortage and a post-war distemper epidemic.

All subsequent dogs were bred from the only three surviving bloodlines. These bloodlines were the Shinshu Shiba from Nagano Prefecture, the Mino Shiba from Gifu Prefecture, and the San'in Shiba from Tottori and Shimane Prefectures.

The Shinshu Shibas possessed a solid undercoat, with a dense layer of guard-hairs, and were small and red in color.

The Mino Shibas tended to have thick, prick ears, and possessed a sickle tail, rather than the common curled tail found on most modern Shibas.

The San'in Shiba's were larger than most modern shibas, and tended to be black, without the common tan and white accents found on modern black-and-tan shibas.

When the study of Japanese dogs was formalized in the early and mid-20th century, these three strains were combined into one overall breed, the Shiba Inu. The first Japanese breed standard for the Shiba, the Nippo Standard, was published in 1934.

In December 1936, the Shiba Inu was recognized as a Natural Monument of Japan through the Cultural Properties Act, largely due to the efforts of Nippo (Nihon Ken Hozonkai), the Association for the Preservation of the Japanese Dog.

Differences between Japanese Spitz Breeds

Akita Inu

Relatively large dog with a calm and balanced character. Akitas are intelligent and docile, their education, however, calls for an experienced breeder. This breed is named after the province of Akita, from which it comes. National Monument since 1931.



Kishu Inu

Sometimes called Kishu Ken. Coming from an old medium breed and is named after the region Kishu, now Wakayama Prefecture. This breed is similar to Hokkaido, Shikoku and Kai. Japanese breed originally used to hunt wild boar and deer. Coat color is mostly white. In Japan, it is still sometimes striped or red Kishu. They are courageous and brave as hunters. They are quite stubborn and headstrong, making it necessary training, they are loyal and faithful family. They can be reserved or shy to strangers. They are clean, intelligent and have a strong will. National monument since 1934.



Shikoku Inu

The rarest and most primitive of the Japanese breeds. Resembles a wolf, and legend has it that the breed has some wolf blood. This belief probably arose mainly from the appearance of the dog. It originates from the island of Shikoku. His movement is quiet and fast like a wolf. This property has been protected and preserved for their skills in hunting (mainly wild boar) in the mountains and hills of Shikoku. National monument since 1937.



Hokkaido Ken

Ken also called Ainu. It is a hunting breed, used for hunting bears and other wildlife. Their origin is tied to the history of the Ainu, the indigenous people of the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido. This breed of dogs played a major role in shaping other Japanese breeds, which passed its boldness, anger, loyalty and discretion. National monument since 1937.



Kai Ken

Rare breed. It is a medium-sized, wedge-shaped head and rough coat. It is known for its tiger fur. They are excellent hunters and wardens. They are devoted to their owners. National Monument since 1933.



Shiba Inu

Relatively small dog, but proportional, muscular, fox-like appearance, with small triangular ears and eyes, rolled over the back, or at least a sickle curved tail with short, dense hair, only the tail slightly long and standing. National monument since 1936.



Shiba Inu Breed Standard

The following description is taken from the FCI Standard No 257 – adopted in Australia 1 January 1994 and the April 1995 revision was adopted in Australia in October 1995.

- A small sized dog, well balanced, well boned with well developed muscles.
- Constitution strong. Action quick, free and beautiful.
- Important Proportions: The ratio of height at withers to length of body is 10:11 (slightly longer than tall).
- Temperament: The temperament is faithful, with keen senses (sensitive), and high alertness.
- Head & Skull: The forehead broad, cheeks well developed, and stop defined with slight furrow. The nasal bridge straight and the nose black in colour desirable. The muzzle moderately thick and tapering. The lips tight.
- Eyes: Relatively small, triangular and dark brown in colour; the corners of the eyes are upturned.
- Ears: Relatively small, triangular, slightly inclining forward and firmly pricked.
- Mouth: The teeth strong with scissor bite.
- Neck: Thick, strong, and well balanced with the head and the body.
- Forequarters: General appearance: Seen from the front, forelegs straight.
- Shoulders: Shoulder blade moderately sloping.
- Elbows: Tight.
- Body: Back straight and strong; loin broad and muscular. Chest deep, ribs moderately sprung, belly well drawn up.
- Hindquarters: Upper thighs long, lower thighs short but well developed. Hocks thick and tough.
- Feet: Toes tightly closed and well arched. Pads hard and elastic. Nails hard and dark in colour desirable.
- Tail: Set on high, thick, carried vigorously curled or curved as a sickle, the tip nearly reaching hocks when let down.
- Gait/Movement: Light and brisk.
- Coat: Hair: Outer coat harsh and straight, undercoat soft and dense; hair on tail slightly long and standing off.
- Colour: Red, black and tan, sesame, black sesame, red sesame.
 Definition of the colour sesame: Sesame Equal mixture of white and black hairs. Black sesame More black than white hairs. Red sesame Ground colour of hair red, with mixture of black hairs.
- All the above mentioned colours must have "Urajiro". "Urajiro" = whitish coat on the sides of the muzzle and on the cheeks, on the underside of the jaw and neck, on the chest and stomach, on the underside of the tail, and on the inside of the legs.
- Sizes: Height at withers:
 - o Dogs 40 cm (15¾ ins)
 - o Bitches 37 cm (14½ins)
 - o There is a tolerance of 1.5 cm ($\frac{1}{2}$ in) smaller or taller.

- 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.
- Particular Faults:
 - o 1. Shyness
 - o 2. Bitchy dogs, doggy bitches.
 - o 3. Malocclusion (overshot or undershot mouth)
 - o 4. Numerous teeth missing.
- Disqualifying Faults:
 - o 1. Ears not pricked.
 - o 2. Hanging or short tail.



Information Sources:

ANKC - FCI Standard No 257

Wikipedia

Pinterest / Google

