

# **Practical Guide for the Chinese Shar-Pei**

(Revised June, 2006)



**Furnished to you by:**

**Centennial Chinese Shar-Pei Club**  
**Denver, Colorado**  
*Serving the Rocky Mountain Region*

## Practical Guide for the Chinese Shar-Pei

The Chinese Shar-Pei is a guard dog. They are a very loyal dog and an excellent family dog. They are sweet and loving dogs, but because of the natural character of the dog, they are usually very stand-offish when first introduced.

There is a misconception about the character of the dog. Some of the early Shar-Pei from the 1970's did have a nasty temperament, but breeders have worked very hard to breed that out. It would be a very rare exception to find a Shar-Pei now with a bad temperament. However, their basis instinct is to guard the family. As with any of the guard dog breeds, it is important to always approach a Shar-Pei from the front so that they can see you approaching. Approaching the dog from the front is always the best way to come up to the dog. There are several reasons for this.

1. You always want to be sure that the dogs sees you coming.
2. Because of the wrinkling by the Shar-Pei's eyes, it is possible that their side vision is blocked by the skin folds.
3. Some of the older dogs may have ear infections or can be hard of hearing, and cannot hear you approaching, so it is important that they can see you as you come up to them.

Shar-Pei are very loyal to their families, and it takes them some time to adjust to a new environment. As a

general rule, allow a dog anywhere from 3 to 7 days to adjust to a new environment.

When introducing yourself to a Shar-Pei, it is not a good idea to stare them directly into the eyes. To a guard dog this is a threatening stance, and puts them on guard. A much better way to approach a Shar-Pei is to put your hand out by their nose, and let them smell you first. Watch the tail. If the tail is wagging, then you are accepted. If the tail is down, then do not approach the dog any further as they are not ready to accept you. Talk to them in a friendly voice, and wait for the tail to come up before you approach the dog any further. If the tail doesn't come up, try offering them some treats while you talk to them. Keep an eye on the tail, as that is a good indication as to whether you are accepted or not. Once you have won the trust of a Shar-Pei, you will have a loyal friend for life.

You may encounter a Shar-Pei with an ear infection. You can usually tell by looking at the dog. The natural placement of the Shar-Pei's ears is on the top of the head with the tip of the triangle of the ear pointing towards the eyes. When they have ear infections, the ears hang down lower, and point more towards the ground. A dog with an ear infection needs to have that taken care of, as it causes the dog some discomfort. There can also be a noticeable smell coming from the ears of a dog with an infection. To clear up the infection, clean the ears with a good cleaner, such as Nolvasan Otic or DermaPet Ear Cleanser. Once the ears are clean, a twice daily treatment with Tresaderm.....5 drops in each infected ear..... for several days will usually clear it up.

Another problem that you may encounter with a Shar-Pei is entropion of the eye lids. The eye lids are turned in towards the eyeball so that the lashes are rubbing against

the eyeball and this can cause a lot of discomfort to the dog. An untrained people can see this problem by looking at the eyes. There is very often squinting of the eyes. Tears can be coming from the eyes, as well as a discharge. Depending on how severe the problem is, you can treat it with Lacrilube or an antibiotic eye ointment several times a day. If the problem is very severe it will need corrective surgery to fix the problem.

Shar-Pei have nails that grow very fast. If you see a dog with trimmed nails, it is a pretty good indication that the dog belongs to someone that would like them back. It is also a good indication that the dog has a good temperament. Generally Shar-Pei do not like to have their nails trimmed. The most common way that they show this is to try to get out of your grip, or to keep moving their leg so you can't cut the nail. It takes some training to get a Shar-Pei used to having his nails clipped. As a general rule, a Shar-Pei should have their nails clipped and their ears cleaned once a week.

Another characteristic feature of the Shar-Pei is a blue-black tongue. If a dog does not have the blue-black tongue, there is a chance that it may not be a pure-breed Shar-Pei. Some pure-breed Shar-Pei may have pink spots on their tongues, but you should not see a solid pink tongue. The lighter colored dogs such as apricot, cream, and even the chocolate color are dilutes, and their tongues may appear lighter in color, especially when they are hot. The dilutes may have lighter colored eyes, and instead of dark brown, they may have a green color to them.

A very experienced Shar-Pei person could make a judgment on temperament of a dog quickly. However if you are not a very experienced person, I would allow a 3 day transition period for adjustment, before you make a decision on the temperament of the dog. Almost all Shar-

Pei can make the adjustment from one family to another, but since they are very loyal family dogs, they need to be allowed time to make the adjustment. Once the adjustment is made, you will have a very loyal pet. If you are trying to make a judgment on the temperament of a Shar-Pei and are not very experienced with them, it might be best to call a local club and have a member come make the judgment for you. Usually you will find that most local clubs are more than willing to do that, if you will give them the chance.

This is written to give you a quick guide to the Shar-Pei. It is written mainly as a guide for Shelters to evaluate a dog that they may get in their program. It certainly is not a comprehensive guide. It is suggested that you use this guide for a quick evaluation. It is also recommended that you call the local club to have a knowledgeable person come out and make an evaluation if you have any doubts as to breed or temperament.

Denver's local club is the **Centennial Chinese Shar-Pei Club, Inc.** The contact person for club rescue is:

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Longmont, CO 80501  
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## General Information for the Chinese Shar-Pei

Without a doubt, the Chinese Shar-Pei is one of the most unique looking breed in the canine world. The animals' unusual appearance, personality and reputation as a "rare breed" are among the many reasons for its amazing popularity. These attractions should be examined.

From its hippo-like face and furrowed brow to its over abundance of skin, the Shar-Pei is both comical and irresistible. Most of the puppies are wrinkled, and as they grow into adulthood, many of the body wrinkles disappear, leaving folds on the neck, face and back. The small, tight ears, deeply set eyes, huge muzzle and short coupled body round out the Shar-Pei's features. The name Shar-Pei means "sandy-coat" and refers directly to the texture of the hair. The coat can range from extremely short and stiff ( **a horse coat** ) to longer and thicker ( **a brush coat** ). There is a third coat that sometimes shows up in Shar-Pei, which is called **a bear coat**. It looks more similar to a chow coat.



Horse coat



Brush Coat



Bear coat

The coat was developed to irritate the mouth of its opponents and can cause a mild skin irritation to some

people when handling the dog. If you develop a rash when touching a Shar-Pei, it will disappear within 30 minutes after contact. Only solid colored coats are acceptable in the show ring. Colors vary from fawn, black, chocolate, sable, red, apricot, cream and blue.

The “endangered breed” status the Shar-Pei has enjoyed has also added much to its popularity. The story of the breed’s rescue is indeed fascinating. Chinese Shar-Pei began to arrive in the United States from Hong Kong in 1973 after Matgo Law, a Hong Kong dog breeder, made a plea for the breed’s survival. He viewed U.S. dog lover’s as the best hope of avoiding possible extinction of a breed whose numbers were dwindling in its native country. From a limited number of dogs imported throughout the 1970’s and subsequently bred, the total number of dogs registered in 2002 now exceeds well over 100,000. This tremendous popularity and the dog’s reputation as the “dog of the nineties” has spawned many thousands of owners and breeders. It is owners and breeders, who together form the foundation of the national and local Shar-Pei clubs, that are continuing to perfect the breed. With greater numbers of high quality dogs available, the true Shar-Pei enthusiast has the opportunity to build foundation stock of sound animals by breeding and purchasing dogs with solid backgrounds and NOT merely for fad and appearance.

## **HISTORY OF THE SHAR-PEI**

The Chinese Shar-Pei is believed to date back to the Han Dynasty of 206 B.C. Likeness statues of the Shar-Pei, which can be dated to that era, have been found. This ancient Chinese breed is thought to have originated in the area around the small village of Tai-Lin in the Kwangtung Province, and has existed for centuries in the southern provinces. Only one other breed, the Chow Chow, shares the unique blue-black tongue of the Shar-Pei breed. Establishment of a common ancestor is difficult, but it may be that the two breeds are related.

Research since re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States in 1972 has not discovered any prior records of the breed in China. Following the formation of the People's Republic of China as a communist nation in the 1950's, the dog population of China was essentially eliminated. No dogs were seen in the cities and few dogs remained in the countryside. During this time a few Chinese Shar-Pei were bred in Hong Kong, BCC and in the Republic of China (Taiwan). Some breeders crossed the Shar-Pei with other breeds to produce a fighting dog.

The breed was recognized and registered by the Hong Kong Kennel Club until 1966 when they discontinued registration of the breed. Subsequently, the Hong Kong and Kowloon Kennel Association established a registry for the breed. Taiwan, Japan and Korea, together with some European countries now include the Chinese Shar-Pei in their dog registries. A few Shar-Pei were imported into the United States as early as 1966, but it wasn't until 1973 when Matgo Law made his famous appeal to "save the Chinese Shar-Pei" that American dog fanciers really

became interested in the breed. The first dogs from Matgo Law arrived in the U.S. in the Fall of 1973.



A photo of old pricked ear Chinese Fighting Dog from 1960's  
From: <http://www.hkshar-pei.com/>

The first organizational meeting of the Chinese Shar-Pei Club of America was held in 1974 and the club has been in continuous existence since that time.

In July, 1985 the Shar-Pei was recognized by the United Kennel Club. In May, 1988 the breed was accepted by the AKC and placed in the Miscellaneous Group. In May, 1992 the Chinese Shar-Pei became the 134<sup>th</sup> breed to be recognized by the AKC and was placed in the Non-Sporting Group. Oddly enough, the Shar-Pei was again recognized by the Hong Kong Kennel Club in May, 1988. By now the breed has also been approved by the Federation Canine Internationale (FCI), the world governing body on pure-bred dogs.

## **Websites for information about the Chinese Shar-Pei:**

[www.cspca.com](http://www.cspca.com) The National club for Shar-Pei

[www.drjwv.com](http://www.drjwv.com) Health and care issues

[www.centennialsharpeiclub.org](http://www.centennialsharpeiclub.org) Local club serving the Rocky Mountain region

## **Suggested Reading For Further Information**

“THE CHINESE SHAR-PEI” by Strand and Olsen,  
Denlinger’s Publications, Ltd: Fairfax,VA 1980

“THE COMPLETE DOG BOOK” official publication of the  
American Kennel Club, Inc.: New York, New York;  
Howell House; 17<sup>th</sup> Edition

“THE BARKER” official publication of the Chinese Shar-  
Pei Club of America, Inc.; Marge Callthorp, Editor  
P.O.Box 241; East Haddam, CT 06423

“THE CHINESE SHAR-PEI” by Ellen Weathers Debo;  
TFH Publications; Neptune City, NJ 1986

“THE GUIDE TO THE CHINESE SHAR-PEI” by Wood  
and Straus; Can be ordered from Debbie Theodore,  
374 W. Angela St. Pleasanton, CA 94566 E-Mail:  
[sharpei@comcast.net](mailto:sharpei@comcast.net)

“THE CHINESE SHAR-PEI VETERINARY MANUAL” by  
A. Tate RN and J. Jakubowski, DVM; Medea Publishing  
Co., Inc.

“THE CHINESE SHAR-PEI PUPPY BOOK” by Jo Ann  
Redditt; Orient Publications; Can be ordered from  
Orient Publications; 3510 Washington Ct.,  
Arlington, VA 22302 E-mail: [orientpub@aol.com](mailto:orientpub@aol.com)

“UNDERSTANDING THE CHINESE SHAR-PEI” by Jo  
Ann Redditt; Orient Publications; Can be ordered  
from Orient Publications; 3510 Washington Ct.,  
Arlington, VA 22302 E-mail: [orientpubl@aol.com](mailto:orientpubl@aol.com)

“SHAR-PEI” by Anna Katherine Nicholas; TFH  
Publications, Inc.; Neptune City, NJ 07753

“BASIC GUIDE TO THE CHINESE SHAR-PEI” by Kandi  
Stirling; Dace Publishing; Qunique VA 22965

“THE COMPLETE CHINESE SHAR-PEI” by Dee  
Gannon; Howell Book House, Inc.; New York, New  
York 10169

Please see the full CSPCA Suggested Reading List listed  
on [www.cspca.com](http://www.cspca.com), under the publications button.

This book is being furnished to you by the Centennial Chinese Shar-Pei Club of Denver, Colorado. We hope that you found it helpful in understanding the Chinese Shar-Pei. This club was formed for the betterment of the breed. The main purpose is to promote the health and well-being of the Chinese Shar-Pei. If you would like to send a donate for our rescue program or would like information on rescue or membership, please contact:

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