

# HISTORY OF THE SHAR-PEI

Provided by the Centennial Chinese Shar-Pei Club

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 Providence, 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.

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 be 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

## General Information for the Chinese Shar-Pei

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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 up to 1" in length ( **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.

The coat was developed to irritate the mouth of it's 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.

The Shar-Pei makes a very devoted and loyal family member. They are very easily house trained, and get along great with kids.