

# IS A CHOW CHOW THE BREED FOR YOU?

Compiled by the late Joann Williamson on behalf of the Chow Chow Breed Council



The fluffy, adorable 8-week-old Chow Chow puppy becomes a strong and wilfully independent dog in a few short months. Although the Chow is highly intelligent and extremely loyal to his owner, his strong will makes him a challenge ideally suited to an owner prepared to give him both time and patience. He is serious, dignified, and proud.

## 1. HISTORY OF THE CHOW CHOW

The Chow is one of the oldest recognisable types of dog (dating back more than 3000 years). Originally from Mongolia, the Chow was used for guarding temples in China, hunting and herding. Today, the Chow is primarily a companion dog.

## 2. APPEARANCE

- a) **ROUGH:** The Chow is a short, compact, squarely built dog with an abundant outer coat particularly thick around the neck giving a lion-like mane and a soft woolly undercoat. It has a blue/black tongue and as a pup 44 rather than the normal 42 teeth. The tail is curled over its back and its straight back legs give it a unique stilted gait.
- b) **SMOOTH:** This is identical to the rough except for the coat which should be short, abundant, dense, straight, and upstanding (not flat) and plush-like in texture.

## 3. TEMPERAMENT

Extremely loyal, dignified, aloof, discerning and proud, the Chow has an independence more often found in a cat than a dog. They prefer to be greeted with a hand (to see and smell) just below their nose and not a pat on the head from above or behind. Their reputation as a one-man dog is misunderstood. Although they take to one person, they will readily accept other members of the family. They are initially wary of strangers but if rehomed will, with a bit of patience, learn to trust their new owner.

## 4. CHARACTERISTICS

- a) **GUARDING** - possibly because of the role of their early ancestors most Chows are excellent guard dogs only barking when there is something to bark at. They are particularly protective of their owners and 'their' children.
- b) **CHASING** - due to their basic hunting instincts they will chase, and if in a pack (2 or more) will kill sheep, squirrels, cats or anything else given the opportunity. They do not chase sticks/balls – 'you threw it, you go and get it!'

## 5. BEHAVIOUR WITH:

- a) **OTHER ANIMALS** - A Chow will rarely start a fight with other dogs but is more than able to defend itself if attacked and will always remember what attacked it. Most puppies have a healthy respect for other dogs and cats if introduced to them when very young.
- b) **CHILDREN** - Chows are very good with children if brought up with them and are particularly protective of 'their' children. However it is essential that young children are always supervised with any dog and children should never be left alone until they have been taught to respect animals and not frighten or hurt them.

## 6. COLOURS

The most common colours are red and black. Chows can also be blue (as in Persian cats), fawn and cream (with or without biscuit-coloured ears).

## 7. DOG OR BITCH AND A SECOND CHOW DOG OR BITCH

This is down to personal preference and whether the dogs can be kept separately (e.g. during seasons). Both are affectionate but equally obstinate.

## 8. EXERCISE

Chows are compact, heavily-built dogs and should not be encouraged to jump up or race up and down stairs, as this can lead to injury to their straight hind legs. They can run fast over short distances. They love to play in the snow, enjoy dry cold weather and will happily lie outside for hours on end provided they have somewhere to shelter as most Chows dislike getting their feet wet and are reluctant to go out in the rain. Chows do not require a lot of exercise but are always interested in going for walks and enjoying new smells. Puppies should be able to play in the garden and have short (10 minute) walks twice a day until they are a year old when the length of walk can be increased.

It is important not to let Chows get too hot. In summer, walk early in the morning or in the cool of the evening. Chows have no road sense and will happily walk down a motorway with traffic dodging either side of them. As a result it is unwise to let them off the lead, other than in an enclosed space, until you are confident they can be recalled and will return on command

## 9. FEEDING

At eight weeks Chow puppies require 4 nourishing, good quality meals a day, with a limited amount of red meat. The breeder should give you a diet sheet detailing the type and quantity of food. They do not normally overeat and should be fed to appetite. Increase the volume of food as the Chow grows. From about 12-14 weeks reduce the number of meals to 3 but increase the quantity until approximately 6 months, after which two meals a day are sufficient but again increasing the quantity. It is not recommended to give any dog 'tit-bits' but a few hard biscuits can be given to assist in keeping teeth clean and as a bedtime or breakfast treat. Household 'leftovers' particularly vegetables and fish can be added to the Chow's main meal. **Never give cooked bones and always make sure there is plenty of fresh, clean water available to drink.**

## 10. GROOMING



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

Most Chows do not like to get their feet wet but they do enjoy being clean and groomed. Some Chows dribble when excited and it is important to dry the hair on the chest regularly so the skin doesn't become sore and inflamed.

Your Chow will always look good with a thorough brushing once a week with a slicker brush down to the skin and a 10-minute tidy up session in between. There will also be little, if any, shedding of hair twice a year when they change coat. Care should be taken not to drag the soft undercoat out. Tangles should be teased out and special attention paid to the thick hair on the back of the legs and the hindquarters and the soft fine hair behind the ears.

Bathing – puppies can be bathed from 8 weeks onwards in a mild dog shampoo making sure to rinse thoroughly and being careful not to get soap in their eyes or water in their ears.

## 11. HEALTH

For your own peace of mind it is advisable to take your puppy to a vet close to your home as early as possible for a check-over and any inoculations/worming that may be due as advised by the breeder.

- a) **INOCULATIONS:** Most vets start inoculations at 8 weeks with a follow-up at 10 weeks and then once a year after that. Do not take puppy out in public until your vet advises his inoculation programme is complete.
- b) **WORMING:** Puppies should be wormed for roundworms every two weeks until twelve weeks old or free of worms then wormed monthly until six months of age. It is recommended that adult dogs should be wormed at least twice a year and preferably four times if you have children or you live where there are farm animals. Your breeder will tell you when puppy was last wormed and what with and your vet will advise what further worming is necessary. It is important never to worm and treat for insects within 3 days of each other.

There is no breed without health problems. Generally Chows are healthy and stoic and live 12/14 years. The following are the exception rather than the rule as all reputable breeders aim to eradicate poor health issues. However your Chow may encounter the following: -

**Entropion** (eyelids that turn in) can require an operation to remove the offending excess skin but providing no damage is being caused to the actual eye your vet may wish to wait until the head has fully developed before operating as the condition can correct itself, when the Chow's head grows. However Chows often have wet eyes, if teething as pups, or when stressed, or in windy conditions, or occasionally when the tear ducts are blocked.

**Eczema/ hot spots** Chows are inclined to get this particularly in warm weather and may chew their coats. If this occurs and they cause a sore area it is essential to clean this and let the air get to it so that it will heal. If the coat pulling and itching persists and no parasites are present (fleas are very rare on Chows), a change of diet to less meat or a lower protein food may solve the problem.

**Bloat** In common with any deep chested breed the adult Chow is prone to bloat (excess air in the stomach), which can cause the stomach to swell rapidly and twist painfully and can be fatal if veterinary attention is not sought immediately. It can be caused by food swelling in the stomach therefore an adult Chow should be fed two smaller meals rather than one large meal and any biscuit mix should be thoroughly soaked.

**Cruciate ligament** As in any breed of dog, jumping or turning quickly can damage the ligaments in the knee.

**Breathing** Some Chows (usually the heavier headed ones) suffer from breathing problems, particularly in warm weather, and if your Chow appears to struggle for air it might be wise to consult your vet. This should not be confused with the grunting noises a Chow makes when it is talking to you.

**Hip Dysplasia** This can affect all breeds and occurs where the ball joint doesn't fit snugly into the socket. This hereditary condition can lie dormant for several generations but high-scoring parents increase the likelihood of high-scoring progeny so check that the parents have low scores.

**Heatstroke** – Again this affects all breeds but particularly heavy-coated ones like the Chow. Never leave a Chow in a car on a hot day – even if the windows are left open and the car is parked in the shade the Chow's heavy coat can result in him overheating and dying. Sometimes an otherwise perfectly healthy dog may get overheated in hot weather or due to stress. This can cause heat stroke and immediate action is needed to cool the Chow down. The easiest method is to stand or sit the Chow in a quantity of cold (not icy) water with a cold, wet towel on his head, until its body temperature drops. Also seek urgent veterinary attention.

Your veterinary surgeon is there to help if you think that your Chow has any serious problems, but careful checking of the dog regularly will often prevent costly visits to the vet as so many things can be prevented before they become serious.

## 12. INSURANCE

Pet insurance is recommended but shop around as policies vary – some have high excesses, exclude preventative treatments such as worming, vaccination, neutering, pregnancy related, have limits per ailment or limits per year and do not cover dogs over 7 years of age.

### **13. LEADS, EQUIPMENT ETC.**

Your puppy will require a lead and a rolled leather collar so that the fur round puppy's neck doesn't get damaged. Make sure it is tight enough so that he doesn't slip out when pulling. He will also need a food bowl, a water bowl, a pin brush and a metal comb. Puppy will also appreciate a soft toy for in the house and a large rubber toy for outside.

### **14. SLEEPING**

Whilst your puppy is growing he will need a lot of sleep. Puppy should have his own resting place with a blanket and children should be told not to disturb puppy when he is resting in his bed. Chows enjoy being outside during the day but it is important that they have a shaded place to retire to sleep.

### **15. HOUSE TRAINING**

One of the cleanest of all breeds, the Chow is easy to house-train. They have many mannerisms of the cat and will often clean their own feet etc. Chow puppies are very clean and barring the occasional accident are often house-trained by eight weeks. Puppy should be put into the garden whenever he wakes up and after each meal. If newspaper is placed near whichever door he uses to go into the garden, puppy will use this at night

### **16. TRAINING**

Patience is needed to train a Chow but the basics can be taught and a well-behaved dog is so much easier to live with than an unruly big dog you cannot rely upon. A Chow puppy is very adorable but training must begin from the day you take him home, and often requires plenty of firmness.

It's never too late to train your Chow, but if he learns bad habits and then you try to change him, it is twice as much work for you. Re-training can be achieved with an older Chow but it is a much slower process and some habits are extremely difficult to break. With the exception of house-training, Chows are not the easiest breed to train as they are very independent. Adult males in particular are very strong; therefore it is essential to train your Chow not to pull on the lead whilst he is still small enough to control. Although Chows learn fairly easily, they seem to say 'what's in it for me' before they will comply with your requests. As a result as soon as you get your puppy he should be taught basic things like standing on a table to be brushed and being led round the garden with his collar and lead on. As soon as his inoculations are complete, local training classes are ideal as puppy can then meet other dogs and people and be socialised at the same time as learning to be well behaved. If your Chow is particularly boisterous you may find other forms of training, e.g. dancing to music or basic agility, gives the Chow an interest and helps to use up its excess energy. If planning to show **your Chow** discuss **this** with your breeder and attend ringcraft classes. If there are only obedience classes in your area explain to the tutor that you do not want your Chow to sit whenever you stop, as he needs to stand in the show ring.

### **17. CHOW BREED COUNCIL/ CLUBS**

There are **9** Clubs for the breed in the UK, **all** of which are members of the Chow Chow Breed Council. The Breed Council is particularly committed to safeguarding and improving the health status of the breed and trying to reduce the incidence of hereditary disease. Membership of the Clubs is not expensive and ensures you will receive schedules of the Club shows if you wish to show your Chow or just to enable you to go along and meet other Chows and their owners. The Officers of the Chow Breed Council are:

#### **CHAIRMAN**

Mr. Thomas Oakley  
Tel: 01159 733199

#### **VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Mr David Robbins  
0191 4105290

#### **SECRETARY**

Mrs. Claire Merrion  
Tel: 01480 466352

#### **TREASURER**

Mrs Andrea Douse  
01933 418939

The Secretaries of each member Chow Chow Clubs are: -

**The Chow Chow Club,  
Mr J Kirby,  
01928 833916**

**Chow Chow Club of Scotland  
Mrs C Maxwell  
01250 884223**

**Chow Chow Club of Wales  
Mrs B. Phillips,  
01594 516548**

**Chinese Chow Club,  
Mrs A. Douse  
01933 418939**

**Midland Chow Chow Club  
Mrs P. Godber  
01773 744634**

**National Chow Chow Club  
Miss G. Claxton  
01487 840644**

**Northern Counties Chow Chow Club  
Miss A.M. Foy  
07919 145062**

**North Eastern Chow Chow Club  
Mrs V. Ellis  
07508 562930**

**West of England Chow Chow Club  
07974 097487**

## **18. CHOW RESCUE**

Chows often require new homes through NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN (death of their owners or broken marriages). Most Chows adapt extremely well to their new home and owner, given a little patience. If you feel you would like to give a rescue Chow in need a home contact the Chow Chow Breed Rescue Co-ordinator, Sheila Jakeman, on Tel: 01608 658491 **Chow Chow Club of Scotland Mrs Doreen Lindsay on Tel: 01563 821676**

## **19. THE BREEDER SHOULD:**

- a) Ask you a lot of questions to ensure you are right for their puppy.
- b) Adhere to K.C. guidelines regarding maximum age and frequency/number of litters.
- c) Introduce you to the dam (and possibly the sire) of the puppy.
- d) Give you a copy of the Pedigree immediately.
- e) Give you a copy of the Kennel Club Registration within a month.
- f) Give you a receipt/contract clarifying the terms of the sale (insurance/inoculations/K.C. registration/breeding restrictions).
- g) Give you a diet sheet and a small quantity of the food puppy is used to.
- h) Advise you about any worming or inoculations puppy has had.
- i) Show you how to socialise, groom and care for your puppy.
- j) Encourage you to contact them if you have any concerns at all once you take puppy home or help to re-home if for any reason you are unable to keep the puppy.
- k) Permanently identify pup by microchip, tattoo or DNA profile.

## **20. THE CHOW IS NOT FOR YOU IF YOU:**

- a) Expect blind obedience.
- b) Do not have the time and patience to socialise and train it.
- c) Enjoy trekking up hills for miles every day.
- d) See a dog as an appendage to the household to be left alone for long periods and occasionally made a fuss of when you have some spare time.
- e) Are not prepared for the responsibility and serious commitment required during the 10-14 years of the dog's life (e.g. picking up and disposal of faeces – now required by law in all public places).
- f) Are not prepared to wait for a puppy – Chows do not sit gift-wrapped on a shelf waiting for a buyer

## **21. BEFORE FINALLY DECIDING ON A CHOW**

Read Books on Chows (check the Internet or your local library).

Attend shows and speak to breeders.  
Check out Chow websites.

## 22. STILL INTERESTED IN A CHOW?

It is important to go to a reputable Breeder who will give you advice and guidance on your Chow puppy and not to a retail outlet or Puppy Farm.

Puppies are often readily available from 'Puppy Farmers' who tend to have several breeds and are only interested in money. They have no interest in where their puppies go, or helping the new owner if the puppy develops physical or behavioural problems. Club secretaries are often aware of litters due to responsible breeders and can point you in the direction of reputable breeders in your area. The Kennel Club have recently set up the **Assured** Breeder Scheme. Many excellent breeders are not yet members but long term the scheme will help to point potential owners in the direction of well-bred puppies.

Chow puppies are in short supply and you may have to wait some time but

**BE ASSURED - THE WAIT WILL BE WORTH IT!**

