



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET



THE STORY OF APSO SENG KYI

BY NANCY PLUNKETT



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET



***This is the story of Apso Seng Kyi,
Bearded Lion Dog of Tibet.***

One of the oldest known breeds in the world, the true beginnings of the Lhasa Apso are shrouded in the mists of time. Evolving in almost total isolation, not only surviving but thriving in one of the most challenging environments imaginable, the Bearded Lion Dog of Tibet has made an incredible journey over the last few thousand years.

From the steps of the Potala in the capital city of Tibet to countless countries around the world, the unique little mountain dog now known as the Lhasa Apso has traveled far and wide; a treasured and beloved companion wherever he goes.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Evolving in the Himalayas



Jomolungma, "Holy Mother"; 29,029 ft.
Known to the outside world as Mt. Everest

Altitude:

Average elevation 16,000 ft.
Extremely thin atmosphere
Intense UV radiation

Climate:

High arctic desert
Extremes of temperature
Very little rain

Terrain:

Mountainous
Arid and rocky
Often snow covered



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET



Himalayan Wool

The Highland Tibetan Sheep produces one of the highest quality wools; 'Changpel.'



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Himalayan Wool

The Tibetan yak is so indispensable to the Tibetan lifestyle it is called 'Norbu', meaning treasure. It is used as a riding and pack animal, its fine wool woven into fabric for tents, clothing and ropes. Yak meat and milk are used for nourishment, its skin used to make clothing and other useful items, and the dung used to fuel fires for warmth and cooking.



The Tibetan goat has the finest fleece among goat species. Due to the extreme climate in Himalayas, Tibetan goats grow a very fine 'pashmina' which produces the soft wool fabric known as Cashmere. Tibetan goats only produce a few ounces of wool in a year's time, its high quality and rarity increasing the value accordingly.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET



The Tibetan Wolf

A sub-species of the gray wolf, the Tibetan wolf, also known as the “woolly” wolf, is thought by some scientists to be the most likely ancestor of the domestic dog. DNA studies have determined the Lhasa Apso and several other closely related breeds to be among the most ancient in existence today, perhaps the closest descendents we have to those first Tibetan wolves domesticated by humans many thousands of years ago.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Large Tibetan Breeds



Tibetan Kyi Apso
A shaggy, bearded version of the large Tibetan Mastiff



Do Kyi or Tibetan Mastiff
A large, imposing guard dog

Tibetan Sha Kyi
A tall, lean dog used for hunting





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Guarding the Flocks

The larger dogs were kept out of doors and used for the guarding and tending of livestock:

“These little dogs are wonderfully agile, and intelligent; when used to gather a flock of sheep, the Tibetan would give a signal and the dogs would leap off up the mountainside...Often the mountainside would be like the side of a house, almost precipitous, but the dogs would leap from rock to rock, disappear down a gully and then reappear further up. If they misjudged the distance or size of the landing place, or if they slipped on the icy slopes, they would be killed—there was big, BIG drop below them.

“In their lives there was no room for mistakes, or less than perfect fitness—they were tremendously agile, jumping with cat-like precision and little apparent effort.”

--Early description from
The Tibetan Terrier,
by Angela Mulliner



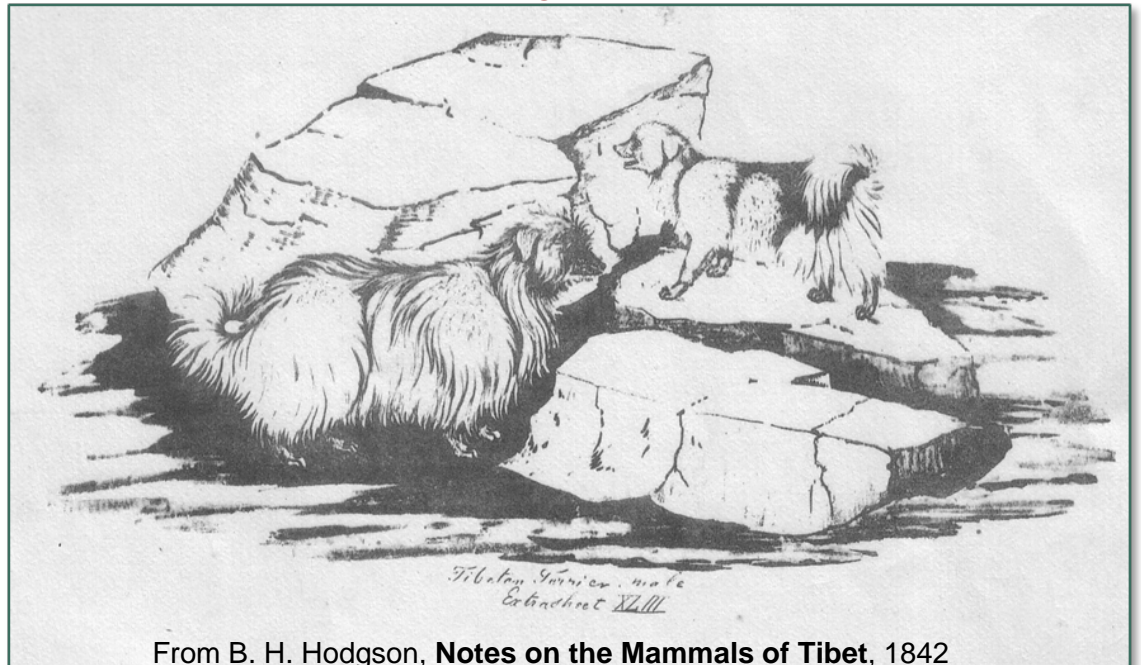
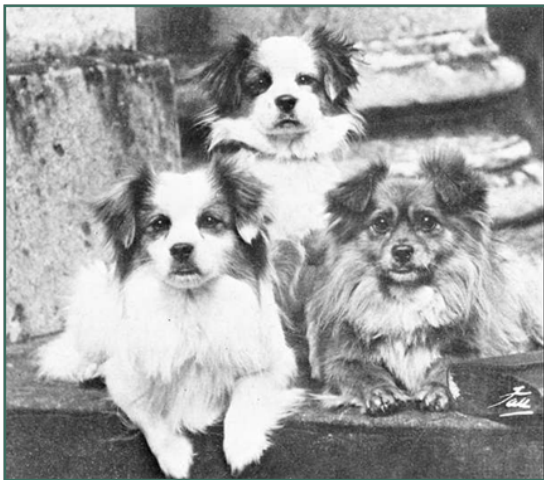


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Jemtse Apso



The smooth coated version of Apso Seng Kyi was called 'Jemtse' Apso, which translates into 'shaved' Apso, or Simkyi, which means house dog. Both long and smooth coat varieties often appeared in the same litter, the smooth coated Apsos later becoming known as the Tibetan Spaniel.



From B. H. Hodgson, *Notes on the Mammals of Tibet*, 1842



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Apso Seng Kyi

Bearded Lion Dogs were kept as pets and indoor sentinels. They were depended upon to sound the alarm at any sign of intruders...including evil spirits.

Outside were invariably tied the fiercely imposing mastiffs, but the Tibetans kept the ever watchful Lion Dogs inside their dwellings to serve as an additional warning system against all things unknown.

Even the long coats of the dogs were utilized, being shorn every year and woven into warm woolen garments.





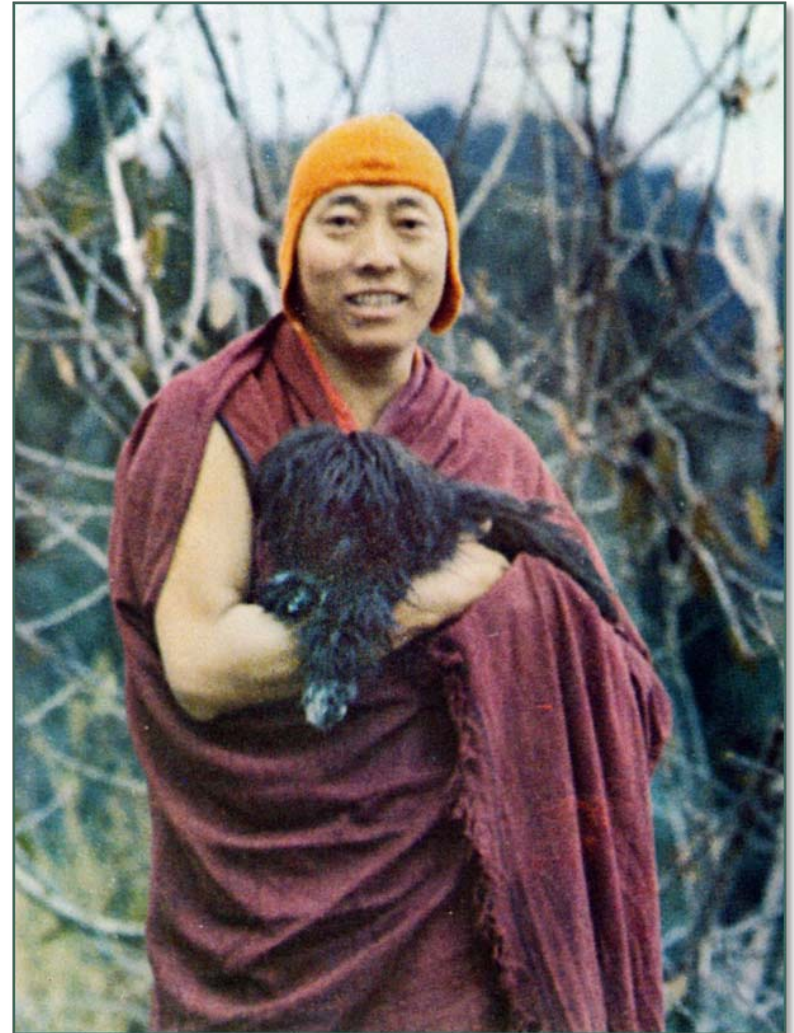
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Living Symbols

Apso Seng Kyi was especially favored by Buddhist monks in the numerous monasteries throughout Tibet, but they could also be found in the homes of Tibetan nobles and sharing even the most humble of dwellings as beloved companions and trusted sentinels.



Living symbols of the Buddhist Lion as well as treasured companions, the Buddhist culture of the Tibetans also meant that their dogs were reincarnated souls on their quest to achieve enlightenment.

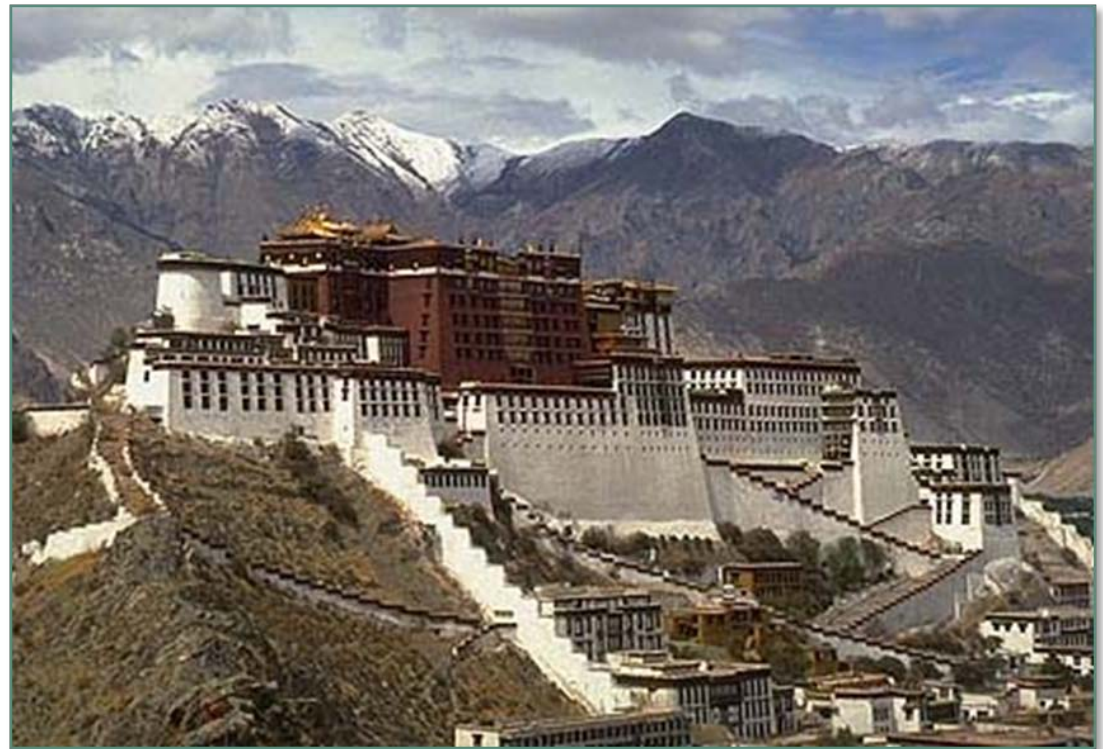




LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Gifting of Lion Dogs

Bearded Lion Dogs were often given as gifts by the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan dignitaries. The rulers of China received many Lion Dogs as tribute, documented as early as 1583, which were highly prized and carefully bred in the Imperial Palace. In turn, the dogs of China were also given as gifts to the Lamas and other dignitaries in Tibet. The exchange of these dogs between Tibet and China over many centuries most certainly had an effect on the development of Lion Dog type in both countries.



The Potala towers high over the capital city of Lhasa. Serving for centuries as the home of the Dalai Lama, it is now simply a tourist attraction.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Buddhism, the Lion and the Lion Dog

Originating in India, Buddhism became firmly established in China around the first century. Buddhism did not flourish in Tibet until the seventh century, supplanting, at least in part, the existing Bon religion practiced up to that time.

The lion was associated with Buddhism as early as 260 B.C., through the Buddhist Emperor of India, Asoka. Asoka erected many stone and wooden pillars bearing Buddhist inscriptions, always capped by crouching Buddhist lions who symbolized the subjection of the fiercest passions to the gentle influences of Buddhism. The first recorded importation of a lion to China was in 87 A.D.

The Lion Dogs of both Tibet and China are inextricably tied to Buddhism, being considered a living, symbolic representation of the Lion that had become so venerated in the Buddhist religion. The first known reference to a 'Lion Dog' was in 1131 A.D.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET



It seems natural that the Tibetans bred their small Lion Dogs to resemble lions and in accordance with the universal custom sent them as gifts to the Manchu Emperors of China. The sending of Lion Dogs symbolized the presentation of lions to Wen Shu Buddha, and served as a reminder of Manjusri, the God of Learning, who was habitually accompanied by a small pet dog capable of being transformed into a mighty lion as his steed.

FROM AN IMPERIAL DOG SCROLL
DATED SEPTEMBER 1890:

**“LI-ERH (PEAR). LONG-COATED HAH-PAH DOG.
Length of Body, 1 ft. 5 in. Height 8 in.*
Sent from Thibet as a present to the Emperor.
Its temperament is that of a human being.”**

*This was probably the Chinese builder's scale. On this scale one Chinese foot of 10 Chinese inches is equal to 12.5 British inches. The British measurement would be 15.25" in body length and 10" in height.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Lo-Sze Dogs of China

The first known reference to short-faced dogs was around B.C. 500. In A.D. 732 there was mention of 'Pai Dogs', meaning 'short-legged, short mouthed dogs, whose place was under the table.' By A.D. 990 they were known as Lo-Chiang-Sze dogs, later shortened to Lo-Sze. The rarest of that type was the 'Loong Chua' Lo-Sze (dragon claw), short-coated except for the ears, toes, behind the legs, and tail, which were well feathered. Pet dogs in general were known by the name Hah-Pah, a name later used in the west to describe the breed now known as the Pug.



Lo-Sze Dog, from an Imperial Dog Book.
Tsou Yi-Kwei, K'ang Hsi period (1662)



Imperial Dog Book, 1890

NO. 6. PAO-ERH (PRECIOUS). LO-SZE DOG.
Length of Body 1 ft. 4 in. Height 6.5 in.

NO. 7. CH'OU-ERH (SMELL) HAH-PAH DOG.
Length of Body 1 ft. 7 in. Height 6.7 in.

NO. 8. HSING-ERH (APRICOT). HAH-PAH DOG.
Length of Body 1 ft. 6 in. "Mether cross-bred."

NO. 9. MO-HAI (INKSTAND) LO-SZE DOG.

NO. 10. P'ING-ERH (BOTTLE) HAH-PAH DOG.
Length of Body 1 ft. 8.5 in. Height 8.5 in.



"Happa Dog", 1915



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

The Lion Dog of Malta

“Fu Lin” dogs from Byzantium were brought to China as early as A.D. 618. The Fu Lin dogs were likely an ancient breed called *Canis Melitaeus*, later known as Maltese Lion Dogs and finally, the Maltese. In the 17th century they were described as ‘the size of a weasel’, either short-haired, long-haired or maned, the colors white, red and white or black and white. The origins of the Fu Lin dogs are uncertain, but some evidence suggests they may have descended from the dogs of Tibet.



‘Maltese Dog’, 300-600 B.C.,
excavated at Fayyum , Egypt



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

The Chinese Lion Dog

The long-coated Chinese Lion Dog (Shih Tzu Kou) was known to exist from the 12th century on. The Chinese and Tibetans only used the term 'Lion Dog' when describing dogs with long, shaggy coats, presumably because of their resemblance to the much revered lion in their Buddhist culture. The Chinese Lion Dog is historically understood to be founded on the Tibetan Lion Dogs sent to the Chinese Emperors as gifts, though there can be no doubt that the Imperial Chinese routinely interbred the Lion Dog, Hah-Pah and Lo-Sze dogs together.



Lion Dog from an Imperial Dog Book





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Marco Polo (1254-1324), writes this after visiting Peking during the Yuan Dynasty:

“It was the custom of the Emperors on the days when they give feasts in honour of the Princes and High Officials to take out at the Ten Thousand Years’ Hill (the Coal Hill) all the beasts—tigers, leopards, bears, elephants—parading them one by one before the guests. After these were brought the lions. These beasts are small and short in body. They are astonishingly like the ‘golden-coated, nimble dogs’ which are commonly bred by the people themselves in their own homes. All animals, when they see the lions, are terrified. Their anger is more fearsome than that of all other beasts.”

A Chinese chronicler writes: “There was a civilian named Shen Heng Chi who bred a ‘Chin Ssu’ (lit. golden-silk) dog in his home. This dog was not more than one foot long, and was very intelligent.”



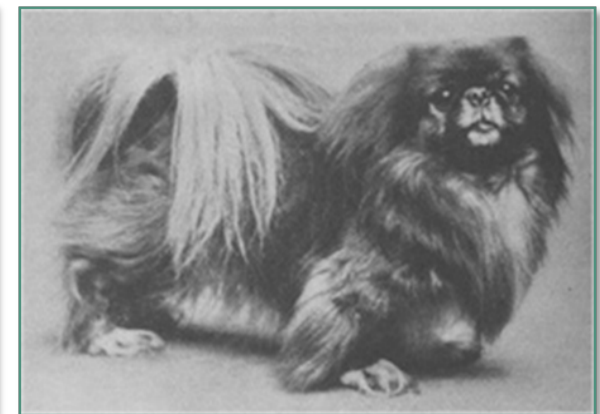
Chinese Dogs-17th Century



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Chinese Hah-Pah Dogs

It is easy to see the origins of the modern Pekingese in the early paintings of the Chinese Hah Pah and Lo Sze dogs. Hah Pah dogs were the most common type of pet dogs bred by the average Chinese citizen. It could be that during the early Manchu Dynasty, the “golden-coated nimble dog” of Peking became modified in combination with the other existing Chinese and Tibetan breeds to become the Pekingese of today. The Peking Dog was first described by a European in 1861 as looking like “something between a King Charles and a Pug.”





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Chinese v. Tibetan Selection

The Chinese played an extremely active role in the development of their small, pet dogs; specific traits being stringently selected for, particularly in the Imperial Courts. By contrast, any selective breeding the Tibetans may have practiced with their dogs would have been constrained by the harsh environmental factors they lived in. Chinese influence on Tibetan type was strictly limited to those animals which were able to survive and reproduce under the extreme challenges of the Tibetan environment.

Certainly there were similarities between the Chinese and Tibetan Lion Dogs, and surely some shared genetics after centuries of exchanging dogs, but it must be said that those traits which were most crucial to the survival of the small Bearded Lion Dog ultimately became the same distinctions that set the breed apart and made it uniquely Tibetan.

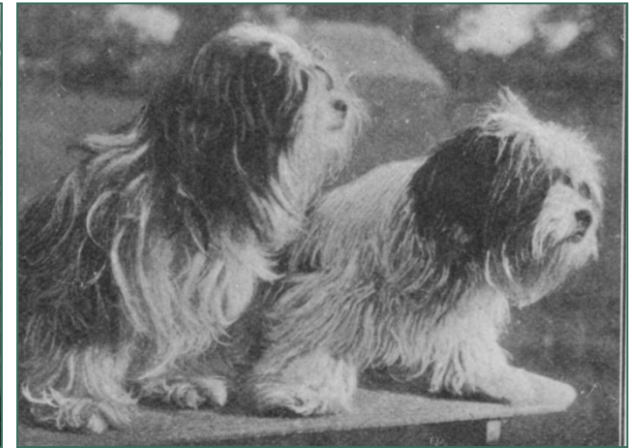




LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Arriving In The West

Small dogs from Asia began arriving in Britain late in the nineteenth century. They were known by a number of different names, such as Bhuteer Terrier, Lhasa Terrier, Thibet Terrier, Bhutanese Terrier and Kashmir Terrier. The name Lhasa Terrier ultimately became the one most widely used to describe the small, shaggy dogs from the Himalayas.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Lhasa Terriers

There was much variation in size among the Lhasa Terriers first brought to England. The breed was first recognized by the English Kennel Club in 1902 and actually shown in two size classifications, the 10" class and 14" class. The larger dogs were often called "Greater Lhasa Terriers" and were eventually given separate breed status as Tibetan Terriers.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Chinese Lion Dogs

At the turn of the twentieth century, small dogs were arriving from China as well as Tibet. They tended to be slightly smaller in stature than the Tibetan dogs, with shorter noses and larger, rounder eyes, though it was not recognized for some time that the Chinese and Tibetan dogs were different enough to warrant separate breed status.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Distinguishing the Breeds in the UK

The Tibetan Breeds Association developed separate breed standards for the 'Lhasa Apso' and 'Tibetan Terrier' in 1934. The Lion Dogs from China also gained separate breed status at that time, to be known henceforth as 'Shih Tzu'. The Lhasa Apso was recognized in the US in 1935, using the British standard. Despite having been recognized as a separate breed in England, the Shih Tzu was not recognized in the US until 1969, causing no little confusion as to the breed status of a number of English imports. The Tibetan Terrier was not recognized in the US until 1973. The Lhasa Apso was shown in the Terrier Group in the US until 1959 when it was reassigned to the Non-Sporting Group, where it remains today.



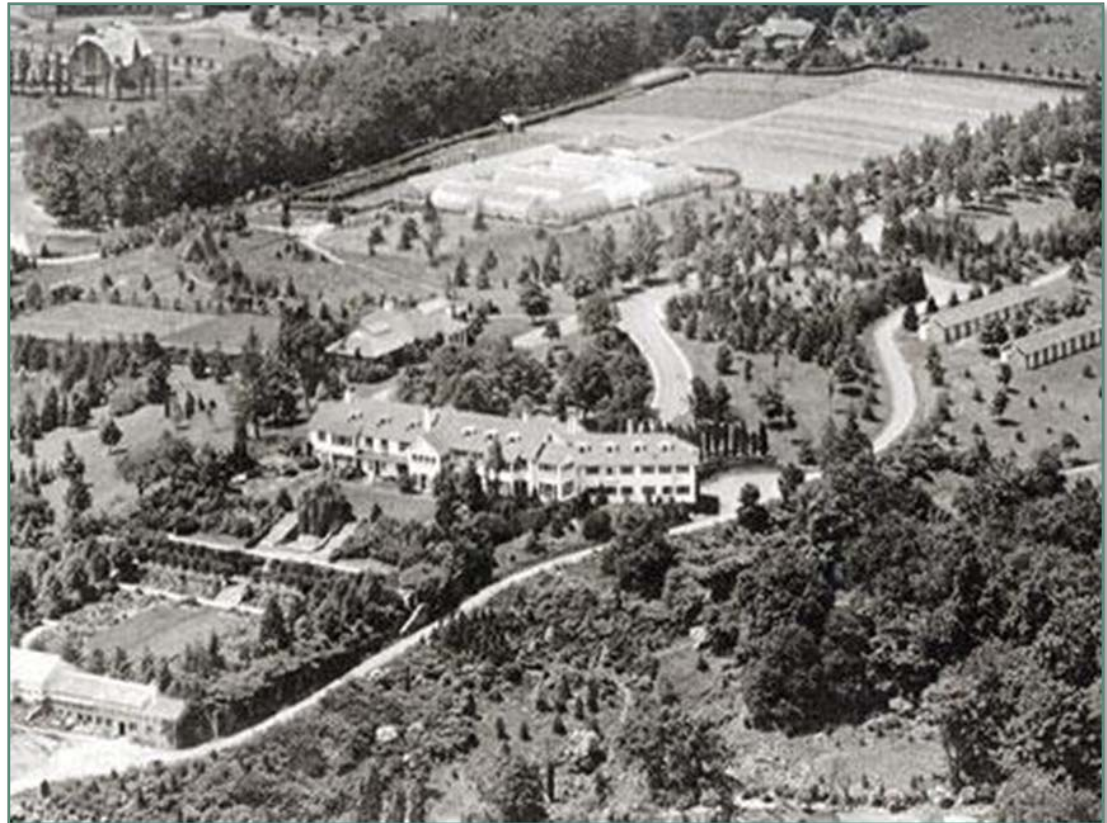


LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Lhasa Apsos Come to Hamilton Farm, USA

The Hamilton Farm Estate in Gladstone, New Jersey was originally built in 1911 by James Cox Brady. With 5000 acres, a sixty-four room Georgian mansion and the most lavish stable in the country, Hamilton Farm was one of the largest working estates of its time. They were famed for their high quality driving and race horses, bench and field dogs, and livestock of every kind.

James Cox Brady passed away suddenly in 1927. His widow, Helen, married C. Suydam Cutting in 1932.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

The Lhasa Apsos Of Hamilton Farm



Mrs. Cutting at the Newark Museum



Mr. Cutting with Tsarong Shape and his wife, Mary Taring.

In the early 1930s, the 13th Dalai Lama entered into a friendly correspondence with C. Suydam Cutting, a noted world explorer, eventually gifting him and his wife, Helen Brady Cutting, with a number of Lhasa Apsos. These dogs formed the foundation of the breed in the United States, bred under the **Hamilton** prefix.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

“The Fire Ox And Other Years”

C. Suydam Cutting describes many of his world travels in his book, *The Fire Ox And Other Years*, including his last trip to Tibet in 1937, year of the Fire Ox, accompanied by his wife, Helen.

This unnamed Lhasa Apso appears in Cutting’s book with the following caption:

“Apso (Lhasa Terrier). One of those presented to the author by the late Dalai Lama.”





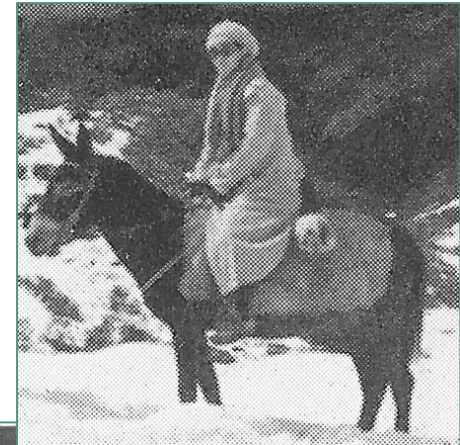
LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Traveling through the Himalayas

"I am sending you two dogs by way of Kalimpong. Please take great care when you receive them.

-dated 7th of the 1st month of the Water-Bird year." -Regent of Tibet

"The dogs rode well, especially Tsing Tu, the female, who bounced miraculously on my wife's saddle mile after mile. A mile and a half from every stop they would race ahead chasing marmots, which would squeal at the edge of their holes, waiting till the dogs were on them before ducking in."





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

The Lhasa Apsos Of Hamilton Farm

The '**Hamilton**' line of Lhasa Apsos was founded on just ten animals, developing into what became one of the most successful, influential and longest surviving bloodlines in the world of dogs. Lhasa Apso kennels around the world were established using Hamilton Lhasa Apsos as their foundation.



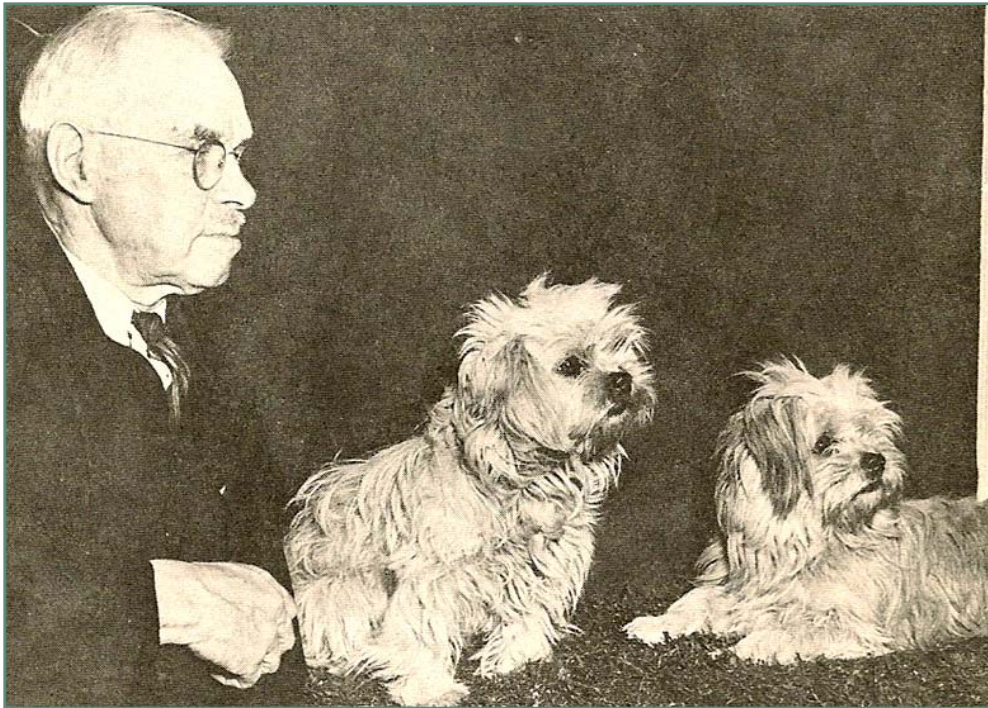
Hamilton Tsaring, M
Hamilton Bidgy, F
Hamilton Chusul, M
Hamilton Sarong, M
Hamilton Tsing Tu, F
Tundu, M
Shanghai, F
Lhassa, F
Le, M
Hamilton Pehma, F





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

The Lhasa Apsos Of Hamilton Farm



Mr. Fred Huyler with the last two Tibetan imports in 1950, Le and Pehma



Mr. Fred Huyler was the manager of Hamilton Farm for fifty years, overseeing everything about the farm including the breeding and exhibition of all the animals; horses, cattle, sheep, swine, dogs and poultry



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

The Lhasa Apsos of Hamilton Farm

Ch. Le, bred by the 13th Dalai Lama and the last male Lhasa Apso to come from Tibet, arriving with the female, Pehma, in 1950. Le was a very influential sire and could easily compete in today's show ring.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

The Lhasa Apsos Of Hamilton Farm

Undeniably successful in the show ring, many **Hamilton** Lhasa Apsos became champions and top winners, but their greatest contribution was the solid foundation they provided for the breed in the US, without which it could not have flourished to the extent that it has around the world.



Ch Hamilton Tatsienlu at age 16.5

One of the most influential sires of all time, Ch Hamilton Tatsienlu appears numerous times in the pedigree of almost every registered Lhasa Apso today. A beautiful dog who possessed the best characteristics of the breed, and passed them down to the countless generations coming after him.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

The Lhasa Apsos of Hamilton Farm

Ch Hamilton Torma made history in 1957 when she became the first Lhasa Apso to win an all-breed Best In Show. Bred by the Cuttings of Hamilton Farm, she was owned by Marie Stillman of **Americal** Lhasa Apsos, another very influential kennel in breed history.



Americal Lhasa Apsos



BIS Ch. Hamilton Torma with Mrs. Randolph Scott (Mrs. Stillman's daughter), a study in glamour.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

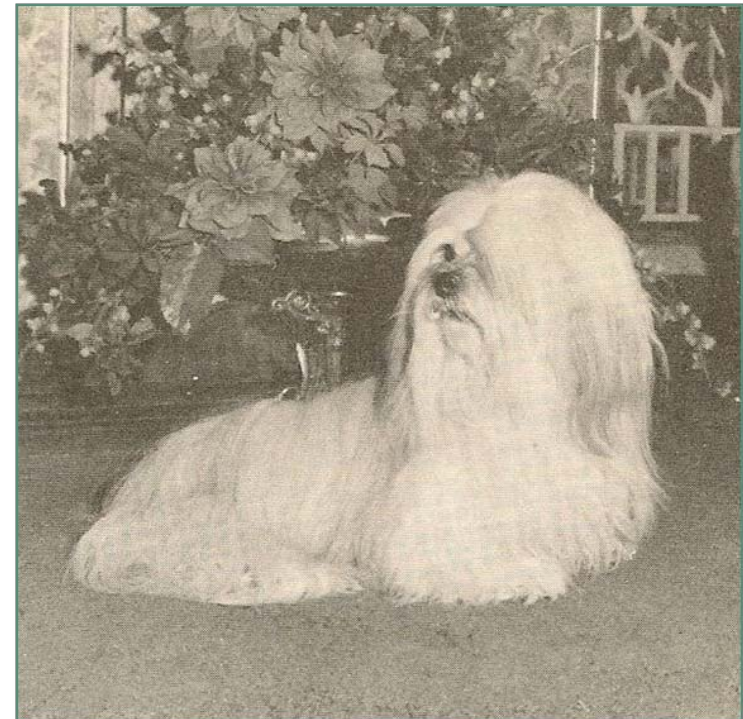
The Lhasa Apsos Of Hamilton Farm

Two other influential Lhasa Apso kennels founded on Hamilton dogs were **Karma** and **Licos**. Dorothy Cohen of Karma took over the Hamilton kennel in 1962, continuing the breeding program until 1974. Grace Licos' Lhasa Apsos were renowned for their lovely type and elegance. Hamilton, Americal, Karma and Licos were the foundation for a great many of the early Lhasa Apso kennels.



The Licos foundation: Ch Americal's Leng Kong, Ch Americal's Rika, Ch Hamilton Pluti, Ch Licos Nyapso La, Ch Hamilton Katha, BIS Ch Licos Kulu Lha and Ch Licos Karo La.

The Influence of Licos and Karma Lhasa Apsos



Ch. Hamilton Karma, foundation dam of Karma.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

The Lhasa Apsos Of Hamilton Farm

Hamilton Kangmar was the foundation dam for the famed Annapurna kennel of Mademoiselle Violette Dupont in France. Kangmar was so beloved she is still considered by many to be the 'mother' of the breed in France.



Annapurna Lhasa Apsos



Début des Lhasa Apsos en France : exposition d'ABBEVILLE - 1962. Les cinq chiens de face sont, de gauche à droite : F6 ANNAPURNA - ANNAPURNA DIDJOU - ANNAPURNA KARUNA - GAUTAMA et KATA ANNAPURNA de l'élevage de M^{re} DUPONT.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET



American Lhasa Apso Club

The American Lhasa Apso Club was founded in 1959 with 61 members, and held its first match show on the grounds of Hamilton Farm in 1962. Mr. C. Suydam Cutting was the Honorary President from 1959 until his death in 1972. The first President and Treasurer of the American Lhasa Apso Club was Mr. Fred Huyler, the manager of Hamilton Farm. Today, ALAC has well over 400 members from all over the world, and hosts a National Specialty in a different region of the US every October.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET



Hamilton Dogs Today

There are still a small number of Hamilton breeders today who believe strongly in continuing the work begun by the Cuttings of Hamilton Farm almost eighty years ago. These Hamilton line dogs hold their own in show competition and often win top honors; beautiful representatives of Hamilton Farm and the Bearded Lion Dogs of Tibet.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Hamilton Around the World

Dogs from the Hamilton bloodline are still sought after around the world, well known to consistently produce the original Hamilton/Tibetan type in their offspring.



Slovenia



Sweden



Spain



Australia



Netherlands



Denmark



Czech Republic



Russia



Finland



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Hamilton Farm Today

The resplendent stables of Hamilton Farm has been the home of the United States Equestrian Team since 1961, hosting many equestrian events throughout the year. Another 600 acres of the estate, including the mansion, was later developed into the prestigious Hamilton Farm Golf Club.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Tibetan Line of Germany

The TL program of Kerstin Handrich and Gerti Bracksieck began in 1992, combining Hamilton dogs with Bhutanese imports and dogs descending from a line originating at the Drepung Monastery in Tibet. It has been a successful effort that has produced many beautiful dogs exhibiting the best of Tibetan type. The TL dogs are now eligible for registration in the US and we look forward to incorporating these wonderful dogs into some of the American breeding programs.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

The Gompa Dogs

The Gompa Lhasa Apsos are founded on a group of dogs that were imported from Nepal to Canada in the early 1980s. Unable to be registered in Canada, this valuable bloodline was kept intact over the years through the efforts of countless supporters. There are only perhaps a dozen dogs left but they have just achieved AKC recognition and will finally be taking their rightful place in the Lhasa Apso world.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Lhasa Apsos of Bhutan

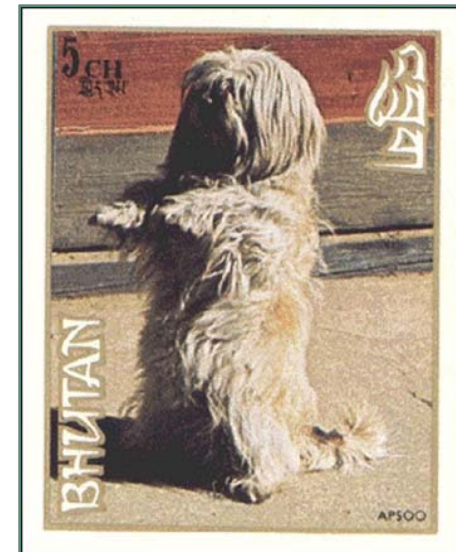
There are still Lhasa Apsos to be found in Bhutan, though not many. The Royal Family of Bhutan bred them for many years, and a few other breeders were still active as of a few years ago. The breed was so well regarded in Bhutan there was a postage stamp made in their honor in 1974, still available today.



Chu-Chu Princess of Tongsa



H. J. Panitz





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Lhasa Apsos of India

There are a number of dedicated Lhasa Apso breeders in India, and of course many Tibetans living there in exile keep and breed their own Lhasa Apsos. Some Indian-bred Lhasa Apsos have been exported to Europe and the United States, and at least two Hamilton dogs have gone to India to be incorporated into bloodlines there.



Lhasa Apsos bred by the late Mumta Khanna



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Refugees in the Himalayas

Wherever there are Tibetans, there are Lhasa Apsos. Whether living in Tibet, or the refugee villages of India, Bhutan or Nepal, the Tibetans love their dogs and always seem to make a place for them. It is amazing to see how the Bearded Lion Dog has maintained his unique character and appearance over the many centuries and long distances he has come, surely a wonderful tribute to the little Bearded Lion Dog of Tibet.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Lhasa Apsos of Tibet

Unkempt as they may be, these are indeed Lhasa Apsos that have recently been seen living in Tibet.

Though heartbreakingly few, it is gratifying to know that some of these little Bearded Lion Dogs still make their home high on the Tibetan Plateau from whence they came so long ago.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Breed Standards Describe Features Unique to a Breed Form Follows Function—The Himalayas

Rectangular body proportion provides body mass necessary for heat conservation in the Himalayas. The longer rib cage allows increased lung capacity to breathe the thin air.

A narrow skull, falling away markedly behind the eyes, allows for adequate length of muzzle, with a large nose and wide nostrils, for unobstructed breathing in cold, thin air.

Medium sized eyes are less exposed to the elements and therefore less prone to injury.

Mountainous terrain requires a strong climbing physique: well muscled front and rear quarters, and a strong loin.



Sound legs and feet are needed on a dog that must be able to climb nimbly for 15 to 20 years.

A straight, heavy, hard, dense coat is needed for insulation against cold, heat, wind and snow

Strong pigmentation would be an asset under intense UV radiation.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET



Origins of the Breed Standard

The first known description of the Lhasa Apso was written late in the 19th century by Sir Lionel M. Jacob, KCSI. Jacob was a British civil engineer who lived in India for over 25 years, a well known expert on dogs and the President of the Northern India Kennel Association. The Jacob description of the 'Bhuteer Terrier' was first published in the 1897 edition of **Dogs of All Nations**, a compilation of standards published by Comte Henri de Bylandt. A more detailed version of the Jacob description was published in the December 1901 **English Kennel Gazette** and 1903 **British Dogs** by W.D. Drury, serving as the breed standard until the Tibetan Breeds Association wrote the first official standard in 1934, using much of the Jacob document as its foundation. The American Kennel Club adopted the British standard in 1935 where it remained unchanged until 1978, when the American Lhasa Apso Club amended it in three places: 1) All color preference was removed; 2) The suggested muzzle length of about 1.5" was removed; 3) The description of "Mouth" was changed from "Mouth level, otherwise slightly undershot preferred" to "The preferred bite is either level or slightly undershot", elevating what was originally third choice, then secondary choice, to that of a preferred bite.

Other Lhasa Apso standards around the world have been changed many times during the last century, and outside his homeland the breed sometimes struggles to maintain his unique Tibetan identity in the face of Western fad and fashion.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Bhuteer Terrier (Lhasa Terrier*) Dogs of All Nations, 1897

General appearance Elegantly built, ladies' dog.

Head Distinctly Terrier-like; skull narrow, falling away behind the eyes in a marked degree, not quite flat, but not domed nor apple-shaped.

Muzzle Fore-face of fair length, strong in front of the eyes; nose large and prominent and pointed, not depressed; a square muzzle is objectionable; stop slightly developed; mouth quite level, but of the two a slightly overshot mouth is preferable to an undershot one; teeth are somewhat smaller than would be expected in a Terrier of the size.

Eyes Neither very large and full, nor very small and sunk; dark brown in colour.

Ears Set on low, and carried close to the cheeks.

Body Well built; back not too short with a slight arch at the loin; well ribbed-up.

Loins Strong; hind-quarters and thighs well developed.

Legs Straight and short, there is a tendency to crookedness; of good bone, owing to the heavy coat they look, and should look, very heavy in bone, but in reality the bone is not heavy; hocks well let down.

Feet Round, cat-like, with good pads.

Tail Carried well over the back; a low carriage is a sign of impure blood.

Coat Heavy, of good length and very dense; a strong growth on the skull, falling on both sides. Legs well clothed right down to the toes. On the body the hair should not reach to the ground, there should be a certain amount of daylight. The hair is much harder to the eye than it is to the touch. It should look hard, straight and long, when to the touch it is soft, but not silky. The hair should be straight, with no tendency to curl.

Colour Black, dark grizzle, slate, sandy or mixture of these colours with white.

Height at shoulder Dogs from 10 to 11 inches; bitches from 9 to 10 inches.

Weight About 14 lb.



(*Often called Thibet Terrier, Bhutanese Terrier or Kashmir Terrier)



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

"Here in full is the 1901 Description by Mr. Lionel Jacob, of the 'Lhasa Terrier', an interesting little breed formerly found under the inappropriate name of Bhuteer Terrier." Drury, W.D., British Dogs, Vol. 1; the 3rd Edition.

Head: Distinctly Terrier-like. Skull narrow, falling away behind the eyes in a marked degree, not quite flat, but not domed or apple shaped. Fore face of fair length, strong in front of the eyes, the nose, large, prominent and pointed, not depressed; a square muzzle is objectionable. The stop, size for size, about that of a Skye Terrier.

Mouth: Quite level, but of the two a slightly overshot mouth is preferable to an undershot one. The teeth are somewhat smaller than would be expected in a Terrier of the size. In this respect, the breed seems to suffer to an extraordinary degree from cankered teeth. I have never yet seen an imported specimen with a sound mouth.

Ears: Set on low, and carried close to the cheeks, similar to the ears of a drop-eared Skye.

Eyes: Neither very large and full nor very small and sunk, dark brown in colour.

Legs and Feet: The fore legs should be straight. In all short legged breeds there is a tendency to crookedness, but the straighter the legs the better. There should be good bone. Owing to the heavy coat the legs look, and should look, very heavy in bone, but in reality, the bone is not heavy. It should be round and of good strength right down to the toes, the less ankle the better. The hocks should be particularly well let down. Feet should be round and catlike, with good pads.

Body: There is a tendency in England to look for a level top and a short back. All the best specimens have a slight arch at the loin and the back should not be too short; it should be considerably longer than the height at the withers, note the measurements of the bitch, Marni*. The dog should be well ribbed up, with a strong loin and well developed quarters and thighs.

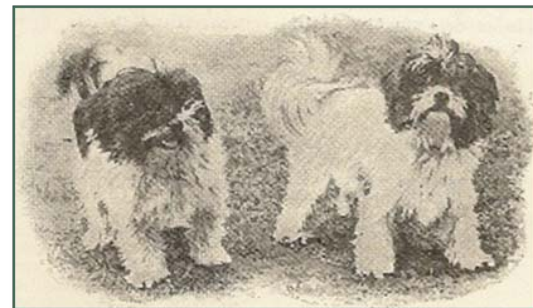
Stern: Should be carried well over the back after the manner of the tail of the Chow. All Thibetan dogs carry their tails in this way, and a low carriage of stern is a sign of impure blood.

Coat: Should be heavy, of good length and very dense. There should be a strong growth on the skull, falling on both sides. The legs should be well clothed right down to the toes. On the body, the hair should not reach to the ground, as in a show Yorkshire; there should be a certain amount of daylight. In general appearance the hair should convey the idea of being much harder to the eye than it is to the touch. It should look hard, straight and strong, when to the touch it is soft, but not silky. The hair should be straight with no tendency to curl.

Colour: Black, dark grizzle, slate, sandy, or an admixture of these colours with white.

Size: About 10 in. or 11 in. height at shoulder for dogs, and 9 in. or 10 in. for bitches.

***Measurements of Marni:** Length of head--6 ¼", Length of back--19", Length of ear--2 ¼", Height at shoulder--10"





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

1934 British Standard/1935 AKC Standard

Character: Gay and assertive, but chary of strangers.

Size: Variable, but about 10 or 11 inches at shoulder for dogs, bitches slightly smaller.

Color: Golden, sandy, honey, dark grizzle, slate, smoke, parti-color, black, white or brown. This being the true Tibetan Lion Dog, golden or lion-like colors are preferred. Other colors in order as above. Dark tips to ears and beard are an asset.

Body Shape: The length from point of shoulders to point of buttocks longer than height at withers, well-ribbed up, strong loin, well-developed quarters and thighs.

Coat: Heavy, straight, hard, not woolly or silky, of good length, and very dense.

Mouth and Muzzle: Mouth level, otherwise slightly undershot preferable. Muzzle of medium length; a square muzzle is objectionable.

Head: Heavy head furnishings with good fall over eyes, good whiskers and beard, skull narrow, falling away behind eyes in a marked degree, not quite flat, but not domed or apple-shaped; straight foreface of fair length. Nose black, about 1 ½ inches long, or the length from tip of nose to eye to be roughly about one-third of the total length from nose to back of skull.

Eyes: Dark brown, neither very large and full, nor very small and sunk.

Ears: Pendant, heavily feathered.

Legs: Forelegs straight; both forelegs and hind legs heavily furnished with hair.

Feet: Well-feathered; should be round and catlike, with good pads.

Tail and Carriage: Well-feathered, should be carried well over back in a screw; there may be a kink at the end. A low carriage of stern is a serious fault.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

AKC Standard-1978

Character: Gay and assertive, but chary of strangers.

Size: Variable, but about 10 or 11 inches at shoulder for dogs, bitches slightly smaller.

Color: All colors equally acceptable with or without dark tips to ears and beard.

Body Shape: The length from point of shoulders to point of buttocks longer than height at withers, well-ribbed up, strong loin, well-developed quarters and thighs.

Coat: Heavy, straight, hard, not woolly or silky, of good length, and very dense.

Mouth and Muzzle: The preferred bite is either level or slightly undershot. Muzzle of medium length; a square muzzle is objectionable.

Head: Heavy head furnishings with good fall over eyes, good whiskers and beard, skull narrow, falling away behind eyes in a marked degree, not quite flat, but not domed or apple-shaped; straight foreface of fair length. Nose black, the length from tip of nose to eye to be roughly about one-third of the total length from nose to back of skull.

Eyes: Dark brown, neither very large and full, nor very small and sunk.

Ears: Pendant, heavily feathered.

Legs: Forelegs straight; both forelegs and hind legs heavily furnished with hair.

Feet: Well-feathered; should be round and catlike, with good pads.

Tail and Carriage: Well-feathered, should be carried well over back in a screw; there may be a kink at the end. A low carriage of stern is a serious fault.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Character:

***“Gay and assertive but
chary of strangers”***

Despite their cute and cuddly appearance, the temperament of the Lhasa Apso is not that of a toy dog. Their not-so-distant primitive history, and the Tibetans' general usage of Apsos for guarding and herding, gives this breed a remarkably strong and independent nature.

Possessing a high level of perceptive intelligence, the typical Lhasa Apso notices everything in its environment and decides in his own time whether or not it is “safe”.

They are confident and strong minded, not bending easily to another's will. These ingrained tendencies are often displayed in the form of guarding possessions, challenging other dogs and objecting to being handled by strangers. Early socialization and training is absolutely essential for the Apso.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Size:

“Variable, but about 10 inches or 11 inches at shoulder for dogs, bitches slightly smaller.”



Tibetans were known to prize the smallest of the Apsos. Ideally, males should be about 10” or 11”, with females smaller in both size and features. The average weight of a male Lhasa Apso is about 14 to 18 lbs, females generally weighing between 11 to 15 lbs. The Lhasa Apso is a small dog but very sturdily made, neither toyish nor massive in build.

LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Color:

“All colors equally acceptable with or without dark tips to ears and beard.”

The Lhasa Apso has been called the “jelly bean” dog. They come in all colors and all combinations of colors. It is common for them to have dark tips to their ears and beard. Young Lhasa Apsos will often have some degree of black tipping on their body coat. Though very striking, this tipping eventually grows out and will not be present in the coat of a mature dog. No one color or pattern is preferable over another.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Body Shape:

“The length from point of shoulders to point of buttocks longer than height at withers, well ribbed up, strong loin, well-developed quarters and thighs.”

Statistics show that Lhasa Apsos average 30% to 45% longer than tall, the median ideal. The long rib cage provided necessary lung capacity in the thin atmosphere of Tibet; the strong loin and well developed quarters and thighs providing the body substance and power necessary for heat conservation and negotiating the rugged mountain terrain.



The same dog coated and clipped, measuring 11.25" tall and 33.3% longer than tall.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Coat:

“Heavy, straight, hard, not wooly nor silky, of good length and very dense.”

The Apso coat should be straight, hard and heavy in texture, and dense enough to provide insulation from cold, heat, wind and snow. A hard coat will reflect the UV light; a soft coat will not. The guard coat must be straight and hard enough to allow the undercoat to shed through without creating debilitating mats. A coat of good length distinguished the Lhasa Apso from the Tibetan Spaniel. Correct coat texture is not simply pretty, it is essential to survival in Tibet.





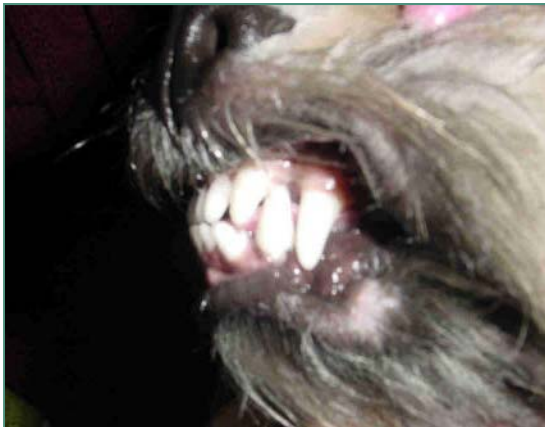
LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Mouth and Muzzle:

“The preferred bite is either level or slightly undershot...”



A survival developed breed from the Himalayas would typically have a normal canine mouth. The slightly shortened muzzle of the Apso allows for minor bite variation, but nothing so extreme that it would hinder survival in Tibet. The 1935 AKC standard reads: *“Mouth level, otherwise slightly undershot preferred.”* The Sir Lionel Jacob standard, 1901: *“Mouth quite level, but of the two a slightly overshot mouth is preferable to an undershot one.”*





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Mouth and Muzzle:

“...Muzzle of medium length; a square muzzle is objectionable.”



Left: A medium length muzzle tapering into a large nose leather with wide nostrils. **Top:** A flat, squared-off muzzle, with the top and front of the muzzle meeting at a right angle, is objectionable. These are major distinguishing features between the Lhasa Apso and Shih Tzu heads. Sir Lionel Jacob, 1901: *“The nose large, prominent and pointed, not depressed”*.

LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Head:

“Heavy head furnishings with good fall over the eyes, good whiskers and beard; skull narrow, falling away behind the eyes in a marked degree, not quite flat, but not domed or apple-shaped; straight foreface of fair length. Nose black, the length from tip of nose to eye to be roughly about one-third of the total length from nose to back of skull.”



Heavy head furnishings with good whiskers and beard distinguished the Lhasa Apso from the Tibetan Spaniel.

LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Head:

“...skull narrow, falling away behind the eyes in a marked degree, not quite flat, but not domed or apple-shaped...”

A narrow skull is essential to Lhasa Apso head type. Instead of the skull “rising” behind the eyes, as in the domed head of a Shih Tzu, the Lhasa Apso skull falls away markedly behind the eyes and is almost flat; the stop moderate to shallow. The narrow skull and fall away behind the eyes are major distinguishing traits between the Lhasa Apso and Shih Tzu heads. Note the similarity in head type between the 1907 import and his modern counterpart, and the vast difference between those two dogs and the domed Shih Tzu.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Head:



Additional views of the Lhasa Apso head show the stop rising gently to just above the eyes, then quickly falling away behind the eyes to a skull that is not quite flat, but not domed or apple-shaped. The narrow skull, gentle stop and marked fall away are important distinctions between the Lhasa Apso and Shih Tzu heads.

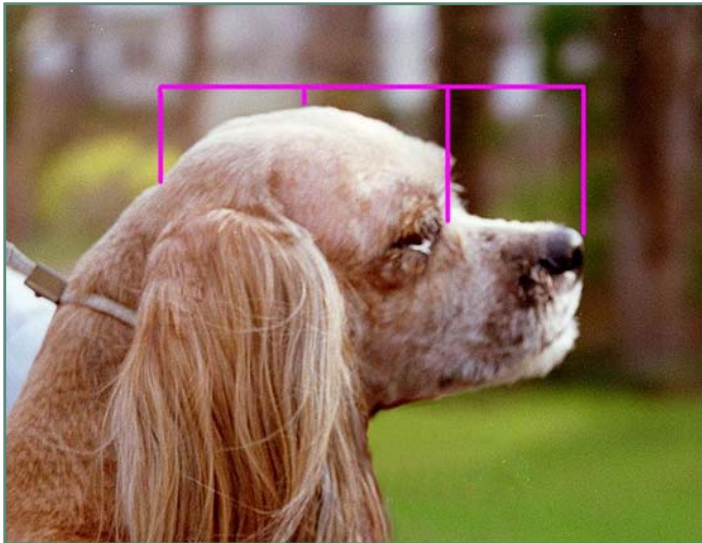
Sir Lionel Jacob, 1901: *“The stop, size for size, about that of a Skye Terrier.”* Geoffrey Hayes, 1934: *“In body, rather like a Border Terrier, slightly longer if anything. In head, shape very like one, skull slightly narrower and side ear-carriage though.”*



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Head:

***“... straight foreface of fair length.
Nose black, the length from tip of
nose to eye to be roughly about one-
third of the total length from nose to
back of skull.”***



The Lhasa Apso muzzle should be of fair length and on a parallel plane with the top of the skull. The muzzle is neither long and snikey nor short and square. The 1:2 head proportion distinguishes the Lhasa Apso from both the Shih Tzu and Tibetan Terrier. Strong pigment is an asset under strong UV radiation.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Eyes:

“Dark brown, neither very large and full, nor very small and sunk.”

Large, round eyes would not fare well in the dry, dusty and windy environment of the Tibetan plateau. Lhasa Apso eyes are medium sized, typically almond shaped, and placed rather frontally in the skull. The medium sized eye provides another distinction between the Lhasa Apso and Shih Tzu. Strong pigment is an asset under intense UV radiation.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Ears:

“Pendant, heavily feathered.”

Heavily feathered ears distinguishes the Lhasa Apso from the Tibetan Spaniel, which carries only light feathering on the ears. Most Tibetan breeds carry their ears slightly higher than eye level, drawing them up even with the top of the skull when at attention. With the Lhasa Apso, this can give the impression of a broad skull when in fact it is only the ears being brought up under the heavy head fall.





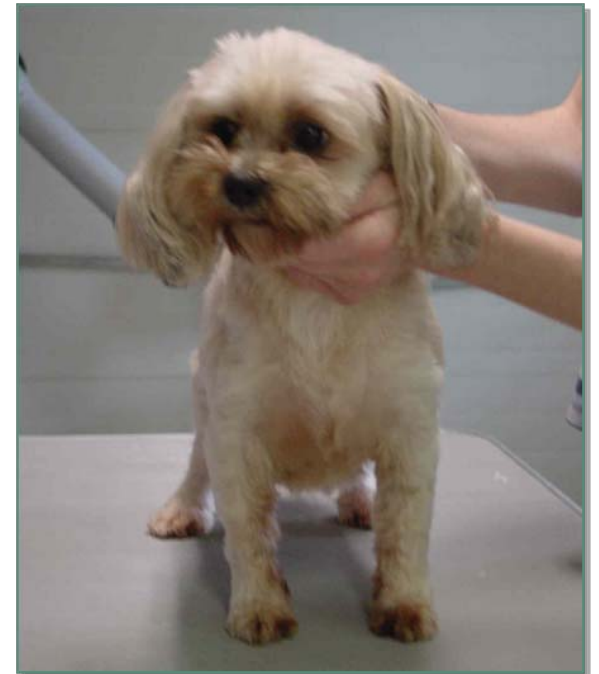
LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Legs:

“Forelegs straight; both fore and hind legs heavily furnished with hair.”

Straight forelegs are the most sound for a climbing animal. Shorter-backed Apsos tend to have straight front legs, but in the extreme can lack adequate substance of bone and muscle. In contrast, a slight bow to the foreleg is not uncommon in longer-backed Apsos of more substance. The ideal Lhasa Apso will balance the essential characteristics of substance, agility and soundness. Heavy leg furnishings distinguish the Lhasa Apso from the Tibetan Spaniel.

Sir Lionel Jacob, 1901: *“In all short-legged breeds, there is a tendency to crookedness, but the straighter the legs the better.”*





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Feet:

“Well feathered, should be round and catlike, with good pads.”

Well feathered, round, catlike feet are yet another distinction between the Lhasa Apso, Tibetan Terrier and Tibetan Spaniel; the Tibetan Terrier having large, flat feet and the Tibetan Spaniel typically possessing a hare-foot, with only light feathering on the legs and feet. Thick, well cushioned pads would be essential for negotiating the steep, rocky and often frozen ground of the Tibetan plateau.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Tail and Carriage:

“Well feathered, should be carried well over the back in a screw, there may be a kink at the end. A low carriage of stern is a serious fault.”

The *natural* tail carriage of the Lhasa Apso is well over the back in a screw. Heat conservation demanded that the tail be nestled close to the back rather than up in the air in a loose curl. High tail carriage lengthens important rearing muscles for a climbing animal with a *normal* slope of pelvis. The Apso tail may drop when he is relaxed, or in reaction if he is startled, but should be carried over the back under general circumstances. There may a kink at the end of the tail, a unique feature of the breed and considered good luck by the Tibetans.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET



A True Lion Dog
An accurate
portrait of the
Lhasa Apso self-
image, believing
themselves to
be lions at heart.



LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Living With the Lhasa Apso

A sense of humor helps!

The Lhasa Apso is both a delight and a challenge to live with. They are sweet, affectionate, playful, and sensitive, almost beyond belief, to one's every mood; they also tend to be strong minded and somewhat manipulative, their daily activities motivated in large part by a healthy self-interest. Their personalities are as individual as can be, yet there are certain characteristics common to all. They feel compelled to always be near you, preferably close enough to touch. They notice everything in their domain and will alert you to the most minute changes. They love to be perched on high to watch over their domain. They are hoarders, gathering their 'stash' of treasures in a special place and guarding them. They love the snow and wind, and detest the rain. And they are always, always considering the angles of each situation, thinking how they might take the best advantage for themselves.





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

The Tibetan Greeting

Legend holds that there was once a 9th century Tibetan king named Lang Darma, who was known for his cruelty and who had a black tongue. As Buddhists, Tibetans believe in reincarnation, and they feared that this cruel king would be reincarnated. Consequently, for centuries the Tibetan people have greeted one another by sticking out their tongues and demonstrating that they do not have black tongues, that they are not guilty of evil deeds, and are not incarnations of the malevolent king.

One cannot be surprised that the Tibetans believe so strongly in reincarnation when they see their dogs display 'human' behaviors such as this typical Tibetan greeting. We are also reminded that a large, long tongue is one of the thirty-two auspicious signs of Buddha...





LHASA APSO, BEARDED LION DOG OF TIBET

Acknowledgements

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- The Tibetan Terrier, Angela Mulliner, Holywell Press, 1977
- The Book of the Shih Tzu, Brearly and Easton, TFH, 1980
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- Close Encounters of the Furry Kind
- Dr. Catherine Marley
- Kerstin Handrich
- H.J. Panitz
- Fran Strayer
- Newark Museum
- Gompa Lhasa Apso Preservation Trust
- USET / Hamilton Farm Golf Club
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Close Encounters of the Furry Kind

