

SHIH TZU DIARIES

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Your
Dog's First Year and Beyond!



written by Janice Jones

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Always seek the advice of a veterinarian or other qualified health professional with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

DEDICATION

To my husband, Alan, children, Aaron, Nick and Elizabeth, for putting up with me and the many four-legged kids that wander our home, and all my Shih Tzu Dogs, past, and present who have each taught me something new about being human.

INTRODUCTION

There is something almost mystical about staring into the dark eyes of a Shih Tzu. Returning your gaze, with his intense, soulful expression, the Shih Tzu puppy will no doubt win you over long before offering that special puppy kiss. What is so extraordinary about this breed? Could it be the eyes, the gorgeous hair coat, or his small compact body? Perhaps the fascination with the Shih Tzu goes much deeper. Most first-time buyers are fascinated by the array of color choices and sizes, but soon realize that the personality is the pièce of résistance.

There is so much to love about the Shih Tzu Dog (Pronounced Sheet-zoo). They are lovable, playful, happy, and courageous. Expect the Shih Tzu to be easy going, relatively quiet, friendly, gentle, and fiercely devoted to their person. They make an excellent pet for both first-time as well as experienced dog owners. Their ability to adapt makes them ideally suited for any life style tossed in their direction, and small size gives them the added advantage of being highly portable.

Whether you own or are thinking of adoption one Shih Tzu or many Shih Tzu, (singular and plural are the same) your life will never be dull. You will be entertained, loved, and admired for as long as they live. With all the benefits of dog ownership comes responsibility. Shih Tzu doges are easy to enjoy, but require patience and time especially during that critical first year.

Why write another book about the Shih Tzu Breed when there are so many of them currently on the market? I asked myself that question several years ago as I was devouring every book I could get my hands on about my beloved breed.

Come to find out, each book that got the highest ratings were breed books written by authors who had also written books on dozens if not hundreds of dog breeds. It was hard to see how these writers had any first-hand knowledge of living with one or more Shih Tzu dogs.

These were professional writers whose job it was to outline the breed's profile and gather some photos for publication. I will admit that the books available had some specific breed information. However, most of the info was generic and copied from one book to another so one could read a book about some different breeds and acquire the same knowledge.

I've owned Shih Tzu dogs for many years. Each one is/was different in both looks, personality traits, and other qualities. No two dogs had the same bark. Each dog has nuisances that set him apart from the crowd. Each had their unique medical issues, disobedient behaviors, and quirks that endeared them to me.

But there was some commonality among all the Tzu I have loved, and that is their steadfast devotion, loyalty, and love that comes straight from their heart. This unconditional love is probably what Tzu owners find so surprising. Their gentle spirit, their exuberance for life, their ability to love all humans transcends generations of people.

Might I even be so bold as to suggest the Shih Tzu owners are among the finest people I have ever met? Did their Shih Tzu help them become the person they always knew they should be? We aren't likely to answer that question any time soon.

In the next chapters, I will lead the novice Shih Tzu owner through the adventures that I have discovered and the lessons learned by living with my herd of Shih Tzu.

In all honesty, they have taught me more than I could ever have taught them.

This book looks at the entire breed but focuses primarily on that first year. The information you may want to know is written in an easy to understand style and can be read from cover to cover, or used as a reference book as the need arises. You'll find everything you need or want to know about the breed, and then some: How to choose the perfect dog, groom, train, and care for a new puppy. You will learn what to do as well as what not to do. This crucial information will make the difference between creating a crazy canine adolescent and maladjusted adult and producing a happy, stable adult dog of which to be proud.

So, kick back, relax, pour yourself your favorite beverage and let me make you the ultimate Shih Tzu expert. Remember you are not alone when it comes to people who love this breed. Queen Elizabeth owns an adult named Choo Choo; Actress Zsa Zsa Gabor owned a Shih Tzu named Fang and Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft owned a dog named Ballmar. Even the Dalai Lama owns a Shih Tzu.

Feel free to read from cover to cover, or choose topics of interest to you. This guide is meant to provide all the information you need to make the first year a perfect success. If you love history, you will find Chapter one to be interesting. Most people do not realize how ancient a breed this is. Unbelievably, their ancient origins have put the Shih Tzu very close in genetics with the wolf!

From there, we will delve into the mindset of the Shih Tzu, his temperament, and personality. Anyone interested in understanding the mind of a Shih Tzu will find this section helpful. Maybe you are not into showing your dog, but a quick understanding of the anatomy of a breed is beneficial.

If you are into color, like most Shih Tzu owners, you will want to read the section on colors in the Shih Tzu and if you have your heart set on a tiny or imperial sized Shih Tzu, that section is written for you. Many people prefer hybrid dogs, and I've included a segment on the various ones that are part Shih Tzu and part another breed. If you are considering a puppy or dog in this category, I hope you will find the section on Designer dogs helpful.

In Chapter Two, I will help you determine if this is the right breed for you and you can answer some questions that will help you make an informed decision. In subsequent chapters, we will look at the growth and development of your new puppy (Chapter 3), Food and Diet, Health, Training, Abnormal Behaviors, Grooming, and the Living with that perfect little puppy is the focus of Chapter 4.

If I had to choose the one thing that Shih Tzu owners can do to increase the lifespan of their dog is to pick a proper diet. Safety, is always a significant concern, but an excellent food can prevent health problems and keep your Tzu in top shape long into old age. Don't miss this chapter if you want to know just a bit more about canine nutrition and what to look for in a top-quality diet. The section on health is both a reference and a how-to guide. Many of the topics in this chapter are not likely to come up in

your dog's life. Just like all breeds, the Shih Tzu can inherit genetic diseases, so I included them in the book as a reference.

The next two chapters deal with Training and Problem Behaviors. These are indeed a must read for anyone who is having trouble training their stubborn Shih Tzu.

What's left? Grooming and Living with your Tzu. To Groom or Not to Groom, well, that's not the question when it comes to this breed. If you have a Shih Tzu, you will need to do some grooming.

"Happiness is a warm puppy."

Charles M. Schulz

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CHAPTER ONE: MEET THE SHIH TZU

"You can say any fool thing to a dog, and the dog will give you this look that says, "My God, you're right! I never would've thought of that!"

Dave Barry

The world of the Shih Tzu goes back centuries, but the dog that we know today in the west is perhaps less than a hundred years old. Over the last 60 plus years, we've seen changes in coat texture, coat colors and even in the size of these remarkable little "lion" dogs. To know one is to love one, and most people who happen to be owned by a Shih Tzu (or two) find that any other breed just won't do.

While being a loving chum, a steadfast friend, and an unquestioning and forgiving companion, they are not without their idiosyncrasies. I hope to win you over to this breed, but at the same time, point out the negatives as well, which are few but present. The best Shih Tzu owners are the most informed owners. They recognize the best, the worst, and all the shades in between. This book covers the first year of the Shih Tzu's life from conception to his first birthday.

At one, they will still be a puppy even though they are sexually mature and have passed through the rebellious adolescent phase. From there, your Tzu is likely to have another 12 to 15 birthdays for you to celebrate, most of which will accompany that same puppy enthusiasm and playful exuberance you've seen all along. I don't want anyone leaving with the impression that Shih Tzu are boisterous and hyperactive. Instead, their playful nature is over shadowed by their passion for being your best friend forever.

THE HISTORY OF THE SHIH TZU

The history of the Shih Tzu dates back to antiquity, and may be one of the very ancient breeds making them more wolf-like than some of the newer developed breeds. Whether they were developed in Tibet or China is a topic of some debate. Most accept that the dogs that became the modern Shih Tzu did come from Tibet, having been mixed with the Tibetan spaniel. China though is most likely where they were developed. It was the custom of the ancient time to present gifts to royalty, and often these gifts were dogs. As the story goes, these little dogs were given to Chinese nobility and then developed by mixing in some pug, Lhasa Apso, and Pekingese to create the Shih Tzu we know today. Some believe that the Japanese Chin added their genes to the mixture as well.

The Shih Tzu is called the lion dog because it was created to resemble a lion, the symbol of Buddhism. They were not called Shih Tzu until about the fourteenth century. They had many names including Lion dog, Holy dog, Royal dog, Ru dog, Foo dog, Chrysanthemum faced-dog and even Under the Table Dog.

Dowager Empress T'zu His ruled China from the mid-19th century until 1908 when she died. Ruthless, Dowager Empress ruled with impunity, but when it came to her dogs, she was warmhearted and genuinely devoted to them. She maintained large kennels of pugs, Pekingese and Shih Tzu and strived to create the modern Shih Tzu. When Communism came to China in 1949, dog breeding ceased, and the Shih Tzu became extinct in their country of origin.

Lucky for the breed, Shih Tzu dogs were imported into England and the U.S. The first dogs introduced to the U.S. was in 1938, two females named Ding-Ling of the Mynd and Wuffles of the Mynd. Shih Tzu dogs were scarce around the world, but slowly they were imported not only to the U.S., but also to England, Ireland, and Norway.

World War II had a devastating effect on the dog world. By the end of World War II, there were no Shih Tzu alive in China, and the gene pool around the world was extremely low.

It is estimated that 14 dogs that made up the original foundation stock for the entire breed. Not all 14 dogs, however, were Shih Tzu. There was one little male Pekingese named Philadelphus Suti-T-sun that was used in breeding because Shih Tzu breeders feared that the breed would be lost due to inbreeding. In 1952, Elfreda Evans deliberately bred a Pekingese into the stock to diversify the gene pool. Since it was presumed that the Pekingese was already part of the breed, this decision was not as farfetched as one might suspect. This action did come with criticism, and only dogs with six generations removed from the Pekingese could be registered.

Since they "looked" like Lhasa Apso, they were lumped together as the group of small longhaired dogs. By 1955, breeders had convinced the AKC, which the Shih Tzu was a distinct breed apart from the Lhasa Apso and was accepted into the Miscellaneous Group, but was not permitted to participate in dog shows. What the Shih Tzu needed was a parent group.

The American Shih Tzu Club was formed and by 1969, they were admitted into the Toy Group. From there, their numbers increased dramatically; they began enjoying success as Show Dogs, winning numerous Championships and trophies. As pets, they became more and more popular, and today, the AKC registers more than 30,000 Shih Tzu dogs a year.

TEMPERAMENT AND PERSONALITY

The Shih Tzu dog is a companion animal. Other than, to alert the habitats of ancient palaces in China to intruders, they have always had one job to do: Be a loyal, loving companion. They have never been required to chase prey, herd sheep, pull carts, and they do not make valuable search and rescue dogs. They do not sniff out drugs or tobacco, and you will never see them participating in the Iditarod. They leave all that "work" to other breeds. Their sole purpose in life is to love you.

We can generalize about the Shih Tzu, but each dog has its unique personality, just as humans do. Since they are a purebred dog, they may have more in common with each other than with a dog of many parentages.

Nature vs. Nurture: There is no longer a debate in the scientific community concerning whether an individual is the product of nature or nurture and this holds true for canines as well as humans. Many temperament traits are the result of genetics, and some of the characteristics are a result of early socialization and later treatment by owners.

These dogs, even though proud in appearance are very friendly, extremely loyal, playful, and charming. They love to be by the side of a human if not on the lap of the beloved owner. Shih Tzu dogs are proud and brave, with a big personality that makes up for its small size.

They have a keen sense of hearing. This allows them to alert you whenever they hear something unique. Each Shih Tzu dog has his or her unique bark. This breed does bark when they hear something, but are not a yappy breed. Once they know that all is well, they will settle down to their quiet self. This ability makes them excellent watchdogs, but do not expect them to be anything but their lovable, charming self to human intruders. On the other hand, they may protect you to the ends of the earth if another dog comes on your property, especially a large dog.

Many argue that the Shih Tzu Dog has an arrogant side to their personality. I think this label was attached to the breed because of three characteristics: First, their overall appearance is reminiscent of his royal background. Secondly, they have a delightful posture suggesting a confident personality. Finally, the way they walk or gait radiates nothing but confidence. There is nothing so lovely as to watch the gait of a Shih Tzu especially those with long flowing hair.

He won't herd sheep, or accompany you on your next hunting trip, but he does have an athletic side to him, even though it is short-lived. Many have done well in agility trials. Most Shih Tzu love to run from time to time, leap and jump. If you have more than one Shih Tzu, chances are they will find time each day for a lively game of chase. They will enjoy a walk if it is not too long and the weather is pleasant. Their energy levels are relatively short-lived, exerting a burst of energy, then collapsing on the floor or a comfortable pillow for a long nap. This trait makes them ideal for seniors and busy families who may not have the time to devote to appeasing the high-energy demands of some breeds.

Shih Tzu dogs can get most of their exercise requirements by following you around the house. They do enjoy a pleasant walk, or should I say stroll. Because the Shih Tzu dog is a brachycephalic breed, they can develop respiratory difficulties making it hard for them to do well on long hikes.

Puppies are more active than older dogs, but not all older Shih Tzu are couch potatoes. Many older Shih Tzu remain active and playful throughout their entire lifespan. This breed is perfect for seniors and those that prefer a slower type of life style, but can also adapt well to the demands of an active family

They get plenty of exercise through play, either with you or another dog. Some enjoy a game of fetch, although this is rare as they have little prey drive, a requirement for a successful "fetch" player. It just does not occur to them that they might have fun running after a ball.

Most love their human family, but some individuals will pick a particular person within the family in which to bond. The majority of them just seem to love any human they see and will bond with young children and senior adults very quickly. They are incredibly adaptable and adjust rapidly to a new home if they must change living arrangements.

Some toy dogs do not make good pets for children due to their small size. Shih Tzu dogs are the exception. While still small in build, they are compact and sturdy. Their size ranges from nine to 16 pounds although some can be smaller and you might see these smaller dogs labeled as Imperials or Chinese Imperials.

They are very smart, but stubborn and seem to take on the attitude, "what's in it for me." This stubborn streak makes training sometimes tricky especially for those dogs that do not find treats or toys especially appealing or motivating. You will appreciate the bond you will develop when you go to train. Those that are not food motivated may be driven to please you.

Housebreaking is usually the most difficult with this breed. Most Shih Tzu want to please their owners and developing a strong bond with your Shih Tzu will increase the likelihood that they will cooperate with you most of the time.

The key to training success with this breed is finding the perfect reward to use. Some will appreciate praise and cuddles, but tiny tasty treats work well with most dogs. Short training sessions work best because this breed is not known for long attention spans and some are downright distractible.

In this breed, there is little difference in the personality or temperament of males and females. Both are lovable, devoted, and playful. There is little difference between girls and boys when it comes to activity level. That seems to be more of an individual trait. Both genders get along well with other dogs, especially other Shih Tzu and most are good with the introduction of a young puppy to the family if done in a way that does not seem threatening to an older dog.

There are no hard and fast rules about choosing the gender of a second or third Shih Tzu. Neutered males do great, girls do well, and boys and girls do well. It is more of a personal choice than anything else.

Depending on the temperament of the dogs, two females can do fine as long as both accept the humans in the family as the alpha dog. Some people prefer males and find that two unrelated males will do fine, as long as they are neutered or are not around a female in season. More fights break out between two female dogs or two male dogs. Rarely do you see a female start a fight with a male.

-End of Sample-