

Samoyed Overview

Samoyed History

The Samoyed people, a dark-skinned semi-nomadic tribe, living along the shores of the Arctic Ocean into an immense stretch of tundras from the White Sea to the Yenisei River are a remnant of one of the earliest tribes of Central Asia. There is evidence that they migrated to the Arctic with their dogs at least one thousand years before the Christian era. They have been known to explorers for many centuries as mild, kindly people, manifesting extraordinary love for their beautiful dogs, which they treat as members of the family, sharing their table and bed which has given the Samoyed dog an unusual background of human association. No Samoyed tribesman ever strikes a dog; he trains by voice alone. These people developed a love and understanding of humankind and an unflinching sense of trust and loyalty in their dogs which remains a part of their character today. They lived by hunting and fishing. Existence depended upon their dogs who herded reindeer, fought off wolves, hunted the bear, guarded their belongings, shared their beds, and kept their children warm. The dogs were excellent fishermen and were used at times for towing boats and sledges when it was impossible to use the reindeer, generally the draught animal. Nansen (1893-94) was one of the first to use the Samoyed as a draught animal. He spent some time with the Samoyed tribe during his expedition to the North Pole. The natives lived in huts called "chooms." deerskin being used as tents, clothing, blankets and beds. They were a short, stocky people, the man standing about 5' tall, the woman shorter. They were strictly honest and kindly, though they managed their lifetime without a bath.

The qualities of intelligence and endurance led to the use of Samoyed dogs as transport by most of the important European expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic. Samoyed teams have made glorious history with Borchgrevink, Amundsen, and Shackleton in the Antarctic and with Nansen and Abruzzi in the Arctic. The American explorers Fiala and Baldwin also used Samoyed teams. Nansen's story of his Farthest North with Samoyeds on the first Fram expedition is an epic of dog valor that rings through the whole history of man's adventures at the ends of the earth.

One has only to read of the hardships these valiant dogs endured, worn and exhausted they were killed one by one to feed the others, they would not touch the meat and later in desperation it fed their masters. Feet torn and bleeding, they never flinched and worked until all their strength was gone. Only the hardest and fittest could withstand the cruelty of the bleak frozen lands; only a few returned. Most of the Samoyed strains in England and the United States are related to veteran sledge dogs of these expeditions.

Antarctic Buck was often stated as being the very first Samoyed dog to be imported into England. An article from "The Queen"- the Lady's Newspaper of England, May 15, 1909, proves otherwise as follows. "The breed was first introduced into England by Mr. Kilbourn Scott, a member of the Royal Zoological Society, in 1889- his first dog being bought from a tribe of Samoyeds in Archangel province in northwest Russia and he gave the present name of Samoyed to the breed- (pronounced with the accent on "SAM".)" This dog was named Sabarka and as their first dog generated interest in the breed. With more importation, the famous Farningham Kennels was founded. Many explorers obtained stock from here for further

expeditions. Later, Mr. Scott imported a magnificent dog, one of the pack used by the explorer Borchgrevink, born on the Southern Cross on the way to the Antarctic.

Again, quoted: "He stands 21-1/2 or 22 inches tall and is measured 35 inches long from the tip of his nose to the tip of his tail. He has the fine, open forehead, great ruff on neck, spreading tail and hair around the toes which are so characteristic of the breed. His fur is snowy white all over with a gloss on the hair which is peculiar to the breed. (Note: this is what we term silvertip on the coat.) He is a most lovable dog and before being brought to England, he was shown to Jack London, (who wrote so charmingly about Arctic dogs and their characteristics) who declared that Buck was one of the finest Arctic dogs he had seen. So typical a Samoyed is a great accession to the breed."

The first official standard for the breed was adopted in England in 1909. Although Sams arrived in America before this date, it was not until 1906 that the first Sam was registered with the American Kennel Club and appeared at shows. Very few of our present day Samoyeds were bred from these early AKC registered dogs, but from dogs imported prior to and immediately following World War I from large, well-established kennels in England. The original Samoyed Club of America was organized and chartered February 14, 1923 in the East. The first official American standard was adopted May 15, 1923.

Instinct and Intelligence

Historical background is retained as dogs were endowed with a fifth dimension where they in reflection reach back for generations and know the purpose for which they were intended. So the dog of today will know their part in life's scheme to protect, guide and herd, to love and be loved. Whether the subject is a reindeer or your wee child, be assured it will be guarded from danger with a love that knows no bounds.

The Samoyed is alert, expressive, intelligent, full of action and displays affection for all mankind. Joy is shown by the sparkle in his eyes and the mouth curving upward at the corners forming the well known "Sammy Smile."

Their intelligence can be a challenge to the owner. Man in the past depended upon the Samoyed and it was the latter who made the decisions, worked independently of man for the survival of man. The dog was "on his own" to find the reindeer, gain their confidence, protect them from wolves and herd them back to human environment. They taught their young this independence and responsibility, instilling this great instinct of reasoning so strongly that it rules the minds of our breed today. Yet we expect this highly intelligent animal to give up his heritage, his independence and bow to our every wish or we call him stubborn, unmanageable, stupid.

Size

The standard recommends males be 21" to 23-1/2" at the shoulder; bitches 19" to 21". There is no disqualification of size in this breed. Size varies from 17 inches to 25 inches though these extremes are usually sold as pets and seldom seen in the show ring. The majority of winning Sammies today are at the top of their standard size, rather than at the bottom.

Personality

By nature he is not a quarrelsome dog though he will stand his ground for what he feels are his rights. Being an all purpose dog he will easily adapt himself to any circumstances or environment and when brought up with children, they will be his favorites as he excels as a playmate and guardian who will not desert his charges when they are in danger. Each Samoyed is an INDIVIDUAL, even from one litter. One will be very attentive and obedient while another may be more headstrong and less demanding of affection as long as he KNOWS the house is his castle when he wants it and he owns you.

Personalities can and are changed with circumstances and environment. The happy, outgoing puppy can end up dull, shy or aggressive through neglect or mistreatment during his first year. Lack of harmony in the home will upset him, he cannot be happy if you are upset. He should be taken for short drives as early as eight to ten weeks, meet strangers and adjust to strange surroundings as well as other dogs when he is three months and older. Care must be taken that he is always treated kindly. Never allow an aggressive animal near him until he is old enough to accept such a challenge and protect himself. He must not be deprived of human relationship which he needs. Never tie him outdoors alone. This will change his personality as he was born to be free. A fenced-in yard is a must where he can get his exercise, feel the freedom of open area, yet be protected from death by a car. He will want to herd the neighbor's cat, rabbits, squirrels or explore the area, as much as ten miles of it.

He has a keen sense of knowing when you are happy, sad, who really loves him, just tolerates him, dislikes him and he will return his love accordingly. He thrives and his personality abounds with love and companionship in being part OF THE FAMILY, in the car as well as at home. There is no way of fully describing his understanding, intelligence, his value as a pet and/or show dog except to live very CLOSELY with one and experience the great treasure he becomes in your home.

He is a "talky" dog and with encouragement will voice his pleasures and his dislikes. Some enjoy jokes and ham it up when laughed at while others resent it. He will speak with his paw or nose. Many an owner can tell how a cup of coffee was almost bounced from their hands when they ignored his demand to be let outdoors. That nose will also be pressed softly under your arm for attention, pressure added when the first hints for recognition are ignored. They are naturals to "shake hands" as they are quick to offer a paw in friendliness, even when a small puppy. They use their feet cleverly to open doors, etc.

Living in Harmony with Your Samoyed

Why do so many owners have so many problems with their dogs while others have perfect harmony? The answer is in the handling, not by forceful demands, but an understanding of love and respect between them. He HAS a mind of his own, respect it and he will comply with love and patience. He can be the easiest of all breeds to train or the hardest to control, depending on how you handle the situation. Training MUST be given; a command once given MUST BE OBEYED. He WILL obey and keep his dignity if you have had close companionship and understanding of each other. Keep in mind your command can very well sound stupid to him. At this point while matching wits- meet the challenge, present your point as an enjoyable and

intelligent command by expressing delight in sharing it, praise him highly when done, even though it was not just as you expected. Being alert and full of action, the Samoyed should respond as a happy worker. His great love of mankind is your control of his independence. He is a jealous dog, he wants your attention, he will please you to get it.

The home life of the past reflects character today. He slept with his masters and the babies; the chooms were his home too, he was part of the family. Tie him, ignore him and you will have a problem dog to handle. Love him, gain his respect, take him with you for rides, let him share your home and life and you will build the character his breed possesses. Character cannot be built without close human relationship, neither in a kennel or at the end of a chain, but as the center of your attention, loved, respected and wanted. Your reward will be respect, protection, performance and love coupled with intelligence beyond belief.

The herding instinct is very strong. He will take off after a rabbit despite your command to stay. Accept him for what he is. He will need a fenced-in yard. If you want a dog who will stay on your porch, who will not stray, this is not your breed. If you are willing to give your time and love, you will receive the greatest treasure a dog lover could own, being owned by a Sammy.



Wonderland Samoyed Safe Haven

The mission of Wonderland Samoyed Safe Haven (WSSH) is to rescue, rehabilitate, and provide a safe haven and home for Samoyeds in need. Guided by the humane ethic, we protect the breed from neglect, abuse, and exploitation. WSSH seeks to inspire awareness and compassion for all living things.

Visit us at www.wssh.org or write to us at main@wssh.org.