

## Japanese Dog Breeds (Dogs Native to Japan)

The dogs that have inhabited Japan since ancient times are referred to as Japanese dogs. The Akita, Kai, Kishu, Shiba, Shikoku and Hokkaido are these breeds. Most of their names are associated with particular areas of Japan. These dogs, which were originally bred to hunt, could withstand cold weather and traverse mountainous terrain. Although they differ in size and color, they share common physical characteristics such as curled or upturned tails, prick ears and triangular-shaped heads with pointy muzzles. Their physical features have not changed for thousands of years. The Japanese government has designated these breeds as protected species to preserve them from extinction. Japanese dogs are popular not only in Japan but also in other countries for their simple nature, faithfulness and bravery. They make excellent guard dogs because of their loyalty and wariness of strangers.



The Shiba and Akita are the most famous of the six Japanese breeds. The Shiba is the smallest and most popular. The number of this breed registered in Japan is the largest. The Shiba is often said to be charming, energetic, patient, intelligent, territorial, and alert as well as an independent thinker. It can also be stubborn, bold and dauntless. Like the other Japanese breeds, the Shiba can make a great companion for the individual who gives it the attention and exercise it requires.

Many canine bones approximately the same structure and size as those of today's Shiba have been found in shell mounds that are thousands of years old. Many of the dogs are believed to have been buried with their masters, which shows the close relationship the people of the time had with the dogs.

The Akita is the biggest of the six Japanese dogs and the only breed that falls into the large dog category. The most famous Akita in Japan was Hachiko, who came to Shibuya Station in Tokyo at the same time every day for years to wait for his dead master's return. Hachiko's death in March 1935 was reported in the newspapers, and many people mourned him. The bronze statue of Hachiko outside Shibuya Station is considered a national monument and a symbol of faithfulness.

