

Further information

We hope that this gives you a basic insight into the Schipperke but if you want to find out more, please contact anyone on the Club's list of approved breeders, who will be pleased to provide any additional information and advice.

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THE SCHIPPERKE

Pronounced - 'Skip-er-key'

Information Sheet

The Schipperke Club recommends that its members use any health screening tests available to this breed



What does the Schipperke look like?

The Schipperke is thickset and cobby – a small, usually black dog possessing a thick, harsh coat with an obvious ruff on the neck and culottes on the backs of the thighs. The head is ‘foxy’ with pricked ears and an expressive face. The front portion of the dog appears slightly heavier than the rear but the overall structure is relatively fine.

The Schipperke in Great Britain is also found in a gold or cream colour, but the Breed Standard does allow other solid colours, although these are rarely seen.

Characteristics

The Schipperke has been described as a large dog in a small body. It has the instincts of a guard dog – protective, devoted, and courageous. At the time the breed was developed, dogs had to be useful to justify their existence. Just as a sheepdog was the guardian of herds and farm property, the Schipperke was the guardian of the household. In common with all guarding breeds, Schipperkes possess an inordinate sense of responsibility towards the home and everything in it and have a loyalty for those to whom they are devoted. Although the Schipperke is a small dog, its sharp bark will make enough noise to scare away any burglars or unwelcome strangers.

The Schipperke is an inquisitive breed – a trait which creates the perfect watchdog. Nothing in the home escapes close inspection. The breed is interested, alert and active with a capacity for fun and mischief. Many have also performed well in agility and obedience.

In 1882, a Belgian writer described the Schipperke temperament thus: ‘A little, black devil, but minus the cloven hoof and the tail, such is the Boatman’s dog. A very demon for rats, mice, moles and anything that moves. An indefatigable watchdog, he rests neither day nor night always on foot never weary of inspecting the house from cellar to garret and as soon as he observes anything amiss he warns his master by his piercing barks. He knows the ways of the family, mixes himself into everything and ends up by thinking that he is the one who directs the household. His fidelity to his master is unalterable; his gentleness with children is equal to any test, but let a stranger beware if he lays a hand on any object or person; the Schipperke has teeth and can use them. A good stable dog, he is a great friend with horses and an excellent Horseman’.

The ideal Companion.

The Schipperke is an ideal house dog. As a whole, the breed is clean in habit, small enough to live in an apartment or flat, economical to maintain and very healthy.

As incurable busybodies, Schipperkes find many distractions within the house but still need regular exercise outside to keep in good physical condition and good health. It must be kept in mind that the Schipperke needs an active way of life, whether in a city apartment or a country estate. Nothing delights Schipperkes more than to be with their owners for everything, be it a long rambling hike in the country, a leisurely walk along the city street, or even an idle day spent at home.

Children and Schipperkes are natural companions. Though gentle with youngsters and babies in the family, this little dog becomes an unswerving protector at the approach of any perceived danger.

It should not be forgotten, of course, that it is necessary to train any dog to be a good citizen, regardless of the breed.

Origins

The Schipperke is a Belgian breed, known to have dated back to 1690 when shoemakers in Brussels held a competition at the ‘Grand Place’. Each Schipperke wore a special collar, designed to avoid damaging the coat.

During the early development of the Schipperke, it was known by two names, which left some controversy as to the breed’s true origin.

1. The name Schipperke was introduced by boat captains, and derived from the Flemish word ‘Schip’ meaning Boat and therefore Schipperke translated means ‘Little Boat Man’. It has been suggested that the dogs’ tails were docked so as not to upset the goods on the barges.
2. The Schipperke was also found in homes of merchants and many believed that the name derived from the corruption of the word ‘Scheper’ meaning ‘Little Shepherd’.

It is also thought that the Schipperke may descend directly from the fifth member of the Belgian Shepherd Dog family, the ‘Leuvenaar’, now extinct. This dog was frequently seen in the region of Louvain accompanying waggoners and messengers.

Some fanciers also suspected that the Schipperke may have been crossed with the Pomeranian at one time, giving the breed its Spitz like characteristics. Like many breeds, however, the breed’s origins are now lost in history but we are left with today’s hardy, active little dog which still fulfils its established role as a pet and first-rate companion.