

# BREED TYPE in the ALASKAN MALAMUTE

In 1935 the American Kennel Council recognised the Alaskan Malamute as a pure bred dog. The initial recognition came about due to the hard work of a small number of people, most notably Eva "Short" Seeley, who developed the breed. The dogs used by Seeley to develop the breed resembled those dogs kept by an Indian tribe known as the Mahlamute tribe. The dogs, known within the breed as "Kotzebue's", were a small, hardworking dog, designed to live and work in hard conditions.

The original Standard called for males to be 23 to 25 inches at the shoulder, bitches 20 to 23 inches. Hardly big dogs at all. And yet, the Standard talked of "unusual strength" and "enormous propelling power". Were they wanting disproportionately sized dogs, massive yet short? No, of course not. The same people who worked to develop this breed and write the breed Standard, also worked to develop, gain official recognition for and write the breed standard for the Siberian Husky, which was recognised by the AKC 5 years prior to the Alaskan Malamute.

The original Alaskan Malamute Breed standard was written *in comparison* to that of the Siberian Husky.

The Siberian Husky was for light weight, long distance "as quick as you can" sledding. The Alaskan Malamute was for long distance freight haulage.

When disaster (aka the United States Armed Forces) struck the stocks of registered Alaskan Malamutes, decimating it to almost extinction, the Stud Books were re-opened and new blood allowed in. This new blood came in the form of other Kotzebue's, as well as a different strain, known as "M'Loot's", and "the third strain", sometimes called the "Hinman-Irwin dogs". The Standard had to be altered to accommodate these new dogs, leading to the Standard we have today. A variation in size, colour and markings all had to be introduced.

So with this unusual and recent history, what is **correct** Malamute BREED TYPE?

**"The Malamute is structured for strength and endurance, and any characteristic of the individual specimen, including temperament, which interferes with the accomplishment of this purpose, is to be considered the most serious of faults."**

**"CHARACTERISTICS - Important: In judging Malamutes, their function as a sledge dog for heavy freighting in the Arctic must be given consideration above all else."**



"Form follows function" applies to the Alaskan Malamute more so than any other breed. The Alaskan Malamute is a sledge dog whose every feature relates to its function AND its survival.

Many features, from the shape of its head, its top line, tail carriage, coat and even colour, help distinguish it from other arctic sledding breeds such as the Siberian Husky and the Canadian Eskimo Dog. Other features, such as substance, movement and coat are essential factors.

The Alaskan Malamute should show **STRENGTH, ENDURANCE, ATHLETICISM, and WEATHER RESISTANCE.**

## STRENGTH

The following are excerpts from the breed

Standard:

*The Alaskan Malamute, one of the oldest Arctic sled dogs, is a powerful and substantially built dog with a deep chest and strong, well-muscled body.*

*The Malamute must be a heavy boned dog with sound legs, good feet, deep chest and powerful shoulders, and have all of the other physical attributes necessary for the efficient performance of his job.*

*The legs of the Malamute must indicate unusual strength and tremendous propelling power.*

*The head is broad and deep*

*Muzzle: Is large and bulky in proportion to the size of the skull*

*Mouth - The upper and lower jaws are broad with large teeth.*

*Neck - The neck is strong*

*The forelegs are heavily boned and muscled*

*Pasterns are short and strong*

*The chest is well developed.*

*The loins are hard and well muscled*

*The rear legs are broad and heavily muscled*

*The feet are large*

*The toenails are short and strong.*

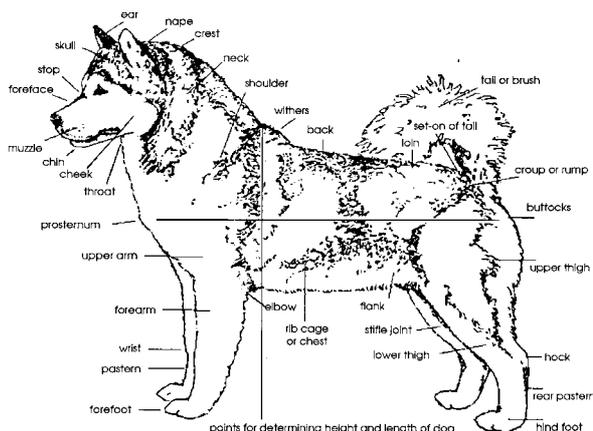
*Hocks joints are moderately bent and well let down*

Every aspect right down to the toenails should indicate "STRENGTH". If the exhibit before you does not give you an impression of strength, can it be good breed type?

This should not equate to size, or bulk. Remember always the original 1935 AKC Standard called for males to be 23 to 25 inches at the shoulder and weighing 38.5 kg, bitches 20-23 inches at the shoulder and weighing 34 kg, this is not a large heavy dog. The current Standard also specifies that "There is a natural range of size in the breed." And "size consideration should not outweigh that of type, proportion, movement and other functional attributes. When dogs are judged equal in type, proportion, and movement, the dog nearest the desirable freighting size is to be preferred."

The size of an exhibit should leave you in no doubt as to which of the northern breeds you are looking at. An Alaskan Malamute should never give you the impression of speed, and should never be so light as to appear to be a Siberian Husky. Nor should it be so heavy that it would be likely to sink and struggle in deep soft snow.

Remember at all times, this is a freighting dog. **STRENGTH!!**



## ENDURANCE

The following are excerpts from the breed Standard:

*The Malamute must ... have all of the other physical attributes necessary for the efficient performance of his job. The gait must be steady, balanced, tireless and totally efficient. He is not intended as a racing sled dog designed to compete in speed trials.*

*The Malamute is structured for .... endurance, and any characteristic of the individual specimen, including temperament, which interferes with the accomplishment of this purpose, is to be considered the most serious of faults.*

*Their function as a sledge dog for heavy freighting in the Arctic must be given consideration above all else.*

*The gait of the Malamute is steady, balanced and powerful. The hindquarters exhibit strong rear drive that is transmitted through a well-muscled loin to the forequarters. The forequarters receive the drive from the rear with a smooth reaching stride.*

*A stilted gait, or any gait that is not completely efficient and tireless, is to be penalised.*

*Desirable freighting sizes:*

*Dogs: 63.5 cm (25 ins) at the shoulders - 38.5 kg*

*Bitches: 58.5 cm (23 ins) at the shoulders - 34 kg*

*The body carries no excess weight, and bone is in proportion to size.*

**FAULTS** - *Any characteristic of the individual specimen, including temperament, which interferes with his strength and endurance is to be considered the most serious of faults.*

*Any indication of unsoundness in legs and feet, front or rear, standing or moving.*

History tells us the Alaskan Malamute worked as a sledge dog, hauling heavy sleds long distances, and as a backing packing dog, carrying heavy packs over long distances. Not just for a day or two here and there, but all day, day after day.

If the exhibit before you does not give you an impression of endurance, if it does not have a steady, tireless and powerful gait, can it be good breed type?

Think of a weightlifter. Can the weightlifter be expected to lift heavy weights all day every day, day after day? **NO!** Endurance does not mean large and bulky. The ability for endurance **MUST** be present.



## ATHLETICISM

To have the endurance to do long haul freighting work the Malamute must be an athlete, and to reflect this the breed standard emphasises heavily or well-muscled 5 times. Do not confuse excess weight with substance or muscling – an out-of-condition Malamute should not be rewarded.

The following are excerpts from the Breed Standard:

*The Malamute stands well over the pads, and this stance gives the appearance of much activity and proud carriage, with head erect and eyes alert showing interest and curiosity.*

*He is a loyal, devoted companion, playful on invitation*

*He is agile for his size and build.*

**FAULTS** - *Any indication of unsoundness in legs and feet, front or rear, standing or moving. Ponderousness, Straight shoulders, Lack of angulation, Bad pasterns, Cow hocks, Stilted gait.*



**Correct Rear**



**Bandy or Bowed Rear**



**Cowhocks**

History tells us the Alaskan Malamute had to forage for its own food during the summer months, and was used to hunt seal and course polar bear. It was expected to work on ice, as well as in snow drifts. How could a dog without athleticism be expected to hunt, to course, work its way through soft snow without sinking, and haul freight at the same time?

If the exhibit before you does not give you an impression of athleticism, can it be good breed type?

## WEATHER RESISTANCE

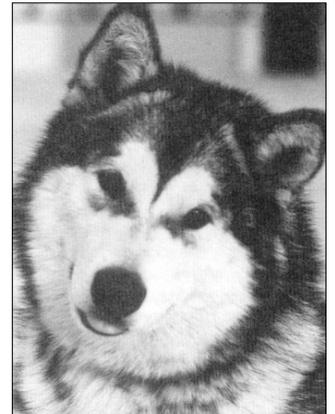
The following are excerpts from the breed Standard:

*One of the oldest Arctic sled dogs*

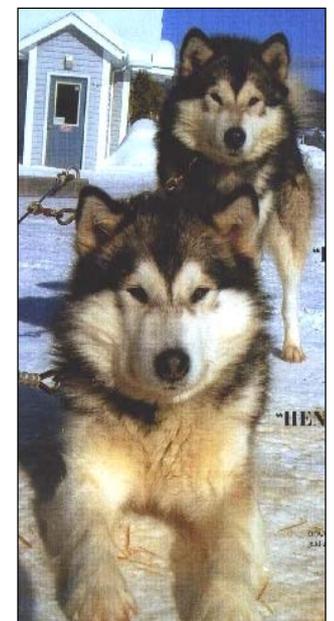
*The coat is thick with a coarse guard coat of sufficient length to protect a woolly undercoat.*

**Important:** *In judging Malamutes, their function as a sledge dog for heavy freighting in the Arctic must be given consideration above all else.*

*The Malamute has a thick, coarse guard coat, never long and soft. The undercoat is dense, from 2.5 - 5 cm (1 - 2 ins) in depth, oily and woolly. The coarse guard coat varies in length as does the undercoat. The coat is relatively short to medium along the sides of the body, with the length of the coat increasing around the shoulders and neck, down the back, over the rump, and in the breeching and plume.*



*Correct head shape is vital to arctic survival.*



History tells us that dogs with coats with too much length were susceptible to harsh arctic winds opening the coats, letting the weather reach the skin. Long coats were susceptible to being frozen to the ground over night, resulting in the dog being stuck to the ground, able to move only by ripping out chunks of hair and skin. Coats that were too short failed to provide adequate protection from those same harsh winds and coats lacking in correct texture simply did not repel the weather. Longer coats mean ice balls are too far from the body for the body heat to melt.

*Other weather resistance characteristics:*

*Head shape:* moderately rounded with a moderate stop and slight furrow between eyes - this needs to be felt as protective fatty pads over the eyes can give the appearance of a pronounced stop. Correct head shape means there are no sharp angles to collect snow.

*Tail carriage and length:* the tail must be of sufficient length to cover the muzzle when curled up, this protects the face and allows the Malamute to breath in warmed air.

*Snow shoe feet:* to prevent the Malamute from sinking into the snow.

*Close fitting lips and eyes:* any loose mucous membranes would freeze in the arctic.

If the exhibit before you does not have correct coat and other weather resistant attributes, can it survive? Dead dogs cannot work. If it cannot survive, if it can not work, can it be good breed type?

## Strength, Endurance, Athleticism, Weather Resistance...

These four things are the basics. An exhibit displaying 1, 2 or even 3 of these things and not the remainder lacks balance, and lacks an essential element of breed type.

Of course, there's more to type than just these four things. There are the basics of any Spitz breed - the double coat, wedge shaped head, erect ears, curled tail. And there are also features which distinguish the Alaskan Malamute from the other arctic breeds.

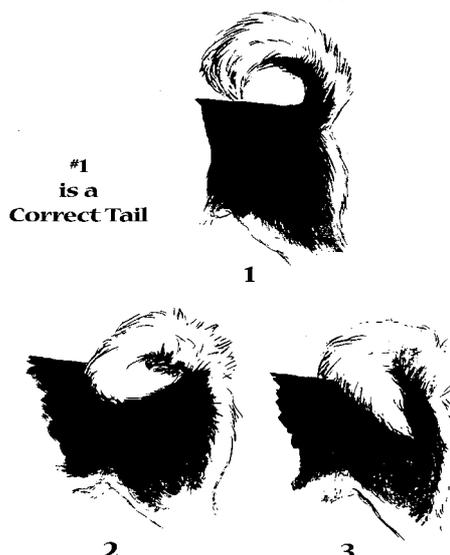
The breadth and depth of head, the ear set, the muzzle, should all differentiate the Alaskan

Malamute from the Siberian Husky and the Canadian Eskimo Dog (CED).

The top line of the Alaskan Malamute gently slopes from withers to croup, whilst the other two breeds have level top lines.

The Alaskan Malamute's tail, a waving plume, differs from the CED's which is to be "carried up or curled over the back, and the Siberian Husky's is usually carried in a sickle curve. Note also the Alaskan Malamute Breed Standard states the tail "Is moderately set and follows the line of the spine at the

base." The Siberian Husky's states "The well furred tail of fox-brush shape is set on just below the level of the top line". The CED does not mention tail set (as opposed to carriage).



Coats also differ, with the Alaskan Malamute coat expected to stand off, whilst the Siberian Husky calls for a smooth lying coat.

Both the CED and the Siberian Husky can be any colour or combination of colours, whilst the Alaskan Malamute has only 1 allowable solid colour (white) and otherwise has a mantled coat "and broken colours extending over the body or uneven splashing are undesirable".

Above all else- can it work? Can it survive?

If the answer is 'no' for any reason, consider the question: "Is it type?"

## STUDY THE STANDARD:

The Alaskan Malamute Breed Standard is most explicit. For example, the Alaskan Malamute **is**, (not "should be"). The ears **are**, (not "should be"). The head **is**, (not "should be") and so on. The eyes **are**, the ears **are**, the jaws **are**, the neck **is**, the shoulders **are**, pasterns **are**, the chest **is**, the body **is**, the back **is**, the loins **are**, the rear legs **are**, the feet **are**, the tail **is**, the gait **is**, etc.etc.etc.

There is very little room for misinterpretation!

*Below: The Alaskan Malamute of today still needs to be soundly structured and in good physical condition to perform the strenuous activities that are part of their natural heritage such as backpacking, sledding & weight-pulling.*

