

## Characteristics of the Chihuahua

**Chihuahuas are social animals that prefer associating with veritable bands of dogs.**

*By Barbara J. Andrews*

The Chihuahua is an incredibly loyal friend. You are his world, not because he fears being out there all alone as do some toy dogs, but because regarding you as the center of his universe is a breed characteristic! Was it developed by centuries of human selection for the trait? I think not. There are other equally ancient breeds that will happily leave their human to chase a rabbit or explore the next horizon. The Chihuahua actually prefers your company to that of other dogs. Think about that. Most dogs will continue to play together when their owners call. Most children will continue to play when moms call. Your Chihuahua will stop, ask if you really mean it and then fly into your arms! He would rather be snuggled next to you than chasing a butterfly. He requires touching, petting, conversation and your approval. Never too pushy, he will employ clever tricks to get your attention. If you are too busy to be amused or talked into a cuddle, he will just lie down close to you and wait.

ChiChis are very sociable with their own kind and two or more males can get along well, although you may have to forgive a bit of marking behavior when there is a female in season. Females will establish a pecking order and then show great affection for one another.

They love to sleep under a sheet or blanket and will even burrow under pillows in order to feel covered. Can this be a retained instinct from a burrowing desert dweller? Although some other breeds like to be covered, none seems so determined as the Chihuahua.

Seeking sunlight is another highly developed compulsion in this breed. It's comical to watch your Chihuahua curl up in a tiny spot of warmth by the window and then observe his annoyance when he awakens to find that the spot has moved and left him in the shade!

Chihuahuas are ideal for single people, the elderly, the handicapped and shut-ins. They want nothing more than to be with their person and are especially perceptive of human moods. Moved to silent tears by a TV movie, I was brought back to the present by a gentle and reassuring kiss from the ChiChi that had been snoozing in my lap. If you are reading or napping, they will lie quietly, waiting, very aware of you. If you are moving from room to room, there is no need to look for your little friend. If you can't see him, it is because he is standing right at your heel, waiting to see which way you are going next.

According to an article published in *Our Dogs* in 1904, well-known singer Rosina Casselli stated that her Mexican Chihuahuas never got distemper. Other records, including those of Señora Dolores Gonzalez, bear out this amazing truth. This was so firmly known that even when the disease was common throughout Europe, Chihuahua owners rarely inoculated their dogs.

This does not suggest that your dog should be deprived of today's perfected vaccines; however, you might wish to discuss with your vet the possibility of a three-year vaccination program rather than yearly. It would be prudent to consider the long lifespan of the breed. A dog with a life expectancy of seven years will receive only half as many challenges to its immune system as compared to your little dog. More breeders and vets are rethinking the necessity of yearly vaccinations.

In all, the Chihuahua is an amazingly hardy and disease-free pure-bred. Certain small dog problems have been reported, including cleft palates and hypoglycemia, the former of which affects newborn puppies. Other problems include hemophilia A, secondary glaucoma, certain heart-valve problems, lung problems and hydrocephalus. Discuss these health issues with the breeder before making a final decision about buying a pup from his line.

Excerpts from *Comprehensive Owners Guide: Chihuahuas*