

Characteristics of the Chihuahua

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

By Barbara J. Andrews

Each breed is unique, which is why my husband and I have enjoyed six breeds in our more than forty years of active participation in the dog sport. As a young child, my heart was owned by an English Springer Spaniel named "Babe." She was a Christmas present, and though I would have been just as thrilled with a horse, my father chose wisely. The dog enabled us to share something wonderful at a time when an only child needed to know her father.

My teenage years with an English Setter ended when she was struck by a car. It seems like yesterday that I knelt in the busy street, wailing in despair. When my mother pulled her from my arms, I thought I would die. Forty years later, I held fast to a very special Akita, but even my grown-up arms were not strong enough to keep him in my world.

Why do we allow ourselves to be so emotionally destroyed again and again? I suppose it's because we invite these dogs into our lives and because the brief time we have with them brings us much more than is taken away when the Creator calls in the loan. So if your next best friend is a little perro with a saucy expression and dancing feet, treasure each chuckle, each moment of comfort that he gives you, and know that he will be with you for a long time.

A Reason & A Ruff

Nothing is worse than a watchdog that barks at the neighbor's cat. When the Chihuahua barks, however, the reason is worth investigating! We are drawn to certain breeds because of size, personality or coat type. Much will depend on your age and lifestyle at the time. It is hoped that you are reading this book because you have decided to approach ownership thoughtfully and plan a long-term commitment. If your choice is the Chihuahua, it will be a long friendship as the breed commonly lives well past ten years.

No matter how much research you do, falling in love can still happen by chance. Owning a Chihuahua was the last thing I expected even though grooming big hairy dogs and running full-tilt around the show ring had me thinking about the practicality of a smaller breed. We continued to cast speculative glances at smaller dogs but none really excited me.

Then, while on the way to ringside, I spied an excited group of people and detoured to see what was happening. Pushing my way between a very large lady and a pogo-stick (which turned out to be a little girl bouncing up and down in constrained enthusiasm), I saw what had drawn the crowd. I too wanted to reach down and scoop them all up but, like the child, I knew better. They were incredibly cute! Fluffy elfin creatures and sleek doe-like babies in a kaleidoscope of gorgeous colors!

Entranced, I realized that they weren't barking. In another ex-pen, there were several silent adults watching and wagging, and I wondered why I'd accepted the stereotype of "yappy ankle biters." Just as I was readjusting my perceptions, suddenly there erupted a ferocious barking as the adults squared off with an Irish Wolfhound, whose owner had pushed through to see the pups. The males were braced side to side, stiff-legged, ruffs ridged, tails up and vibrating as they dared the giant intruder to take just one more step! This was truly the dog world's equivalent of a Jonathan Swift battle of the Lilliputians and the Brobdingnagian. The girls bounced back and forth, barking encouragement while threatening to bite off the monster's toe. Everyone laughed as I continued to reevaluate what I thought I knew about the littlest breed!

Men Love Chihuahuas!

Famed band leader Xavier Cugat never went anywhere without the company of his tiny pack. Men who are confident in their own masculinity are quite willing to become acquainted with a "lap dog." Having done so, they are hooked! When the crowd had finally departed, I stayed to talk with the breeder and it became increasingly apparent that a fortuitous change of direction had afforded me a whole new perspective. She let me hold a puppy and I had found our "smaller" breed.

Living with the Chihuahua has caused many erroneous conceptions to fall away. For example, we often think of toy dogs as being weak or sickly. While they can't be allowed to romp with large dogs and dropping a ChiChi is likely to result in serious injury, the breed is far from delicate. They are the best watchdogs on our property, which is also guarded by Akitas and Miniature Bull Terriers. Whether inside or in the ChiChi house adjoining the bedroom, the only time that they bark is when something is amiss. When the Akitas bark at night, we roll over and go back to sleep. It is only a deer or some other night creature that they see frequently. If the Chihuahuas join in, we get up to check! Next page >

Excerpts from Comprehensive Owners Guide: Chihuahuas