

The Two Akitas

An Akita lover wonders what the differences are between the Japanese and American versions of the breed.

By Allan Reznik

Q. I'm really interested in owning an Akita someday. However, I'm having a hard time understanding a few things about the breed. I gather there is a Japanese Akita and an American Akita, although the AKC does not recognize them as separate. The problem I'm having is figuring out what's true about the Japanese Akita. Some websites say they bark a lot. I also wonder what the two types of Akitas are like with kids.

A. The Japanese Akita is a more moderate-looking dog. It has no wrinkling on the forehead, as the American Akita does, and colors are most commonly solid red or solid white. The FCI, which holds world shows overseas, chose to split the breed some years ago. However, the differences have more to do with aesthetics than temperament or traits like barking.

Akitas are massive canines, strong and often dog-aggressive. Take your time finding a reputable breeder who socializes her puppies and has years of experience in the breed. Akitas love children but can easily knock over toddlers in their exuberance. Parental supervision is essential.

Training your Akita not to bark inappropriately will be among your tasks as a responsible owner.

Contact your local Akita club to find good breeders in your area.

You can do an online search for breeders of the Japanese Akita specifically; they do exist in this country. However, finding an excellent breeder with sound, good-natured dogs is far more important than finding an Akita with or without a bit of wrinkling or a dog of a certain color.