

Meet the Breed

Smaller Packages: Different only in size, Toy and Miniature Poodle varieties are integral parts of this distinguished and time-tested breed.

By Stephanie Horan

Poodles, their owners say, can do anything, and their record certainly supports that claim. They have performed tricks to delighted audiences, pulled sleds, sniffed out truffles, assisted as guide dogs, visited the elderly and ill, worked as bird dogs, guarded homes and families, excelled in dog sports such as obedience and agility, and strutted their stuff as conformation dogs.

Joann Neal, a breeder, has owned Poodles for 50 years and has experience with all three varieties -- Toy, Miniature and Standard. When asked what she loves about her breed, she lists its many virtues. "[The dogs] are smart and attentive, great company, and ready and excited to participate in any activity," Neal says. "Happy, outgoing personalities are the norm."

All three Poodle varieties belong to the same breed. The Standard Poodle is thought to be the oldest of the three, but the Miniature and Toy varieties were probably developed shortly afterward, bred down from the larger Standard variety. The breed standard for all three is identical except for size.

There are no such varieties as "teacup" or "tiny teacup" Poodles. These are just marketing terms invented for Toy Poodles that are much smaller than the standard requires. Unscrupulous breeders often charge high prices for these very tiny dogs, but they are prone to a variety of health problems.

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