

Schnauzers

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Patti Roth

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"We have unfortunately rewarded this behavior by laughing," said his owner Diana Garner of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. And now Fletch has moved his new game indoors. He recently locked a sliding glass door, leaving Garner stuck outside in the 40-below chill. "The whole time Fletch stood and wagged his tail on the other side of the glass, quite proud of his trick."

The Standard Schnauzers' intelligence and sense of humor entertain owners. "They're known as the dog with the human brain," said Darlene Cornell of Newburgh, N.Y., breeder referral coordinator for the Standard Schnauzer Club of America. "They learn things quickly so you have to teach them right from wrong. Sometimes they are smarter than their owners. They have a super attitude, but you have to show them affection and spend a lot of time with them. They're extremely social and enjoy the company of humans as well as other dogs."

Intelligent & Exuberant

Lori Elvin of Grafton, Ontario, Canada, lives with six Standard Schnauzers and an Australian Shepherd. "The best word I can think of to describe Standard Schnauzers is exuberant," she said. "Everything is done with flourish and gusto, from greeting your return to warning you of strangers approaching the house. They live and love life to the fullest and are not sedate, decorative dogs."

Albert, a Standard Schnauzer owned by LeAnn Shank of Bellwood, Pa., enjoys running on exercise treadmills. "Albert jumps on the treadmill and barks and just insists that you turn it on," she said. "You can see the joy in his eyes."

That Schnauzer spunk and intelligence are part of the dogs' appeal. It's also part of the challenge. "Standard Schnauzers are an excellent breed for those who want to devote time and energy into training and working with their dog," said Arden Holst of Los Angeles, former president of the Standard Schnauzer Club of America. "Their intelligence is a double-edged sword, however, because if you do not train them, they learn things on their own, things you may not want them to know, such as how to get into the garbage or out of the fence."

Standards are the original of the three Schnauzer breeds but they're few in number. The American Kennel Club registered 598 in 2000, a ranking of No. 96 out of 148 breeds. Breeding usually occurs among responsible hobbyists rather than commercial breeders, keeping the breed out of the public eye. The work associated with these dogs, from grooming to keeping up with their energy, limits demand. Carol Ann Richie of Oakton, Va., president of the Standard Schnauzer Club of America, becomes concerned when breed numbers get too low, because this can affect the size and strength of the gene pool. However, many Schnauzer owners are glad the popularity remains low. This keeps interest primarily with owners and breeders dedicated to the dog rather than those motivated by money and trends.

The Standard Schnauzer's origins are mysterious, though it's believed to be the result of crossbreeding black German Poodles, Wirehaired Pinschers and gray Wolf-spitz. The centuries-old breed was brought to the United States about 100 years ago and has long been appreciated for its intelligence, fearlessness and versatility. In their native Germany, Schnauzers were farm dogs whose duties included herding livestock and guarding produce carts in the marketplace. Since then, they have performed police and search-and-rescue work including explosives detection and served as tiny dispatch carriers and therapy dogs.