

## *Breed Standards what are they really used for?*

*A Breed Standard - what is it, what does it mean – and just why are they so pawisitively important to know about when looking for a breeder and a purebred dog?*

*To start, a breed standard is an official document written with one goal in mind: to provide a description of a breed that defines its look, character, and working ability. In a sense, a breed standard is the blue print of a breed. It's what makes each breed distinctive and different from any other breed in the vast selection of purebred dogs. Breed Standards separate the Dobermans from the Rottweilers and keep the Pomeranians from looking like small Chow Chows.*

### ***The Definition of a Breed***

*Standards define a breed in very specific ways, (sometimes very technical ways), describing things such as temperament, coat and colour, head type, eye colour, ears, teeth, tail, structure, gait, hindquarters, forelegs, feet, and faults. What's acceptable, and what is not.*

*And its all of those things combined that make the breed what they are supposed to be.*

*Some breed standards focus more on working abilities, while others define which qualities are considered more virtuous than others. And though some even include features that are purely aesthetic, all of the descriptions found in the standard generally have a purpose. They are not just some arbitrary portrayals a group of people threw together to describe a breed in somewhat pretty terms.*

*Take the case of the Alaskan Malamute and the Siberian Husky - though similar in appearance, their standards are entirely different. The Alaskan Malamute is a draught dog bred to pull heavy freight over short distances. Their breed standard describes them as “a powerful and substantially built dog with a deep chest and strong, well-muscled body.” Compare that to a Siberian Husky which is bred to haul light loads at moderate speeds over long distances. They are described in their standard as “a medium-sized working dog, light on his feet, free and graceful in action...with an inbred desire to run.”*

*And it's these differences which define the breed.*

### ***Standards and Shows***

*In fact, breed standards are so important that the ENTIRE world of championship dog shows revolves around them. At every Easter at the Sydney Royal Show we see all that grooming and fluffing and gaiting and baiting, and are impressed by the glamour and beauty of dogs shown to perfection in the Garden. But beneath all that glitz and glamour, each dog is being judged according to its breed standard. In point of fact, dogs are judged according to their breed standards everywhere in the world where dog shows are held. That is the purpose of a dog show – to award dogs that come closest to their breed standard with the idea that those*

*dogs then go on to reproduce those qualities in future generations of its breed – thus preserving each breed and how it is meant to look, act, and work, according to its standard.*

*Therefore, it should go without saying, that breed standards are extremely important to responsible breeders. And though the interpretation of a standard is often subjective, responsible breeders know their standards by heart and can quote them word for word. They try to breed dogs that fit within the parameters of the standard, and don't ignore things that the standard says is not proper for the breed when selecting dogs for breeding. They carefully weigh virtues against faults, and don't ignore things like height, and colour, and temperament, and structure, because those are the things that define the breed.*

*And though not all their puppies will grow up to be show dogs and may have traits that do not conform to the ideals portrayed by the breed standard, the responsible breeder will at least have tried to breed dogs that are good representative of what their breed is meant to be. Through responsible breeding, the integrity of a breed is not only maintained, it is often improved through selective breeding and health screening, whether it's for the next generation of show dogs or for loving family companions.*

*Compare that to the less responsible breeder, the backyard breeders and puppy mills, who breed dogs without regard to the standard, disregard things that define the breed, and ignore the importance of temperament and genetic health.*

*Although many puppy buyers might not care too much about breed standards and dog shows, they should care about whether their breeder is breeding responsibly by making experienced and educated decisions about which dogs are used for breeding, and which dogs are not, rather than using any old dog just because it's purebred. That is why knowing the standard, and breeding to the standard is so important.*

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*Some text has been change to met Australia's show circuit.*