

## TOY GROUP

Your Story, bred by David Fitzpatrick and owned by Jodie and Steve Strait.

Winners Dog was Sunquest Enchanted (Chance), with breeder-owner-handler Kay Canaan.

Best in Puppy Sweepstakes was Taeplace Tesoro of Pekinggarden, bred and owned by Beth Ferrier and Gladys Knox. Best Junior was Ms. Emily Landers.

This show was executed under the expertise of Show Chair Jason Hoke, Assistant Show Chair Elizabeth Tilley-Poole, and Show Secretary Susan Gordon.

—Pekingese Club of America

## Pomeranians

### JUDGING POMERANIAN PUPPY COATS

One of the Pomeranian’s most distinguishing features is its beautiful coat. A correct double coat consists of a short, dense undercoat and longer, textured guard hair. Combined, this forms a ruff around the



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*Pomeranian*

neck, over the shoulders, and on the chest. The thighs and hind legs are heavily coated, and the length is maintained to form a skirt. The tail is profusely covered with the same long, harsh hair to form a heavy plume.

The first few sentences of the Pomeranian breed standard include description of the correct coat in detail and should help clarify the strong emphasis on a correctly coated dog:

“The double coat consists of a short dense undercoat

with a profuse harsh-textured longer outer coat. The heavily plumed tail is one of the characteristics of the breed. ...”

While overall breed type, structure, and movement are essential to the breed, the coat is an important element and should be given the proper weight when judging.

It is no secret that Alopecia X (also referred to by vets as hair cycle arrest) is a problem that plagues several Spitz breeds, especially the Pomeranian. The American Pomeranian Club, its members, and breeders recognize this to be a serious problem and have contributed countless time and funding to research and education. While the exact cause of Alopecia X remains unknown, it is essential that dogs with improper coats are not used in breeding programs and that dogs showing indications of this disease are not awarded in the show ring.

While you can only judge the dog on the day, you must consider the impact

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of today's judging on the future. Every pedigree and line matures differently, and even breeders cannot predict how a dog will fully mature. However, there are indicators that can help determine if the coat is properly transitioning to the ideal double coat that is outlined in the standard.

Puppies, especially in the 6–9 Months class, may mostly have a softer, dense, shorter coat all over their body. As puppies mature, they will often have a “stripe” of hair up their back that is more brilliant in color and is harsher in texture. This is the adult coat that is beginning to grow. This stripe will eventually expand and the rest of the body, the tail, and pants will also begin to grow guard hair.

Often one of the first indicators of Alopecia X is a profuse, abundant puppy coat that lacks guard hairs. As the dog ages, the cottony coat does not properly shed out or transition, and the hair eventually becomes dry

and brittle.

The timeline for each dog's coat transition varies, but judges should be able to see guard hairs by the time the dog is being shown at 6 months of age. When the dog is 12 months of age, you should be able to appropriately judge the double coat described in the standard.

It is also important to note, dogs who have a correct double coat often have a “one-year shed,” meaning dogs in the 12–18 class may appear more open-coated than dogs who are younger or older.

While a flat or open coat is also undesirable, the proper shedding of the puppy coat and regrowing of the undercoat as the dog matures is encouraging. Breeders see it as a sign that the proper double coat will be present throughout the remainder of the dog's life.

To properly judge the Pomeranian, it is important to make good use of your examination on the table. Not only are you feeling for the structure of the dog, you

should also be feeling the quality, density, and texture of the coat. For puppies, as you examine the tail set and topline, it is also the correct time to check for that stripe of hair up the back and for the guard hairs that make up the plume of the tail. While guard hairs may not be fully developed as a young puppy, you should see evidence of that hair beginning to grow. You can also feel the texture of the hair around the base of the tail and on the pants. A cotton coat is undesirable! At any age, you should not see any thinning of the hair or patches of missing hair.

In addition, it may be hard to determine the quality of coat on dogs that are over-trimmed. Over-trimming is most often seen around the base of the tail, the pants, and the tail itself. Exhibitors often believe that trimming these areas tightly will make a dog look shorter backed and give the appearance of a better tail-set—reinforcing again that the table exam is essential, to feel past the

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shape of the over-grooming. When the guard hairs are trimmed too short, only the dense undercoat remains. It is then impossible to determine the presence, texture, and quality of the guard hair.

The Pomeranian breed standard is very clear: Trimming for neatness and a clean outline is permissible. The coat should be in good and healthy condition, especially the skirt, tail, and undercarriage. Dogs that are over-trimmed should be awarded accordingly.

Knowing some of the signs of improper coat and indicators of Alopecia-X can have a huge impact on the preservation of the Pomeranian breed and its distinguishing characteristics. Awarding dogs that are sound in structure and movement and have the proper double coat described in the standard is paramount for being a steward for excellence in this breed.

—Stephanie Hentschel,  
[darrightpoms@gmail.com](mailto:darrightpoms@gmail.com)  
 American Pomeranian Club

## Shih Tzu

### WHY BUY A PUREBRED FROM A RESPONSIBLE BREEDER?

There are many good reasons to buy a well-bred purebred Shih Tzu from a responsible breeder. The first, of course, is predictability. You will know whether you are getting a breed that exemplifies what *you* want from a dog, rather than an albeit cute puppy that could grow up to be something other than what you expected in terms of size, temperament, appearance, and many other factors. Unpredictability also

applies to those “designer dogs” that are part Shih Tzu. They may well combine the worst, rather than the best, qualities of the two breeds involved.

The word “breeder” alone will not suffice when you choose where you will buy your puppy. The word “breeder” simply means the owner of the mother of a litter of puppies. If this person doesn’t know your breed standard and isn’t trying to breed Shih Tzu who look like the standard, and who are physically and temperamentally sound,



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