

The Japanese Chin: Unique & Distinctive Eyes¹

Introduction

Over the past several years, I studied Japanese Chin and the breed standard with great interest. During that time, I contacted many breeders in many countries. As part of this educational process, I heard different reactions from judges, exhibitors, and veterinarians regarding Japanese Chin eyes.

Some people referred to Japanese Chin eyes as unattractive or as a medical abnormality. Others pointed to Japanese Chin eyes as a distinctive feature of the breed; critical to correct breed type. Many breeders stated that the “white of eye” and large, round head associated with the breed is being lost in favor of the smaller and more generic eye.

Breed standards throughout the world describe Japanese Chin eyes as follows:

AKC Eyes: set wide apart, large, round, dark in color, and lustrous. A small amount of white showing in the inner corners of the eyes is a breed characteristic that gives the dog a look of astonishment

CKC² Eyes: large, dark, lustrous, rather prominent and set wide apart

UK³ Eyes: large, dark, set far apart. Most desirable that white shows in the inner corners, giving the characteristic look of “astonishment” (wrongly called the squint) which should on no account be lost.

FCI Eyes: large, round, set wide apart and lustrous black in colour.

¹ © 2005 Obata, Y., Kaneduka, K., Sekine, M. & Forsythe, G.

² The Canadian Kennel Club breed standard refers to the Japanese Chin as the “Japanese Spaniel”. This name may be changed to Japanese Spaniel when the breed standard is revised in Canada.

³ The Kennel Club, 1994. This wording regarding “eyes” is identical to the breed standard wording used by the Australian National Kennel Council.

Nippon Chin Club⁴ Breed Standard

Eyes: Large, round, dark brown and shiny. Set far apart and adorable.

This article focuses on the interpretation of the Japanese Chin breed standard as it relates to “eyes”. It expresses the opinions of three Japanese breeders.

The main text that follows was submitted in Japanese by Mr. Yoshihisa Obata, a respected Japanese breeder/judge (“Yoshihisasow”) with over 30 years experience. Mr. Obata kindly agreed to share his point of view regarding Japanese Chin history, head structure and eyes with Western Japanese Chin fanciers. He hopes that his comments will contribute to greater understanding of correct Chin type.

Mr. Obata’s Japanese Chin bitch, Ch Yoshihisasow Ryouka, holds the record for the all time Japan Ranking First Place Japanese Chin over a twenty year period (1979 - 1998) and #11 all breed ranking in 1995. His Chin dogs and bitches won 15 Best in Show in Japan; group placings and Best of Breed wins at the annual FCI International Show in Tokyo for ten consecutive years; and Best of Breed at the prestigious Pedigree Award Shows in Japan for five consecutive years. He is eminently qualified to comment on the Japanese Chin.

Mr. Obata’s point of view is supplemented by input from Mr. Katsuyoshi Kaneduka (“Misanga”) and Ms. Mika Sekine (“Nyan”); both of whom are respected in Japan for their dedication to the sport of purebred dogs. I am indebted to Mr. Obata, Mr. Kaneduka and Ms. Sekine for their willingness to share their knowledge with western Chin fanciers. I hope that this article will foster more dialogue and interaction between Japanese Chin fanciers at home and across cultures.

⁴ The Nippon Chin Club is a breed registry for Japanese Chin in Japan. The Club and its members host Championship shows, issue certificates and pedigrees. The Japan Kennel Club also performs these functions. Japan Kennel Club shows are held under FCI rules and according to FCI breed standards. Chin in Japan may be registered with either or both regulatory bodies; however, for export purposes, the CKC recognizes documents from the Japan Kennel Club.

Mr. Obata's Perspective:⁵

1) History of Japanese Chin

The Japanese Chin is a breed that was originated and developed in Japan during the Edo period. It is said that Chins were highly treasured and loved as a toy dog in the "Ooku" or closed quarters of the Shogun's wife and consorts at Edo Castle.

The art form⁶ below is known in Japan as a "barbola". It depicts Japanese Chin at Edo Castle:

⁵ © 2005 Yoshihisa Obata with reference to an excerpt from "The Japanese Chin: Its Standard and Assessment" by Kiyomitsu Yoshida published in 1969. 1969年発行 吉田清光著 狎・見方と審査法より、抜粋 Translation of Mr. Obata's work from Japanese to English by Ms. Eri Yamagata, A & E Communications, Inc., Vancouver, Canada. Translation funding provided by Dr. Gail H. Forsythe, Lionheart [1975] Perm Reg'd., Calgary, Canada.

⁶ © Yoshihisasow 作 江戸城 Ookuの狎の押し絵 Japanese
日本原産犬、狎についての理解を得る為に Yoshihisasow 研究資料より提出。Japanese
Barbola of Edo castle Ooku by Yoshihisasow



Chins have always commanded people's love and attention; as a result, their physical characteristics and temperament have gradually changed to suit a life with humans. The Chins are considered to be a natural toy breed, and they have very little experience as hunting dogs chasing after birds or animals, or as guard dogs. These dogs lack the ability to grow an undercoat, which most dogs have during winter, and are almost entirely dependent on people's care. They are sensitive to cold even with extra dog clothes on.

Outside Japan, they are called *Japanese Spaniel*, but this is clearly a mistranslation; the proper term is *Japanese Chin Dog*. The breed is definitely not Spanish in origin, nor is it for hunting. In fact, no dogs similar to the Japanese Chin in terms of appearance and temperament are found in any other country. The Chin is truly a unique Japanese breed, and is acknowledged all around the world as a

pure breed. It is the only breed developed to the status of a masterpiece by Japanese, who tend to lack the finesse for breeding or nurturing animals. It has a long history that can be well substantiated.

2) Understanding the Breed Standard

Each breed of dog has its breed standard, or a set of characteristics that was created to describe the ideal picture of the breed. By reading and understanding the breed standard, one is expected to obtain the ideal image of the breed in question. In order to ensure that we have an accurate picture of the desirable characteristics of any breed, we would read the breed standard many times. It takes much time and effort to fully understand such standards, however, and even an experienced breeder can have difficulty grasping the true meaning of what a breed standard communicates. One should not merely understand the apparent meaning of the wording in the breed standard; how much “paradox” one infers from it determines the completeness of the ideal representation of the breed.

To establish an accurate image of the ideal dog, it is necessary to have an understanding of the breed’s unique appearance, impression, and aura, which are, to put it simply, the qualities that make the breed special.

All pure breeds have their own special qualities. To nurture and perfect a dog of any breed to be as close to the ideal as possible, it is necessary not only to compare it with the breed standard but also to seek out these special qualities of this breed. Otherwise, it would not be possible to create the ideal dog set forth by the breed standard.

In order to reach such understanding, one should make an effort to see with their own eyes many superior dogs. Then it would not be so hard to grasp the unique qualities of the breed.

True understanding of the standard is born out of a combination of theory and practice; if one neglects the theoretical study of the breed standard and depends

only on actual dogs for the understanding of the breed, one would not be able to find the correct path set forth by the breed standard and would fall into the habit of trial and error solely based on his or her observations.

To know a particular dog breed, one must always engage in a practical application based on a constant study of the breed standard.

When observing or studying dogs, one must rely on both theory and practice with integrity. Otherwise, greater than expected damage may arise in the development of the breed. One must understand that such damage occurs as a result of the lack of basic knowledge.

3) Japanese Chin Eyes

Bright, intelligent, healthy, black eyes. Large, round, wide-set eyes, ideally looking outward. These are the qualities that make the perfect, charming eyes of the Japanese Chin, as required by the breed standard. Large eyes are sought after, as they result from the natural shape of the Chin's skull. Its skull, almost a perfect globe, makes the eye sockets shallow, which, in turn, stretches the margins of the eye sockets, causing the eyeballs to be slightly pushed outward to the side. The top of the Chin's head is quite wide. Naturally, the wider the face, the more the eye sockets face outward. The breed standard's requirement for wide-set eyes is a natural result of the unique anatomy of the Chin's skull.

The structure of the eye socket determines the position of the eyes; if the margins of the front area stretch outward, naturally the eyeballs point diagonally outward. As a result, a small amount of white appears in the inner corners of the eyes, creating outward-looking eyes. It is granted that if a large amount of white of eye is shown (known as wall-eyed) this condition endangers the eyes' health. But remarking negatively on the Chin dogs' outward-looking eyes reflects a lack of understanding of the anatomy of the Chin's skull.

In addition, the Chin's unique eyes not only derive from the general structure of the

skull, but they also have a close relation with the structure of the nose bridge and the snout. Only a perfectly short nose bridge and a highly developed snout can create wide-set, large, round eyes. The appropriate balance between the nose bridge and the snout has an effect on the entire skull, leading to changes in its structure.

Mr. Kaneduka's and Ms. Sekine's Perspective

Mr. Katsuyoshi Kaneduka is a Japanese Chin and Siberian Husky breeder and respected all breed professional handler. He handled Siberians to the coveted Best in Show "King" and Best in Show "Queen" (2005) awards at the prestigious FCI International Show in Tokyo. He has shown many top quality Japanese Chin plus other breeds to significant and prestigious awards in Japan.

Ms. Mika Sekine has studied and handled top quality Japanese Chin for many years. Her Japanese Chin dogs represent some of Japan's most well respected bloodlines. Prior to her involvement in Japanese Chin, Ms. Sekine imported and showed the top winning female Chow Chow, Am. Can. FCI, Asian & Japanese Ch. Dreamland's All That Glitters (Pedigree Award 2004 winner).

Kaneduka and Sekine comment as follows:

Small eyes are installed in the brainpan. Small eyes do not have white. They are not ideal eyes nor are they lovely. A Japanese Chin must have lovely eyes; they should be "moony" eyes. Large, round, dark and lustrous. Naturally, large eyes will dash out from the brainpan. The white of the eye appears visible in large eyes. However, the white of the eye should be small in proportion to the eye.

The Japanese Chin is a toy dog and a companion. It is considered a non-sporting dog in Japan. It must be lovely to fulfill its purpose. As for Chin eyes, a slight balance is necessary. That balance consists of large eyes that show a little white of the eye. Therefore, achieving this balance makes breeding the Chin interesting and difficult.

If asked which do you like: Japanese Chin “A” with big eyes and much white or Japanese Chin “B” with small eyes and little white? We do not hesitate. We choose Japanese Chin “A”.

Conclusion

As with many breeds, distinctive characteristics are essential to correct breed type. The Bulldog is not correct without its “wheel” back. The correct Chow Chow should have a unique “stilted gait”; the ideal Pekingese must “roll”. The English, Australian, and American breed standards specifically require that the Japanese Chin possess large, round, dark and lustrous eyes with “white of eye” at the inner corner.

Mr. Obata argues the importance of going beyond the written words in a breed standard to better understand the ideal Chin. He advocates the importance of appreciating the combined effect of a large round head shape to produce correct anatomy, eye placement and “white of eye”; all of which are essential for correct breed type. Kaneduka and Sekine make reference to the large and luminous quality of the full moon when describing the Chin’s eyes and their charm.

When combined, these attributes produce the compelling, yet “startled” expression that is unique to the Japanese Chin. Without its distinctive attributes, each breed moves one step closer to the “generic show dog”. Hopefully, breeders around the world will continue to strive for the distinctive head and eye characteristics that contribute to the Japanese Chin’s elegance, grace and beauty.

The photo below⁷ illustrates the desired large round head (note the low ear set that frames the roundness of the head) and large, round and dark eyes showing the desired proportion of the white of eye at the inner corner of the eye. The eyes are not bulging; they are soft and luminous. They captivate, they draw you in and they rival the fullest moon. Charming indeed!

⁷ © 2005 Yoshihisa Obata



GR. CH. Yoshihisasow Momoka
Nippon Chin Club Special Dog Show
BIS (Higashikuni Memorial Award)

Appendix

Breed Standard: Nippon Chin Club

Chin has been prized as an indoor toy dog since ancient times. It is a lively and graceful small non-sporting dog who has a gentle nature, elegant appearance with profuse coat. As long as its quality is kept, the daintier they are the more ideal.

Head: Large but in proportion to size of dog, broad skull, rounded in front.

Head capsule-----Moderately round and wide. Fore face is round and bulge, but never domed.

Muzzle ----- Short, wide and well cushioned. Wry jaw is not preferable.

Eyes ----- Large, round, dark brown and shiny. Set far apart and adorable.

Ears ----- V-shaped and well feathered. Set wide apart.

Nasus ----- Short bridged and nasus speculum is preferably as close as to the line between eyes. The color should be black.

Mouth ----- A normal line of occlusion is preferable. Natural buckteeth or habitually tongue being out from lips is not preferable.

Jaws ----- Slightly short and hold head high.

Body:

Trunk ----- In good shape and wide in chest. The height and the length of the body are approximately the same. Back should be straight.

Forequarters ----- Straight, no elbow-bending. Fine bone giving slender appearance. Well feathered to the feet.

Hindquarters ----- Straight viewed from behind, slender appearance and as well feathered as covering hock-joints

Digit: Slender and tight. Preferably feathered at tips.

Tail: Proudly set high on level back. The longer and more profuse feather plumed over back is the more preferable.

Coat: Profuse, long and straight. Especially around ears, neck, chest, tail forequarters and thighs should be well covered.

Marking: Colour around eyes to all over ears left and right evenly.

Colour: White and Black, Lemon, Red or Orange as patches.