



**PRESENTS:**  
**THE ALASKAN MALAMUTE**



## INTRODUCTION TO THE ALASKAN MALAMUTE



Welcome to the Alaskan Malamute Club of America Judges Education Program. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive discussion of the breed standard and to offer specifics about the breed enabling the student judge to effectively prioritize the important characteristics of the breed. Throughout the program we will designate as “important” those characteristics we feel are vital points to be considered when judging our breed.

As we begin, 2 words to remember: Type & Style!

Type = appearance AND function

For proper type you can't have one without the other

Style = differences in a “look”





## HISTORY

The Alaskan Malamute we know today has evolved from an arctic dog with a long and remarkable history of service to man. To properly evaluate the Malamute, one must understand something of the severe arctic conditions under which these dogs did their job, and their contributions to the survival of the people who kept them.

The early explorers venturing to the land known as Alaska discovered dogs of unbelievable hardiness, able to work in the brutal arctic climate, often on starvation diets. These dogs had several functions, including hauling heavy sledges and packing. Although their existence was one of heavy work, the dogs were often part of the Eskimo family, playing with children and sleeping in the shelters helping to keep the family warm.

During the Gold Rush, the demand for working dogs resulted in breeds from “outside” being brought in and bred with the native sled dogs. As a result the breed was all but destroyed. However, the Mahlemut people, from whom the breed takes its name, lived a remote, isolated life. Because of this, their dogs remained largely pure.



## HISTORY

In the early 20's and 30's some in the US became involved with sled dogs. Dogs brought from Alaska were thought to be Malamutes, but with no pedigrees, or kennel club to look to for verification, no one was sure. There were substantial differences among these dogs. The Kotzebue strain had consistent type and size. These dogs were later registered by Milton and Eva Seeley. The M'Loot strain, developed by Paul Voelker, was larger, with less angulation and more variation in coat and color. Mr. Voelker wasn't interested in showing, so these dogs were initially not registered. The Hinman/Irwin dogs were not an identifiable strain, but rather a few individual dogs, neither Kotzebue nor M'Loot but offering qualities the others did not.

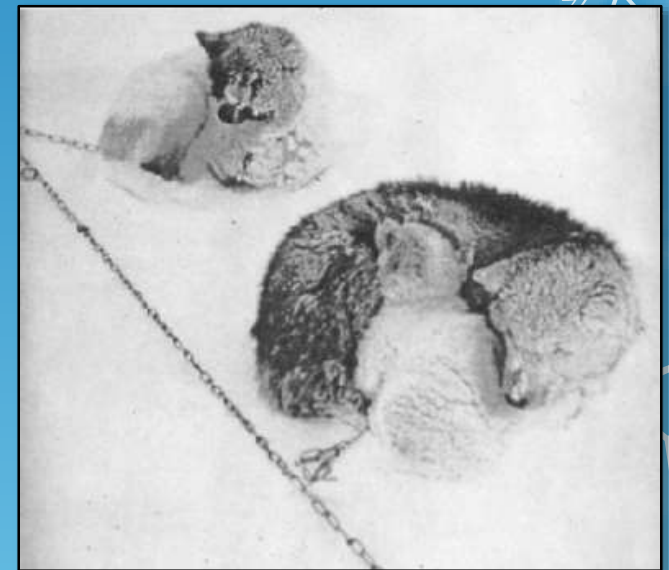
Breed recognition came in 1935, largely through the efforts of Mrs. Seeley. At that time many dogs were of unknown ancestry. Those who appeared purebred were used for breeding, others weeded out. After a few years the registry was closed. Losses from service in World War II all but eliminated the breed. In 1947 there were estimated to be only about 30 registered dogs left, so the stud book was reopened.



## HISTORY

It was then Robert Zoller became involved in the breed and took this opportunity to combine M'Loot and Hinman/Irwin dogs with selected Kotzebues to create what became the Husky Pak line. All modern Malamutes are descended from the early strains, thus the natural differences we see today.

When you are privileged to judge the Alaskan Malamute please keep in mind his purpose and the characteristics necessary to survive and complete his mission.





## General Appearance

The Alaskan Malamute, one of the oldest Arctic sled dogs, is a powerful and substantially built dog with a deep chest and strong, well-muscled body. The Malamute stands well over the pads, and this stance gives the appearance of much activity and a proud carriage, with head erect and eyes alert showing interest and curiosity. The head is broad. Ears are triangular and erect when alerted. The muzzle is bulky, only slight diminishing in width from root to nose. The muzzle is not pointed or long, yet not stubby. The coat is thick with a coarse guard coat of sufficient length to protect a woolly undercoat. Malamutes are of various colors. Face markings are a distinguishing feature. These consist of a cap over the head, the face either all white or marked with a bar and/or mask. The tail is well furred, carried over the back, and has the appearance of a waving plume. The Malamute must be a heavy boned dog with sound legs, good feet, deep chest powerful shoulders, and have all of the other physical attributes necessary for the efficient performance of his job. The gait must be steady, balanced, tireless and totally efficient. He is not intended as a racing sled dog designed to compete in speed trials. The Malamute is structured for strength and endurance, and any characteristic of the individual specimen, including temperament, which interferes with the accomplishment of this purpose, is to be considered the most serious of faults.



*The first impression of the Alaskan Malamute should be power, athletic and beautiful. He should leave no question he could perform as a working sledge dog designed to haul heavy loads at a moderate speed over long distances.*

*He must be balanced with no part over or underdone compared to the whole dog.*

*Because the Malamute is a natural breed he has evolved to fit his environment and function. Extremes are not desired, thus the word “moderate” is used often when describing the Malamute.*

*We will be discussing each section of the Standard at length as we go along. Those characteristics most critical to survival are those listed in General Appearance. These include heavy bone, good feet, steady, tireless gait and any other characteristic including temperament that contributes to his ability to complete his assigned task!*

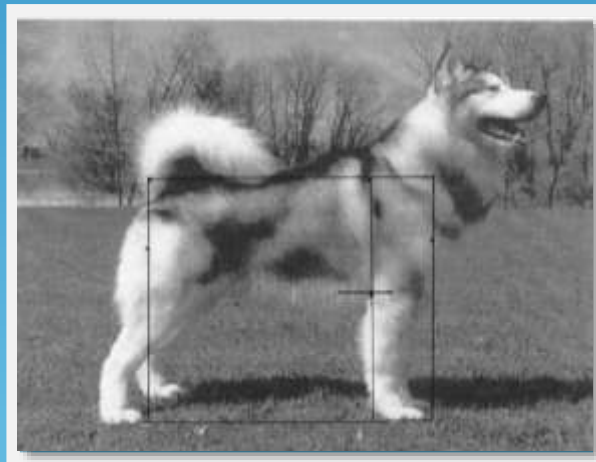




## Size, Proportion, Substance

There is a natural range in size in the breed. The desirable freighting sizes are males, 25 inches at the shoulders, 85 pounds; females, 23 inches at the shoulders, 75 pounds. However, size consideration should not outweigh that of type, proportion, movement and other functional attributes. When dogs are judged equal in type, proportion, movement, the dog nearest the desirable freighting size is to be preferred. The depth of chest is approximately one half the height of the dog at the shoulders, the deepest point being just behind the forelegs. The length of the body from point of shoulder to the rear point of pelvis is longer than the height of the body from ground to top of the withers. The body carries no excess weight, and bone is in proportion to size.

*The "style" is different on these dogs but the basic proportions are very similar. Slightly longer than tall. Height from withers to elbow is equal to distance of elbow to ground.*



*The Malamute must be heavier and appear more powerful than his Arctic counterparts, yet he is NOT ponderous or clumsy. Being a natural breed there is a natural range of sizes. When all else is equal, the dog closest to the ideal is to be preferred. Dogs that are obviously over or undersize may lack the necessary power and stamina to efficiently carry out their duties. When judging the Alaskan Malamute it is necessary to feel under the coat to determine actual depth of chest to height and length from point of shoulder to rear. He should never be so deep in chest as to appear short in leg, out of balance or overloaded in front.*

*Length should be in the rib cage not the loin. A long loin weakens the back. A short back impedes the effortless ground covering movement we call for. Both reduce endurance capability. Feel the legs to be sure what you see is bone and not just hair. He is an athlete! He must be in condition carrying no excess weight. That doesn't mean skinny!*

**IMPORTANT: Balance, Balance, Balance**

**IMPORTANT: Correct proportions**

**IMPORTANT: Condition—Substance is bred not fed!**





# HEAD

The head is broad and deep, not coarse or clumsy, but in proportion to the size of the dog. The expression is soft and indicates an affectionate disposition. The eyes are obliquely placed in the skull. Eyes are brown, almond shaped and of medium size. Dark eyes are preferred. Blue Eyes are a Disqualifying Fault.

*The broad deep head is a defining feature of breed "type".  
The desired dark almond eye gives the Malamute his beautiful soft expression indicating not only intelligence, but a friendly demeanor, a hallmark of this breed. Lighter colored eyes are acceptable in all colors but dark brown is desired. Reds will have a lighter brown to amber color eye which is acceptable.*



*The eye is not to be round, protruding or so oblique that it appears oriental. The rims should be tight fitting and pigment black in all colors except red where brown is permitted.*







The ears are of medium size, but small in proportion to the head. The ears are triangular in shape and slightly rounded at the tips. They are set wide apart on the outside back edges of the skull on line with the upper corner of the eye, giving ears the appearance, when erect, of standing off from the skull. Erect ears point slightly forward, but when the dog is at work, the ears are sometimes folded against the skull. High set ears are a fault.



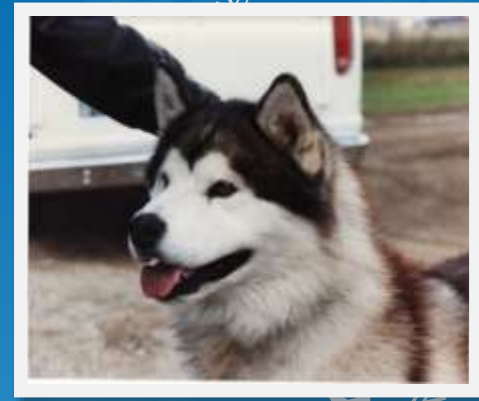
*As with the rest of the head the ears of the Alaskan Malamute are a very important characteristic of breed "type" separating our breed from his northern counterparts. They must be set wide apart appearing to stand off from the back edges of the skull. They must be rounded at the tips, not pointed. If set close together it could indicate a narrow skull. Put your hands on the skull to determine width and depth. Hair can be deceiving.*



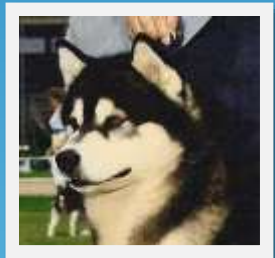
*When viewed from the side the ears will point slightly forward blending with the arch of the neck. From the side one can clearly see the line from the outside corner of the eye to the outside bottom edge of the ear. The Malamute ear must have thick leather and be well furred to protect them from freezing in the harsh Arctic climate.*



The skull is broad and moderately rounded between the ears, gradually narrowing and flattening on top as it approaches the eyes, rounding off to cheeks that are moderately flat. There is a slight furrow between the eyes. The topline of the skull and the topline of the muzzle show a slight break downward from a straight line as they join. The muzzle is large and bulky in proportion to the size of the skull, diminishing slightly in width and depth from junction with the skull to the nose.



In all coat colors, except reds, the nose, lips, and eye rims' pigmentation is black. Brown is permitted in red dogs. The lighter streaked "snow nose" is acceptable. The lips are close fitting. The upper and lower jaws are broad with large teeth. The incisors meet with a scissors grip. Overshot or undershot is a fault.



*The combination of the broad skull and bulky muzzle is a hallmark of the breed and important to breed type. A domed or narrow skull prevents the proper eye and ear placement and carriage. The stop formed by the meeting of the top skull and the top of the muzzle is perceptible yet not overly pronounced. It is necessary to feel the stop particularly on dogs with heavy face markings and/or coat.*



*From the skull the muzzle will blend smoothly narrowing only slightly from the root to the nose. The muzzle must be bulky but not stubby, slightly shorter than the back skull. When viewing from the front the muzzle should not appear "stuck" onto the skull but blending with it. There should be a perceptible under jaw.*



*Some pink spotting on the lips is acceptable. Though black (brown in reds) is desired, this is a minor problem unless excessive. Close fitting lips are important when working in very cold climates. The nose leather may exhibit a “snow nose” which is normal, but lack of pigment is undesirable. Any bite other than scissors is to be faulted to the extent of the deviation. Dropped lower center incisors are not to be faulted.*

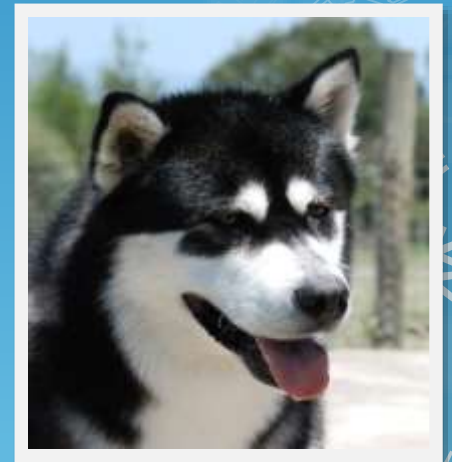


*When the components of the Malamute head are correct and in balance we see the beauty expected and correct breed “type”. Being a natural breed the “styles” can be diverse but “type” will be unmistakable.*



## IMPORTANT

- \*TYPE = Broad deep skull
- \*TYPE = Bulky muzzle
- \*TYPE = Proper ear size & placement
- \*TYPE = Eye shape
- \*STYLE = Face Markings





## Neck, Topline, Body

The neck is strong and moderately arched. The chest is well developed. The body is compactly built but not short coupled. The back is straight and gently sloping to the hips. The loins are hard and well muscled. A long loin that may weaken the back is a fault.



*The strong well muscled neck allows the efficient head carriage just above the level of the withers when working. Such carriage will be apparent when viewing side gait.*

*A pleasing arch beginning just behind the ears will blend smoothly into the withers.*



*Lack of shoulder angulation will give the appearance of a short stuffy neck. Dogs with heavy coats around the neck area may appear stuffy when, in fact, it's coat.*



**This is the same dog**



*A well developed chest will be broad and deep. Upon examination it should not be hollow or so broad/deep as to appear overdone. The Malamute should not be barrel chested or slab sided but must have the capacity to expand allowing for the oxygen demands necessary for endurance. The depth of the chest is to or just slightly below the elbow. The prosternum is apparent upon examination but not pronounced.*

*The topline is strong and straight from withers to croup. Too much slope to the topline would indicate over angulation in the rear, not enough in the front or both.*

*Remember extremes are not in keeping with a working sledge dog. The Malamute is to have a compact body yet not too short coupled. A loin too short will interfere with proper movement; a long loin weakens the back. Appraise the topline while moving as well as standing. There should be no bouncing, rolling, dipping, roaching or excess movement that would detract from endurance and the efficient performance of the job.*





The tail is moderately set and follows the line of the spine at the base. The tail is carried over the back when not working. It is not a snap tail or curled tight against the back, nor is it short furred like a fox brush. The Malamute tail is well furred and has the appearance of a waving plume.



*The tail is a distinguishing characteristic of "type". The tail follows the line of the spine curving over the back. It is not tightly curled, snapped, rest flat on the back or dropping severely down over the hip. The tail is well furred and may drop when standing or trail when moving. It is necessary to see the tail up naturally at some point to assess proper set and carriage.*

### IMPORTANT

- \***Type** = Well muscled neck of sufficient length
- \***Type** = Compact body with strong topline
- \***Type** = Moderate rib spring
- \***Type** = Correct tail set







## Forequarters

The shoulders are moderately sloping; forelegs heavily boned and muscled, straight to the pasterns when viewed from the front. Pasterns are short and strong and slightly sloping when viewed from the side. The feet are of the snowshoe type, tight and deep, with well-cushioned pads, giving a firm, compact appearance. The feet are large, toes tight fitting and well arched. There is a protective growth of hair between the toes. The pads are thick and tough; toenails short and strong.



*The Standard asks for a moderate layback of shoulder. A straight shoulder results in a shorter neck which is a problem in this breed. The neck must be of sufficient length to allow the head to be carried in a forward position just above the level of the withers when working. The length of the scapula should approximate the length of the upper arm to facilitate correct reach in the front. The specified angle will permit the elbow to be in a line directly under the withers when standing. With the proper shoulder the dog will have the beautiful arch of neck.*

*Correct forelegs will not be bowed but straight and strong. Please feel for heavy bone as leg hair can give a false impression. The pasterns are short, strong and only slightly sloping. Too much slope weakens and will cause breakdown of the pastern and may prevent the desired tight foot.*

*It is said this breed is built from the ground up. Therefore large, compact, snowshoe shaped feet are a vital survival characteristic! Tight fitting well arched toes are critical; never flat, small or splayed. Pads are thick and well cushioned.*





# Hindquarters

The rear legs are broad and heavily muscled through the thighs; stifles moderately bent; hock joints are moderately bent and well let down. When viewed from the rear, the legs stand and move true in line with the movement of the front legs, not too close or too wide. Dewclaws on the rear legs are undesirable and should be removed shortly after puppies are whelped.

*As with all attributes of the Malamute, the hindquarters must be in perfect balance with the forequarters in order to function efficiently. For the rear to exude the necessary power, heavy muscle in the thigh is crucial. When examining the rear one should be able to feel muscle both on the outside and inside of the thigh. The hocks are broad and well let down. A short hock is necessary for the powerful drive needed. Rear feet, as in the front, are large snowshoe shaped with strong well arched toes. When viewed from the rear legs should be parallel. Straight stifles, cow hocks, open hocks or any appearance of unsoundness in the rear is unacceptable.*



## ***FRONT and REAR***

*The Malamute must be moderate in all areas. Thus there is no extreme either in front or rear. Good muscling is apparent but the front is not overloaded. When viewed from the front the chest should not appear hollow. Elbows should be tight but not pinched.*

*The rear legs should not be over extended. The stance will indicate strength with feet set pointing forward.*

### **IMPORTANT**

- \*Type = Moderate angulation***
- \* Type = Large tight feet***
- \* Type = Balance front to rear***





## Gait

The gait of the Malamute is steady, balanced, and powerful.  
He is agile for his size and build.



When viewed from the side, the hindquarters exhibit strong rear drive that is transmitted through a well-muscled loin to the forequarters. The forequarters receive the drive from the rear with a smooth reaching stride.

*The Malamute works on the move. His movement must denote power, agility and balance. He must be able to negotiate uneven steep terrain, sharp turns and deep snow. Soundness and endurance are his most valuable attributes.*

When viewed from the front or from the rear, the legs move true in line, not too close or too wide. At a fast trot, the feet will converge toward the centerline of the body. A stilted gait, or any gait that is not completely efficient and tireless, is to be penalized.



*The front is most important because most of the weight of the dog is on the front assembly. When moving the front accepts the shock and punishment. Reach should be in a straight line from the shoulder with the foot hitting the ground just under the nose. There should be no toeing in or flipping of the feet. The elbows are held close to the body. You should not see any rolling or pitching in front nor should the head swing from side to side.*



*When going away the rear is neither too close nor too wide.*

*As in the front the legs will tend toward the center line as speed increases. The powerful rear is apparent going away as well as from the side view.*



*To properly evaluate Malamute movement it must be viewed from the side at a moderate speed. This view allows one to make sure all parts are working smoothly together. The Malamute should never appear to be his own load! Insufficient angulation in the front and/or rear shortens the stride, thereby forcing the dog to take more steps to cover the same distance as a correctly structured dog.*

*There should be no roach, dip or bouncing in the back or pounding or rolling at the shoulders. The correct pastern will absorb the shock allowing a smooth tireless gait. The rear legs should not demonstrate excessive lift off the ground. This is wasted motion and will, over time, effect endurance.*

*If properly built the Malamute will not crab, overreach, interfere or display any other movement faults.*



## IMPORTANT

- \* TYPE = *Correct angulation*
- \* TYPE = *Balanced effortless movement* = ENDURANCE
- \* *Endurance* = SURVIVAL



*Notice the different tail carriage ... all acceptable*



*Notice head carriage and strong toplines*





## Coat

The Malamute has a thick, coarse guard coat, never long and soft. The undercoat is dense, from one to two inches in depth, oily and woolly. The coarse guard coat varies in length as does the undercoat. The coat is relatively short to medium along the sides of the body, with the length of the coat increasing around the shoulders and neck, down the back, over the rump, and in the breeching and plume. Malamutes usually have a shorter and less dense coat during the summer months. The Malamute is shown naturally.

Trimming is not acceptable except to provide a clean cut appearance of feet.



***The coat is a survival characteristic !***

*The texture of the Malamute coat is of utmost importance! The harsh texture repels wet snow and rain preventing the possibility of the coat freezing in the Arctic climate. Think of a very heavy wool sweater with a water repellent wind breaker over it. The insulating factor of the undercoat and the moisture repellent ability of the guard coat enable the Malamute to survive in the most extreme conditions. The length will vary somewhat but coat is not long and soft.*



*Shorter guard coat with full undercoat*



*Slightly longer guard coat—summer undercoat*



*Long soft guard coat full undercoat*



*Wet soft guard coat*

*It is normal for there to be almost no undercoat at certain times of the year. Some Malamutes have a full coat in summer but not much in spring or fall. Others will have none in summer. It varies with each individual. Bitches may have a shorter coat but no less dense.*



**TRIMMING THE BODY COAT OR ALTERING THE TEXTURE IS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE!  
THE ONLY TRIMMING ALLOWED IS TO NEATEN THE FEET.**

### IMPORTANT

- \* **TYPE** = *Correct Texture*
- \* **STYLE** = *Variable length*





## Color

The usual colors range from light gray through intermediate shadings to black, sable, and shadings of sable to red. Color combinations are acceptable in undercoats, points, and trimmings. The only solid color allowable is all white. White is always the predominant color on underbody, parts of legs, feet, and part of face markings. A white blaze on the forehead and/or collar or a spot on the nape is attractive and acceptable. The Malamute is mantled, and broken colors extending over the body or uneven splashing are undesirable.

*There is NO Preferred color in this breed! All acceptable colors are to be given the equal consideration. Undercoat will vary including white, cream, tan, sable, gray and black.*

*All white dogs may be “off” white with a light cream outline on the ears and face. Our definition of all white is a dog without any other obvious color on any part of the body.*





*These photos represent the many colors you may see in your ring. All are totally acceptable and must be considered equal.*



**All White**



**Light Gray**



**Darker Gray**



**Sable**



**Darker Sable**



**Red**



**Seal & White**

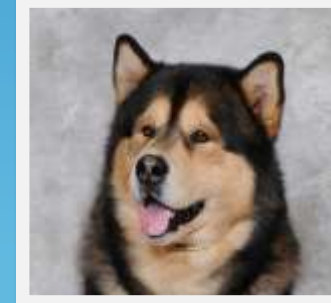
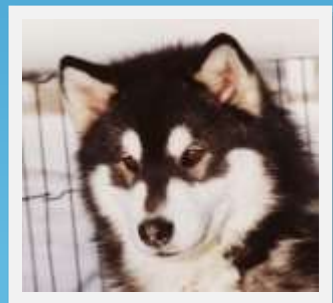
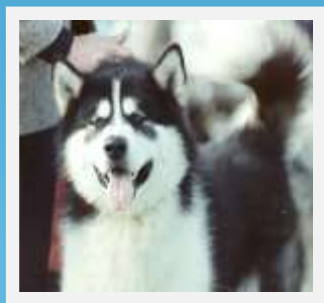
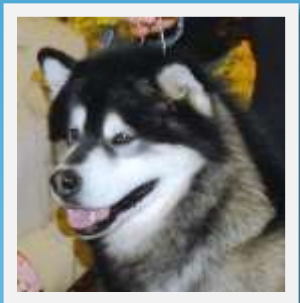
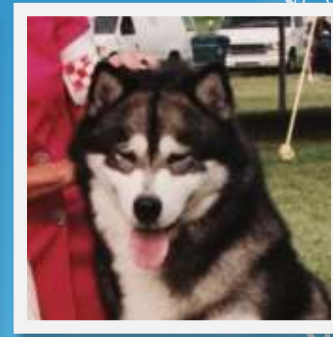
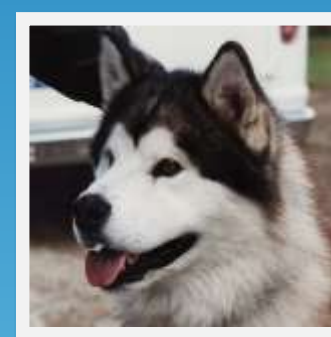
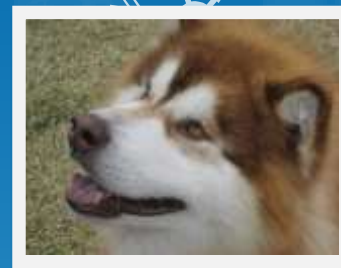


**Black & White**





# COLLARS AND FACIAL MARKINGS





The Alaskan Malamute is an affectionate, friendly dog, not a “one man” dog. He is a loyal, devoted companion, playful upon invitation, but generally impressive by his dignity after maturity.

*The Malamute normally wants to interact with people, especially children. He is not a one dimensional dog. He loves his original work, but is happy doing weight pulling, skijoring, obedience (maybe), agility and even therapy work. The more active the better.*



# TEMPERAMENT

*The Malamute is a true pack animal. There is a leader giving a whole new meaning to “lead or be led”. Thus the independent, self confident and strong willed personality of this breed. For this reason Malamutes may be aggressive toward other dogs of the same sex, particularly other Malamutes. It is imperative if one has a full ring that space be provided to allow “breathing room”. Never, never bunch this breed in a corner or confined space. Normally there is no problem but 2 dogs who may dislike each other can get the entire ring on edge.*

*Malamutes have a real desire to talk. Unfortunately those not familiar with the breed may interpret that as growling. Rarely will this breed growl at a judge but they may be sharing their opinion of another dog or that the bait isn't coming fast enough. If in doubt or if you really feel threatened excuse the dog! NEVER, NEVER forgive any Malamute if it snaps!!! Even if it's a puppy. IT'S OUT!*

*Speaking of bait ~ the way to a Malamute brain is via his stomach. Please be tolerant of reasonable use. It is important that any bait from another breed be cleaned up from the floor before the Malamutes come in the ring.*





## IMPORTANT:

In judging Malamutes, their function as a sledge dog for heavy freighting in the Arctic must be given consideration above all else. The degree to which a dog is penalized should depend upon the extent to which the dog deviates from the description of the ideal Malamute and the extent to which the particular fault would actually affect the working ability of the dog. The legs of the Malamute must indicate unusual strength and tremendous propelling power. Any indication of unsoundness in legs and feet, front or rear, standing or moving, is to be considered a serious fault. Faults under this provision would be splay-footedness, cowhocks, bad pasterns, straight shoulders, lack of angulation, stilted gait (or any gait that isn't balanced, strong and steady), ranginess, shallowness, ponderousness, lightness of bone, and poor overall proportion.

### **Disqualifications Blue Eyes**



## What to Reward

*The Standard is clear!*

*\*\* Movement and the structure needed for power, endurance and balance*

*\*\* Correct Legs & feet needed to hold up under Arctic terrain and weather conditions*

*\*\* Correct coat texture to protect from brutal weather*

## Where can you give?

*\*\* Cosmetic characteristics - those things that do not directly effect the Malamutes ability to survive and effectively do his job. We refer to them as "style" or "appearance" rather than type. Included could be tail carriage as opposed to set, eye color (except DQ), a fancy coat vs a shorter coat provided texture is good, in or out of coat, size within reason and showmanship.*





## *From our veterans*



*to our up and coming puppies*



*We honor the words of long time fancier Natalie Norris:*

*“The Malamute is too fine and distinguished a breed to be changed into anything but what centuries of adaptability to its environment has produced. Our efforts should be to breed not only beautiful Malamutes, but as good specimens physically as were originally found in Alaska. It isn’t a question of breeding a better Malamute, but as good an Alaskan Malamute.”*



*The Alaskan Malamute Club of America wishes to thank all who generously contributed to this program with special mention to Cindy Benson & Betsy Davis for putting it all together.*



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