

# The Icelandic Sheepdog

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### Background

The Icelandic Sheepdog is Iceland's only native dog. The breed was brought to Iceland with the first Viking settlers in A.D. 874 to 930. They were used to work sheep, cattle, and horses. In 1983 56 dogs were analyzed to find out the origins of the breed. The Icelandic Sheepdog is related to a Finnish breed: the Karelian Bear Dog. The results also indicated that the Icelandic Sheepdog came to Iceland from Norway.

In the late 19th century plague and canine distemper destroyed over 75% of the breed which resulted in a ban on the importation of dogs into Iceland. The Icelandic Sheepdog is still very rare to this day but it is increasing in popularity.

The Icelandic Sheepdog was recognized by the American Kennel Club in 2010.

### Sizing up

- Weight: 20 to 30 lbs.
- Height: 12 to 16 inches
- Coat: Double, long and short, both thick and weather-resistant
- Color: White is the prominent color with tan, reddish-brown, chocolate, gray and black
- Life expectancy: 10 to 12 years

### What's the Icelandic Sheepdog like?

Icelandic Sheepdogs are very social, loving, and great with kids. They are alert but may not make the best watch dogs as they will greet any visitor with an enthusiastic welcome and many kisses. They're also very active and need exercise: nice long walks or a game of fetch.

Icelandic Sheepdogs are intelligent and eager to please which makes them easily trainable. As with any new

dog, begin training and socializing as soon as you bring him home. He can also develop separation anxiety if left alone for too long.

The Icelandic Sheepdog's undercoat sheds twice a year and should be brushed whenever it does so. Beyond that a weekly brushing will keep his coat in good shape ensure less fur found on your furniture!

### Health

The Icelandic Sheepdog is generally a healthy breed but watch for any of the following:

- [Hip dysplasia](#)
- [Allergies](#)
- [Cryptorchidism](#)
- Deafness

### Takeaway Points

- The Icelandic Sheepdog is quite rare so be prepared to be put on a waiting list for this pup.
- The Icelandic Sheepdog is an ideal family dog because of his patience with children.
- The Icelandic Sheepdog would not be suitable for someone who works long hours.
- The Icelandic Sheepdog is a shedder so if you have allergies this may not be the breed for you.

*If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian -- they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.*