

Chow Chows Revealed

"All you ever wanted to know about the
reclusive Chow Chow—bared right here"



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Foreword

There's a beautiful and ancient fairy-tale that says that while God painted the sky blue, he was followed by a determined Chow Chow who licked up the drops that fell with his tongue. As you know, each fairytale comes with some truth, but this tale has two truths: one, that this breed does have a blue tongue and second, that its origins began with God's Creation!

This is just one of many myths surrounding this breed. Another fascinating myth is the one that tells of the Chow Chow being a descendent of bears rather than wolves. Unbelievable, but could Nature have twisted this breed's evolution just a little?

Whatever the truth may be, you're bound to find that your Chow Chow is a breed apart –that he's not like any other dog breed. Doesn't his independent nature bother you? Or his blue tongue? Or the way he moves? And what about his reserve? Oh, the Chow Chow is certainly different from every other dog breed.

Since ages, the mystery behind this fascinating breed continues. There are those who believe that he is a dog but that he doesn't really behave like any other dog. After all, he goes hunting, but not like proper hunting dogs. He's said to be a guardian but he's not your typical watchdog. He is a companion dog but not like any other we know. He eats what every other dog eats but with so much caution.

The sad fact of the matter is that when the Chow Chow enters a dog show, he is judged just like any other breed, by following certain norms to the exclusion of others. This is reason for the decline of the breed. Instead, this breed should be judged on the basis of his behavior, responses and majesty, among others.

History bears testimony that this aristocratic breed was first wowed in England and then everywhere else. In the beginning of the XIX century, this dog was first gifted to the London Zoo as a "half-savage" dog. But in 1880 he entered a dog show for the first time and a decade later the Kennel Club recognized this breed. In 1895, when the first English Chow-Chow Club was founded, it also helped lay the foundations of the breed standard.

Much water has flowed under the bridges since then and Chow-Chow first began appearing on cigarette packs—something that continues to this day. His endearing face can also be seen on tea packets, playing cards, postcards, envelopes and stamps. This is the worldwide popularity of this breed that's loved wherever it goes, despite its unpopular traits.

Chapter 1

The origins of the Chow Chow

Over 2000 or 3,000 years ago, the Chow Chow dog breed first came into existence. It is recognized as the most ancient breed in the world, dating farther back than the 11th century in China. In fact, historians believe that this breed originated in China, and a special reference is always made of the Chow Chow escorting the Tartars when they attacked China.

Then, there are those historians who speculate that this breed originated in the Arctic Circle and then migrated to Mongolia, Siberia and China. Of course, today we know that this breed is a native of Mongolia and Tibet.

In China, however, he was the watchdog of the entire household, and a prized possession to such an extent that Chinese emperors kept 200 Chow Chows for use while hunting. In fact, Chinese authors point out that the Pekingese, Shih Tzus and Lhasas were considered the “Royal Dogs of China,” while the humble and hardy Chow Chow was used solely for hunting.

But in the days before the Chinese took to firearms for hunting, they used Chow Chows as retrievers, pointers and sled dogs. This breed can also be seen sculpted on ancient Chinese pottery and sculptures belonging to the Hun dynasty (206 B.C. until 22 A.D.).

All said and done, the real and true origin of the breed remains unknown. While there are those who believe its earliest ancestor is the ancient Mastiff-type dog that was crossed with Spitz types, still others believe that the Chow Chow is but the ancestor of the modern Spitz, Akita and Shar-Pei.

No matter what its history really is, this thickly coated dog was first bred to be a working dog, capable of surviving the severe Arctic cold. At first, fierce Mongolian tribes kept this breed as hunting and guard dogs, while also using it for its meat and fur.

1 Two theories: Would you believe that there are actually two different theories relating to the origin of this breed’s name? First, Chow Chow or ‘chou’ is Chinese slang for edible. This connects well with the fact that the Mongolians and Chinese ate this dog’s meat. In fact, Will Judy, author of *The Chow Chow* says that the name Chow Chow means “edible dog of China.”

Historians assert that the Chinese and Koreans specially bred these dogs as an epicurean delight, a delicacy to be enjoyed, particularly the smooth-coated dog variety. In 1878, a British historian, whose specialization was Chinese history, claimed to have found 25 restaurants in Canton serving Chow Chow meat on the menu.

Though the Chow Chow originated in northern China, most of this breed was found in Canton, south China, where the local people called him the 'black mouthed dog' since he really did have a very dark blue-black tongue. Despite this, the Chow Chow was a very popular and well-loved breed and history tells us that Genghis Khan had a kennel of 5000 Chow Chows which he took into battle around 700 B. C.

In earlier times, Chow Chows were used as guard dogs in monasteries, besides also being herding and sled dogs. Their meat was also eaten in China until in 1915, the Chinese government enacted a law banning the purchase and sale of Chow Chow meat.

The breed was saved from extinction when, after the cultural revolution in China, they were smuggled out of the country by sailors since the revolution had declared them so useless that they ought to be destroyed.

This apart, in the 13th century, Marco Polo had described the Chow Chow, pointing to the fact that they were common in those days too.

In time, this name slipped into easy everyday parlance to mean food in English. It also referred to the cargoes of spices and mixed pickles from China and it was also taken for a spicy pickle relish.

The second theory, though not logical, is still plausible. Chow Chow in the early 1800s, referred to clipper ships that sailed from China to England and brought back an assortment of cargo.

When they reached a particular port, they had to describe the contents of their cargo. Since they carried an assortment of goods, the term Chow Chow was coined, meaning knick-knacks or bric-a-brac. When the dogs became part of the ship's cargo, the name extended to them too.

But returning to the dog breed, the first of the breed made its appearance in England in the late 19th century and grew popular when Queen Elizabeth took a shine to it. In fact, it was given this name because it had been housed in the ship's chow chow hold all along the long voyage. After finally arriving in the United States in early 1900, the Chow Chow was quickly accepted into the American Kennel Club in 1903 as a member of the non-sporting group.

However, the breed with a regal air that we know it as today is really the result of how it was treated in England and the United States—a far cry from being a hardy working dog in China and Mongolia. Over the years, the Chow Chow has evolved to be a medium sized dog and is now seen as a popular American dog.

Chapter 2

The Quintessential Chow Chow

The Chow Chow is a stockily built, muscular and medium-haired dog that belongs to the Non-Sporting group. You can recognize it by its large head that's complemented by a broad flat skull, short muzzle and wrinkles on his face. Often, these wrinkles end up forming a deep scowl.

His ears are erect, rounded and small. His tail curls and high above his lower back and he carries it with pride over his back. However, his hallmark is his blue-black tongue, a rarity among all dogs. In fact, this is one of the two breeds of dogs in the world to have a blue-black tongue, the other breed being the Shar Pei, yet another Chinese breed.

2 Breed standards: The general characteristics of this breed comprise its north Chinese origins, where it was specifically bred as a hunting, pulling and herding dog that also doubled up as a watchdog. Today, it is a companion dog, but it is essential to remember his roots while evaluating his breed type.

1 Appearance: Your regular Chow Chow is no parlor dog. On the contrary, he's powerful and sturdy, with a stocky build to match. This erect Arctic dog is medium-sized and has a strong muscular body that's complemented by a heavy bone structure. One more interesting feature of the Chow Chow that rates him as distinctive is his erect hind legs.

✓ **His body:** He has a compact body, short coupled, broad and deep and is supported by straight, strong legs. If you look at him from one side, his hind legs, you'll find, are very slightly angulated while the hock joint and metatarsals lie directly beneath the hip joint. This structure gives him his trademark short and stilted gait that sets him off as unique.

✓ **His head:** The Chow Chow carries his skull and stop proudly and erectly. Though they are both large in comparison to the size of his body, it's not disproportionate to make him seem either top heavy or a dog with a low carriage. His top skull remains broad and flat from one side to another and from front to back.

He has perfect bone structure, something that does not detract from his coarse coat and loose skin. If you see his profile, you'll find that the top lines of his muzzle and skull are almost parallel, and are joined by a moderate stop. His stop is made to appear steeper than it really is due to his padded brows.

His muzzle, though short when compared with the length of the top skull, is hardly ever lesser than one-third of the length of his head. His broad muzzle is

distinctive in its own way, being well shaped just below his eyes. The depth and width of his muzzle are equal and ideally should seem to be equal from its base to its tip.

His head, as you will see, is large with a short, deep and broad muzzle that's set off by a ruff. He's a fantastic combination of grace and substance that produce an active and agile pet. He may either have a rough double coat or a smooth one, but no matter which he has, he is a unique mix of dignity and sophistication, with his characteristic blue-black tongue, scowl on his face and a stilted walk.

If he looks square, this is achieved by a perfect bone structure, complemented by padding of the muzzle and equally expanded lips. His upper lips cover the lower lips completely when he closes his mouth, and never hangs loose.

Have you taken a look at his nose? It is large, broad and black with wide nostrils. However, the fault in his nose is that it is spotted or another color but black. Only blue Chow Chows have a deep blue or slate nose.

1 His mouth and tongue: Ideally, to conform to the breed standards, he must have a solid black mouth. You will generally find that the mouths of Chow Chows have lips whose edges are black, and the tissues of their mouth are almost always black, while the gums too are generally black.

This breed's hallmark is its blue-black tongue, and that includes the top surface and its edges—in fact, to be ideal, the darker the tongue the better. The disqualifier is a tongue tinged with red or pink on the top surface and sides or one that has one or more spots of red or pink.

2 His teeth: His teeth are strong with a sharp bite.

3 His eyes: Dark brown and deep set, your Chow Chow's wide set and obliquely shaped eyes are of medium size. In fact, they are almond-shaped. If he conforms to the standard, your pet could well have an Oriental appearance with a mysterious, quiet and thoughtful expression.

The black rims of his eyes with lids don't turn in. But equally, they don't droop either and the pupils of his eyes are clearly visible. What would be seen as a serious fault in him is his susceptibility to suffering from Entropion or Ectropion, or if his pupils are wholly or partly hidden by loose ears.

4 His ears: You could very easily fall in love with this breed just for his small and triangular shaped ears. Just a little thick, they taper slightly at the tips, but remain stiff and erect with just a hint of a forward tilt.

Set wide apart with its inner corner upon the skull, there's one fault in his ears—they flop as he walks. His are termed as drop ears—one that breaks at any point

beginning from the base of the ears and going up to the tips. Alternatively, his ears could also lie parallel to the highest point of the skull.

1 **His scowl:** This is one of his hallmarks and is often misunderstood as a sign of meanness. But no, it would be doing him a grave injustice if you based his personality on his scowl. But really, though he scowls, he is actually a very dignified, regal, discerning, sedate and snobbish dog, always showing his independent nature in all that he does.

Let's examine the source of the scowl. Have you noticed that your Chow Chow has a marked brow with an inch of padded skin just above the inner and upper parts of his eyes? His skin is so loose that it's really not at all difficult to fold the skin into brows that form frowns, or even a distinct furrow between his eyes that you can first spot at the base of his muzzle and trace all the way up to his forehead. The fault in his scowl is his excessively loose skin, which is considered undesirable.

2 **His neck and body:** He has a strong, muscular neck, well arched and long enough to bear his proud head above the top line when standing at attention. His short but compact and sinewy body, beginning from the chest, is broad and deep down in the flank. In fact, you will never find his chest narrow or slab-sided. His top line is straight, strong and level right from the withers to the root of his tail.

His ribs are situated close to each other and are well arched. Though the spring of his front ribs remain narrow at the bottom ends, yet it gives the shoulder and upper arm a smooth fit against the wall of his chest. However, the base of his chest is broad and deep and goes all the way down to the tips of his elbows. One serious fault in his chest is that he may suffer from difficult breathing if he has a narrow or slab-sided chest.

He has muscular loins, though short, broad and deep. The croup is short and broad with a strong rump and developed thigh muscles. To be ideal and in conformity with the standard, check to see if his body, back, coupling and croup are short since together they give this animal his square build. Lastly, his tail, set high and carried close to the back follows the trail of the spine.

3 **His forequarters:** Your Chow Chow has strong shoulders that start to show muscular development right from the tips of his shoulder blades. The spine of his shoulder forms an angle of about 55° with the horizontal and forms an angle with the upper arm of about 110° , leading to limited reach of his forelegs.

The length of his upper arm is never shorter than that of his shoulder blade. His elbow joints are set well back along his chest wall with the elbows neither turning in nor out. His forelegs are erect beginning from the elbow to the foot and are supported by heavy bone structure that remains proportionate with the rest of his body. If you view his legs from the front, you will find his forelegs parallel and

widely spaced and evenly balanced with his broad chest.

His pasterns, though short, are upright. His wrists too, do not knuckle over and his feet are round, compact and feline and stand with good support from thick toe pads. His dewclaws can be easily removed.

4 His hindquarters: The Chow Chow has a broad and strong rear body with good muscular structure in his hips and thighs. He may be bone-heavy but the weight of his rear and front bones are almost equal. If you see it from the rear, you will find his legs to be straight, parallel and widely spaced, equal to his broad pelvis.

His stifle joints have the bare minimum angulations and are well-knit, stable and pointing forward. His joint bones should be clean and sharp and his hock joint is well let down and seems almost straight.

He is strong at the hocks, being well knit and firm, never bowed or breaking forward or slanted to one side. The hock joint and metatarsals are in a straight line below the hip joint, short and perpendicular to the ground. A serious fault would be an unsound stifle or hock joints.

5 His coat: A Chow Chow could either have a rough coat or a smooth one. However, both are double-coated. Let's consider the rough coat first. The rough coat is rough from the outside, abundant and dense and could either be straight and off standing but coarse-textured with a soft, thick and woolly undercoat.

His coat on the neck, shoulders and nape forms a mane, giving him a very leonine look. In fact, the rough Chow Chow's long hair and soft woolly undercoat serves as insulation against heat and cold while his coarse outer coat adds to his beauty.

Puppies have soft, thick and woolly coats with the coat forming a thick ruff around the head and neck, as if framing and protecting the head. This coat and ruff are generally found to remain longer with dogs than with their female counterparts.

The smooth coated Chow Chow is judged on the same lines as his rough counterpart except when it comes to the rough Chow Chow's quantity and distribution of the outer coat. On the other hand, the smooth Chow Chow has a hard, dense and smooth outer coat with a definite undercoat. In addition, the standard dictates that there should be no ruff or feathering on the leg or tail.

6 Coat length: Though the coat length may vary from Chow Chow to Chow Chow, a greater emphasis should be given to its thickness, texture and condition rather than length. Even if it is long, you needn't trim or shape it though you might consider trimming his whiskers, feet and metatarsals.

Though the smooth coated Chow is judged by the parameters as his rough coated counterpart, yet they differ in the amount and distribution of the outer coat. These parameters are not applicable to the smooth coated Chow since he has a hard, dense and smooth outer coat with a definite undercoat. To be the ideal Chow Chow, he should neither have ruff nor any feathering on the legs or tail.

7 **Coat color:** The color of his coat may vary from being clear colored, solid or solid with light shades in the ruff, tail and featherings. Usually, you can spot a typical Chow Chow in five colors—red ranging from light golden to deep mahogany, black, blue, cinnamon ranging from light fawn to deep cinnamon and cream.

However, there aren't any white Chows, but light cream is usually passed off as white. The blue Chow Chow is really a watered down version of black, and perhaps the least beautiful of them all.

8 **Gait:** To conform to the standard, your Chow Chow needs to have a good gait. His gait must be sound and straight, he should move with agility and quick and brief steps. His rear gait should be short and stilted because of the erectness of his rear legs. Viewed from his rear, you can see just the effect of his stilted action on his gait.

While his rear leg moves both upward and forward from the hip in a straight and stilted fashion with a slight bounce to it in the rump area, his legs neither extend far, forward nor backward. His hind foot thrusts forward with great impact—an action that transfers power to the body in a straight line due to the minimal action of the rear leg angulations.

In order to send on this power to front part of its body to the best of its ability, the Chow Chow's coupling must be short, and it must not have a roll through the midsection. When seen from the rear, the line of bone from hip joint to pad stays straight even as he walks.

As his speed increases, the hind legs incline forward, though just a little. If his stifle joints do not point in the line of his travel, he will have bowlegs. When you view him from the front, you will find that his line of bone from his shoulder joint to his pad is a straight line as he walks, but as his speed increases, his forelegs no longer move in parallel lines but tilt forward slightly.

To conform to the breed standard, his front legs should not swing out or in arcs but his front and rear parts should be equal and in synergy. Though this breed is known to be somewhat slower in speed, yet the Chow Chow shows remarkable endurance all due to his sound and straight rear leg that gives him direct and usable energy.

1 Body size and proportions: The average height these dogs go up to is about 17-20 inches at the withers. The highest point of his withers is calculated as the distance from his fore chest to the point of his buttocks. But a serious fault in him is his overall appearance if it is anything other than square.

Do you find the base of his chest in line with the tips of his elbows? When you examine the width from the front and rear, his chest is equal in width, besides also being broad. If he conforms to these proportions, he is the quintessential Chow Chow.

When you judge a Chow Chow pup, don't give them any leeway if he doesn't conform to these proportions. For instance, the ideal height of the Chow Chow must be between 46-56 cm.; he must weigh 20-32 kg and must stand ranging between 9 kg and 22 kg.

While females of the species are only slightly smaller than the males and weigh proportionately lesser too, an average adult weighs about 20 kg-25 kg.

2 Temperament: Don't underestimate your Chow Chow's aloofness for his snobbery. You wouldn't believe it but under that thick mane, you've got a super intelligent pet with an independent spirit and a regal air. His inherent nature causes him to be just a little reserved and cautious with strangers. He does not like any show of aggression or timidity from fellow dogs.

In addition, his deep-set eyes give him just a little peripheral vision. Your dog is the kind of neighbor everyone wishes for but few people ever get: he minds his own business just like a true blue aristocrat. He does not go out searching for trouble, but if provoked, will fight for justice and protect his master. If, however, you do come across a bad-tempered Chow Chow, bear in mind that he is not representative of the breed. A puppy mill perhaps bred him for a quick buck. So, don't judge his breed by his aggressive streak.

Chapter 3

Can You Get Along With A Chow Chow?

The Chow Chow stands apart from other breeds in many different ways, something you will soon find out. Sometimes feline in their attitudes—they're aloof, sparing with affection, independent, regal and stubborn—they don't always like to be hugged and fussed over by kids and strangers for their soft and abundant fur.

If you have a family comprising small kids, you should not choose this dog, as it does not particularly care for kids and their antics. Beware, he might turn aggressive in the company of your kids and may even bite them.

Here are his most distinctive traits:

Me first: But the Chow Chow is an extremely intelligent dog, and again like a cat, doesn't care too much to please his master, as other dogs will want to. He believes in pleasing himself first—his master can wait. Being hunting dogs, unsocialized Chow Chows don't get along with cats or small dogs. Not being pack dogs, they don't gel with large dogs of the same sex.

Positive reinforcement: And if you think that you can break his spirit by hitting or spanking him in order to obey you, think again because this is one breed that doesn't tolerate physical punishment.

If you hit him, he may turn vicious but he certainly won't learn the lesson you're out to teach him. Your dignified Chow Chow expects to be treated with majesty and respect and you are obliged to give him that. In return, he will respect you and be loyal to you if he thinks you deserve it. This is why you need to use positive reinforcement to teach him all that he needs to know rather than beat him into shape.

Protective, territorial and loyal: Often, ignorant people who don't understand the uniqueness of this breed's nature misunderstand it. Inherently suspicious of strangers, the Chow Chow takes family life and his responsibility towards his master very seriously. He will protect the master's family with his life and is perhaps undisputedly the best among dog breeds in this matter.

He is territorial too, and will fiercely protect his master's estate as if his own, while the latter is away. Don't imagine you can bypass him and enter your friend's home if his pet, the Chow Chow doesn't permit it. You may be used to getting warm welcomes from other breeds, but this breed is different.

The Chow Chow is well mannered, but can also be stubborn and protective. He is often a one-person dog, loyal to the end. His reserve, turned on its head, can end up in aggression, so one must handle him with kid gloves. Being such a powerful personality, he needs a calm owner who can be both fair and firm with him. If you have such an attitude, you would be the right master for the Chow Chow.

If you don't want to be over-protective towards your Chow Chow, socialized him right from puppy hood with a firm hand. If he has a tough exterior, it is largely due to his origins of being hardy draw-and-pull dogs. Added to this is the fact that they never had a single master as domestic pets do, since they were bred as hunting dogs—something that has cast a shadow on their personalities.

No wonder it is now an introvert and indifferent, and a little detached too. Realizing this, breeders have been trying to breed the Chow Chow to be a family dog, and have achieved some small measure of success. In successive generations of Chow Chows, you could well forget the scowl on his face and love the Chow Chow for his amiable nature and loyalty.

Do what you may, but don't expect obedience from him. If he must obey you, he must first be able to reason out your command and only then carry it out. Therefore, the onus is on you to be consistent always.

2 Smile at his scowl: He may startle you with his gravity, but really you will have to stand in line for his affection till he understands that you are indeed his master's friend. Still, the Chow Chow's behavior won't be radically different towards you—he will be reserved in his attitude towards you, not making friends too soon.

In fact, his appearance gives rise to all kinds of myths about his temperament. People see the scowl on his face; his deep-set eyes and his huge mane are intimidating to the unwary stranger, and lead one to believe he's aggressive and angry. But those who think this way mistake his natural reserve and regal air for his indifference to people, particularly those strangers who think all dogs must be friendly and loving. He is selective about granting his affection to those he considers special and therefore does not curry favor with anyone for attention.

He has a "don't care" attitude and doesn't mind what opinion you might hold of him. So, don't be misled by his scowl: in fact, the next time you encounter a Chow Chow scowling at you, just smile back at him.

3 Active, agile and learns quickly: Some people believe that a shorthaired Chow is more active, can perform tricks and is quicker on the uptake than his longhaired counterpart. They claim that he can dance on his hind legs, roll over, jump on his hind legs and can differentiate between "shake hands" and "shake" –

the latter being a command to dry off her mane after a bath. They are said to learn from wanting to please their masters and are people-centric.

Though people consider the Chow Chow a difficult breed, few people know that they can also be polite and patient. They don't give in easily to wearing leashes and collars, but will grudgingly allow you to put it round them.

4 Believes in personal cleanliness: You will also find that he is an extremely clean dog, who can easily be housebroken before he is eight weeks old. In fact, if you take in a Chow Chow, you will never see it have the odd accident—they take so easily to instruction and follow it to the letter!

His attitude to cleanliness can also be seen in his odor-free body and coat that is usually free of vermin, including ticks, making him a very likeable member of anyone's family.

5 An introvert: He may learn to be by himself for most of the time while you are out at work, but whenever you are at home, he would rather be with you than be kept in a kennel outside your house. He can't bear to be tied up and far away from the people he loves, and if you do make this mistake, be prepared to pay for the consequences: he will become hostile and anti-social.

6 Adjustable nature: The Chow Chow can live equally happily in a house, an apartment or condo. All he needs is ample exercise, though the best environment for him would be a house with a yard where he can play as long and as often as he likes. You will also need to keep your pet fit so he doesn't become lazy. He won't be comfortable in warm climates as his thick coat and sensitivity to the heat will make him very uncomfortable.

Chapter 4

Zeroing in on A Chow Chow -- What to consider

You've asked a few friends and Chow Chow owners about the temperament and ease of looking after a pet of this breed, and you've received many encouraging replies. Now, you feel encouraged to look out only for a Chow Chow. So, where do you go looking for one and how do you go about it? Let's find out.

First, do not contemplate buying a pet from a pet store or wherever else you cannot easily see the parents of the pup before buying it. It would be in your interests to visit a good kennel where you can request to see the breeds available and then decide.

On this basis, you can make an informed choice of a good pup by just spending a little more on finding out the dog's background, if he is in conformity with the breed standard and if he is predisposed to any diseases. This information can save you not just a lot of future grief but paying out huge vet bills too.

3 Characteristics of this breed: Your pet Chow Chow could be either highly energetic or just plain placid. Chow Chows are also known to be hardheaded, obstinate, serious and introverted as also loving, good-natured and loyal.

In your pet, you could also find these traits:

- 1 He resembles a teddy bear and therefore comes across as cuddly and cute
- 2 Stands proudly with a confident stature
- 3 Is a reliable and fearsome watchdog
- 4 Is inherently clean and easily housebroken
- 5 Is well mannered and quiet
- 6 Needs moderate exercise but must be groomed regularly

Though these are the general qualities of a Chow Chow, it is equally true that you can never be sure what your pup will grow up to be like. This is because many purebred pups do not grow up conforming to the standard.

1 Why not to buy a Chow Chow: On the flip side, there are certain reasons why you might not want to take in a Chow Chow, such as:

- 1 He is overly suspicious or openly aggressive when unsocialized
- 2 He has an aggressive streak that extends to other pets too
- 3 He is very strong-willed and determined and resists being nagged. For this reason, he must be handled by an experienced and confident owner who

- can be the dominant partner without having to use force
- 4 He needs regular grooming that includes brushing and combing, particularly if he is the rough coat variety
 - 5 He sheds a lot
 - 6 He will suffer from health-related problems
 - 7 He has such an independent streak in him that it can result stubbornness and disobedience to his master
 - 8 He could also be very jealous of either your new baby or other pets, whether older than him or younger
 - 9 They are also known to kill small animals such as cats and rodents, often leaving a dead mouse at your door more for sport than your safety
 - 10 They are sometimes difficult to train. They are therefore not recommended if you are a first time pet owner or are not in a position or do not want to show your dog who is the boss

❖ **Where you can safely buy your Chow Chow:** Though there are three avenues of buying purebred pups—the pet shop, the casual or backyard breeder and the hobby breeder, perhaps the worst of them all is the pet shop.

Here, dogs are bred unselectively, often sold in wholesale lots to pet stores. They are kept caged until sold, often unsocialized, unloved and unhappy. So, it's not surprising that they are just not right for homes, since they lack in temperament, socialization and health.

It stands to reason that if a pup has a bad beginning with a commercial breeder of this caliber, he stands a very slim chance of growing into a healthy, well-adjusted and beautiful pet. So, when you go out to select a pup, think with your head rather than your heart.

If you choose to think with the latter, you will end up buying that sad little pup who's caged up. But for reasons mentioned above, it will be the wrong choice for you. And in any case, a greedy breeder will continue to breed more and more pups to replace him.

1 **The backyard breeder:** Typically, your backyard breeder buys a female of a particular breed from a pet shop on the proprietor's assurance that a year down the line, he can safely breed her, sell the resulting pups and make back his investment on her.

A match is then made between her and the male down the street, whose owner has the same attitude to his male as the breeder has to his female—to make back his purchase price. Soon, the female gives birth to a litter of pups and though can be registered by the AKC, are of no greater quality than their parents.

This is because neither party cared to go into the physical and genetic history and makeup of each partner. When the litter was born, no care was given to the

new mother and her pups and later the breeder was unmindful of giving any care and attention to socializing, training or conditioning the new pups.

Instead, further damage to these pups was done when the breeder weaned them earlier than usual, thereby depriving them of the necessary bonding with their mother, only to be sold as fast as possible so he could make back his investment in the mother.

2 The serious breeder: Instead of buying from an ignorant and heartless buyer, you should really seek out a committed, and serious breeder or exhibitor. Such breeders invest many, many hours studying pedigrees and lineage, evaluating and observing their dogs for faults and virtues, and all the time giving them their love, care and attention. When you see these breeders with their dogs at dog shows, you can see the fruits of their labor.

Breeders work very hard grooming and training their pups before they can be sold to good homes. It would therefore be well worth asking him about practical realities of buying a particular breed that you have in mind. So, ask him if the breed you're considering is high on vet's bills, how long it takes to look after newborns, how much time he spends with potential buyers, whether it costs much to groom, train and socialize them before they are quality dogs.

1 The hobby breeder: This breeder breeds dogs as a hobby and not for commercial gain. He is a very responsible breeder whose only interests are to produce the ideal dog of their breed and to show dogs—in fact, his dogs are his pets and show dogs. Often his kennels include the couch or bed. He works hard to breed only the best without any worry about time, research, money and effort spent.

You can depend on him to do the genetic screening for any medical problems in their breed, spay or neuter the dog. Such a breeder is committed to every dog he produces. He sells only by referral.

1 Where to avoid buying a pup from: If pups are being sold at flea markets, roadside stands, motel rooms and pet shops, these are the worst places to buy from as unscrupulous breeders who produce pups in large numbers sell their litters here for a quick buck.

To them, the only breeding prerequisite is that the sire and dam have AKC papers. They don't care about the quality, health or temperament of the pup. Commercial breeders produce in large numbers and sell the weakest of the lot to these roadside sellers at a cheap price.

2 Locating a good breeder: An experienced and reputable breeder is the best person to give you a good quality puppy. He should be able to show you his stock from which you can choose and can also suggest a dog to suit your needs

and lifestyle.

Breeding quality dogs is a tough job, not possible by just anyone at all. It needs hands-on knowledge gleaned by constant exposure to breeders at dog shows. You can contact these breeders from a catalog brought out by the AKC. The Chow Chow Club Inc., the national Chow breed club, also brings out a magazine titled "Chow Life" which is an excellent source of reputable breeders.

A good breeder doesn't produce in large numbers, so you will have to wait for a puppy. He will ask you a lot of questions to make sure you are the right person to take a pup from him. In turn, you too must ask him a lot of questions.

3 What to ask the breeder: When you go to look at puppies, ask him the following questions:

- 4 Does he have a pedigree for the puppy?
- 5 Have the parents of the pup been X-rayed for Hip Dysplasia?
- 6 Does the pup suffer from entropion?
- 7 What guarantees does he offer? What happens if your pup doesn't turn out according to the guarantee? Can he be replaced or will your money be returned?
- 8 Are the sire and dam available for you to see?
- 9 Does he have the AKC registration papers to show you?
- 10 Do his pups come with AKC registration?
- 11 Does he own the parents of this pup or at least one of them?
- 12 Where were the parents or mother bought?
- 13 Which vaccinations has he been given? Is he checked for worms?
- 14 What does he eat? What is he allergic to?
- 15 Since when has he been breeding Chow Chows?
- 16 How many litters does he produce every year?
- 17 Does he offer a health guarantee?
- 18 Is he affiliated to any regional or national dog clubs?
- 19 How much does he charge for this one?
- 20 What health tests have been done on BOTH parents of the litter?
- 21 What temperament testing and socialization have been done?
- 22 What goals do the breeder have with the breeding program and how does the breeder go about to achieve this?
- 23 What does the breeder feel are the strengths and weaknesses in the breed and the breeder's program?
- 24 What type of contract does the breeder have for pet or show puppies?
- 25 How many champions has he finished?
- 26 How many champions has he bred?
- 27 Is either parent of the puppy a champion? Or his grandparents? If so, are there AKC championship certificates or photographs to prove this?

❖ **How to choose your pup:** Ensure that you see at least one show quality

litter before you buy. Once you have seen a good litter, you will make a better choice, because you will know the difference between these puppies and an ill-bred one.

When you ring to ask about a litter, ask as many questions as you can over the phone. If you find the answers not forthcoming, you know he isn't knowledgeable and you can reconsider going over to him. Arrange to see about five to 10 litters before buying. First, look at the adults, as well as the puppies.

Reputable breeders do not sell puppies under eight weeks old. They must be free of parasites and should be kept clean and in hygienic surroundings. They should have their first series of shots. Do not pick up a pup from filthy surroundings or it will develop parasite problems.

See if your pup is alert and active but not vicious. He should not have a runny nose nor should his tongue be bluish. Does he have a short wide muzzle, heavy bone and broad chest and big body. Now, set him down and make him walk. If he moves about freely, he's on.

If you select a quality Chow Chow, it means that he conforms to the standard recognized by the AKC. Ask the breeder to tell you the differences between show puppies and good pet quality puppies.

1 Understanding the breeder's lingo: If you can't understand typical jargon, communicating with your breeder will be very difficult. So, get the lowdown on what he means when he says the following:

- **Show potential:** To be of show quality, your pup must pass a basic orthopedic examination at age 10-12 weeks. He should also have excellent breed type and that something extra that sets him off as different from all the other entrants.
- **Breeding quality:** These pups, though essentially the same as the show type, rarely ever have that something extra that judges are looking for.
- **Pet quality:** Healthy and beautiful, these pups may have a small flaw in them which renders them unfit for breeding or showing, for instance, a bad bite, etc.

❖ **Finding a new home for your pet:** You were starry-eyed about bringing your Chow Chow home and you never thought you'd have to give him up so easily. But even if you can't keep him, you'd still like to do your best by him. So, how about making the right future choices for him?

Bear in mind that your dog is still your responsibility. Even now he depends on you to look after him. So, even if it takes all your time, effort and patience to find him a good home, you deserve to do your best for him.

1 **How to find him a new home:** Consider sending your pup to any one of the following:

- **Animal shelters:** Shelters and humane societies are meant to care for unloved and abused animals. They certainly aren't a place where you can offload your unwanted pets. Though they admit about 100 pets each day, few of them ever leave the shelter to go to a good home. So, where does that leave your pet?

Even if your pet is a purebred, that doesn't mean he will be the preferred choice of a prospective buyer. Besides, the reputation your Chow Chow enjoys is a deterrent since many people are frightened of Chow Chows. So, some shelters won't put them up for adoption. Then, if he's old, he has slimmer chances of being adopted.

1 **"No-kill" shelters and breed rescue services:** No one ever wants to see their pet being killed, so they don't admit many pets. But breed rescue services are small, private groups run by volunteers who are dedicated to a particular breed. Their services are expensive and they are so much in demand that they too cannot accept every dog that comes their way.

But it can help by placing your pet by giving you referrals of people interested in your pet's breed. Follow this advice if you want success. You can contact the nearest Chow Rescue service if you call the Chow Welfare Hotline at 608-756-2008 or write to the Chow Chow Club, Inc.'s Welfare Committee.

Chapter 5

Bringing Your Puppy Home

If you've decided to bring our Chow Chow home, that's not enough. You need to get your house ready for him. You're going to have things to do around the house. After all pups are so much like babies, what with wanting to explore all parts of your house.

But how do you know your house is safe and ready for your chow Chow. Check for these:

- 2 Clear your house of poisonous items:** Have you cleared your house of all poisonous items and taken them out of your pup's reach? If you haven't, now's the time to put away cleaners, laundry detergents, bleach, disinfectants, insecticides, cleaning fluid, fertilizers, mothballs and antifreeze in cabinets or high up on shelves. Of course, as he grows, and if he has an adventurous streak, he's sure to jump high on to your shelves to find out what's where.
- 3 Uproot all life-threatening plants:** Do you have life-threatening plants at home? Even apricot pits, spinach and tomato vines are dangerous to your pup. You can also ask your vet for more such plants that could affect your pet's health and life. Or if you're not sure if the plant your pup has eaten is poisonous or not, visit <http://vet.purdue.edu/depts/addl/toxic/cover1.htm> or a detailed listing of poisonous houseplants. Or if he has already been poisoned with the wrong plant, contact the Animal Poison Control Center 888-4ANI-HELP (888-426-4435). For \$45, the center can save your puppy, so it's well worth trying.
- 4 Put away dangerous objects:** Are electrical cords hanging or loose nails lying around? If there are such dangerous objects lying around, pick them up and put them away.
- 5 Supervise him:** Don't let your pup be by himself unsupervised whether inside or outside the house. Also, remember to keep him away from balconies, upper porches and high decks or he may just slip through the openings and fall.
- 6 Keep our toilet covered:** Puppies sometimes like to play in the toilet bowl water. This is harmful for him as he may swallow the toilet cleanser.
- 7 Get sharp objects out of the way:** Put away all sharp objects such as sharp twine, sewing needles and pins far away from your puppy's reach, because if he swallows these objects, he can harm his mouth and internal

organs.

- 8 **Don't tie ribbons round his neck:** Or he may chew it and this can lead to digestive problems or choke himself if the ribbon gets caught in something.
- 9 **If he's a plant nibbler:** If he tends to nibble on grass, don't worry, this is natural. But if he takes this habit forward and nibbles on certain other plants, he may just grow sick or die.

❖ **Dog supplies to buy before your pet arrives:** Have you bought a few musts for your pup? He's going to need the following supplies:

- **Food and water bowls:** Select solid and stable bowls that won't tip over when he eats or drinks out of it. Are they easy to clean? Buy one each for food and water. Initially, buy small bowls and then as he grows older, buy him larger ones. If you do this he won't overeat for his age nor will he fall into his water bowl whenever he goes over to drink.
- **Collar:** True, there is a large variety of lightweight collars available for your puppy. No matter which one you choose, attach an identification tag with your puppy's name, your address and phone number.

Let his first collar be of lightweight nylon or leather. To measure his neck correctly, measure his neck size and add two inches to it. To be sure that the collar fits properly, slide two fingers between his collar and your pup's neck. If it's a snug fit, the size is right. But if there's room left over, you need a smaller size, and if your fingers don't fit comfortably, the collar size is way too small. Your pup may take a little while adjusting to his collar, so give him this time to get used to it.

- **Leash:** Leashes too come in many lengths and styles, such as leather, nylon and retractable. If you buy a six-foot leash it would serve both as a leash for training and walking.

Always keep your puppy on a leash unless he is in your fenced-in yard. In many parts of the U.S., leash laws prevail, making it mandatory to keep your puppy on his leash at all times. If he's unleashed, he may be fined or if he dirties a park by soiling, you will be expected to clean up after him.

- **Grooming supplies:** Grooming him means investing in a number of tools but this will depend on the breed you buy and his coat length. For shorthaired breeds, buy a brush with natural bristles, rubber currycomb or a hand mitt, sturdy wide-toothed metal comb, flea comb and a mat splitter are needed for longhaired breeds.

▪ **Toys:** To exercise your pup, buy him a few toys, as this will help him exercise and get over their chewing cravings. Choose toys specifically designed for pups—ones that can't be splintered, torn or swallowed. What's fun and safe to have are rawhide chips, nylon chews and hard rubber balls. And, if they don't fit comfortably in his mouth, it's not right for him.

▪ **Puppy food:** Give him his essential nutritive foods and get him used to a feeding schedule.

▪ **Crate or sleeping bed:** Fix his sleeping area in a warm and comfortable place. A crate serves very well as a den in your absence from the house. A crate may either be a portable and enclosed in plastic or a wire crate. It should be large enough for him to stand up and turn around in and lie down too and should be airy.

When you buy an adult-sized crate, also buy partitions or place a cardboard box in the back to serve as a cozy space for him. Apart from the crate, set up a sleeping area for him for the time you are at home. Buy a puppy-sized bed instead of an adult-sized bed, so that he is safe and snug.

1 **Stain remover and scent:** To take the odor away from his nose, buy a stain and scent remover.

2 **Book on puppy care:** This is most important for you in your pup's growing days.

Chapter 6

Caring For Your Chow Chow

All breeds of dogs are prone to an array of health problems, and so too with Chow Chows. Of them, hip dysplasia, luxating patella and entropion are the commonest. But the chances of your pup not being dysplastic or having a mild problem with it are minimized if you buy him from a registered breeder who X-rays the hips of animals and examines them for dysplasia before they can be bred. But on the whole, we now know that about 50 percent of all Chows suffer from hip dysplasia.

1 Hip dysplasia: This is caused due to a malformed hip joint that results in the head of the femur bone not fitting perfectly into the hip socket in which the femoral head lies. Often, it leads to pain, lameness and arthritis. However, the good news is that this condition, though congenital, can be treated by surgery.

Again being congenital, a dysplastic dog will often and invariably produce dysplastic puppies. Therefore, to ensure you're taking home a healthy pup, it is imperative you ask to see the sire and the dam, and inquire if they are diagnosed with this condition. If not, ask to see a certificate granted by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals or by Penn HIP, stating this.

Do not believe what you hear, but wait to see the certificate proving they are healthy and clear of this condition. Ask for a copy of the same so you can show it to your vet. Also, ask him if he will guarantee a puppy against hip dysplasia for at least two years.

2 Entropion: Another medical condition they suffer from is entropion. Check if your Chow Chow has runny eyes. If he does, he may well suffer from entropion, a condition caused by eyelid abnormality in which the dog's eyelids are turned inwards rather than outwards. This irritates the eye and, if you as an owner turn a blind eye to this, it can lead to your pet turning blind. If detected in time, it can be corrected with surgery.

Usually congenital, entropion can also be acquired in later life due to an eye injury or infection. However, since this isn't always apparent in pups, you should take care to check this out when selecting your pup. Look out for clear, dry and sparkling eyes of the parents of your prospective pup. But if you see inflamed or runny eyes or crusty eyelids, you must know immediately that your pup is suffering from an eye infection and should be treated by a vet without delay.

3 Luxating patella: If the small, flat and mobile bone in the front of your Chow Chow's knee is dislocated, don't panic, as this is a knee problem that is yet again

a hereditary one, often due to overweight. But this too can be corrected surgically.

4 Intolerance to anesthesia: Chow owners are often worried about their pets being intolerant to anesthesia, resulting in complications from surgery and death during surgery. This happens because this breed is said to have small hearts, in comparison with their body weight, and since anesthesia is given according to body weight, often they have been given a much larger dose than their bodies can take, causing their hearts to stop functioning.

5 Ruptured or torn ligaments: Your Chow Chow has such straight rear legs that the angulation isn't enough, resulting in torn cruciate ligaments. He may rupture his ligaments when exercising strenuously. Or he may chase a ball, stop and start abruptly and cry in pain and turn lame. When he stays lame for some time, you realize that he needs immediate medical attention.

6 Diabetes: One of the commonest hormonal disorders in dogs, diabetes is a problem of the pancreas. It is caused due to the body producing insufficient amounts of insulin, thereby affecting the endocrine system.

The highest occurrences of diabetes are found in dogs aged five to seven years, of which female dogs are more prone to it. If your dog is obese, he stands a greater chance of being affected by it. It is the most common hormonal disorder in dogs.

If your Chow Chow suffers with diabetes, you'll notice that he drinks more water than usual, urinates more frequently and may even do so within the house, and will lose a lot of weight.

In order to prevent diabetes, have your dog examined by the vet every year, with urine and blood examinations as part of the routine checkup. The earlier you detect diabetes, the higher the chances of treating it in time. While there is no cure for diabetes, it can certainly be controlled.

➤ **Treatment:** Treatment usually consists of daily injections of insulin. Learn from your vet how best to administer these shots and adopt a time schedule. Monitor your dog's response to the insulin shots and their dosage. Testing his urine with test strips that you can get from a nearby drug store or pet shop does this. This strip will denote the level of sugar in his system-if it is too much, you reduce the insulin level and if it is low, you scale up the insulin dosage.

If you maintain a record of the results of these test strips, the dosage of insulin given and your dog's eating patterns and attitude, it will help you in understanding his condition, besides also helping your vet predict any future problems.

➤ **Feeding your diabetic dog:** Give your dog a fiber and protein-rich diet with restricted fats and carbohydrates. Be sure to feed him at the same time

everyday, besides also giving him the same food, as this will have an effect on his sugar levels.

Take care to see that you feed him a third of his total daily amount of food about ½ hour before you give him his insulin shot. The remaining two-thirds can be given about eight to 10 hours later. But if he likes a snack before bed, give it out of his two-thirds amount of food.

Put him on an exercise regimen and see that he sticks to it. If you decide to walk your dog, or play with him for about 20 minutes a day. Exercise will help keep his sugar levels constant. If he is obese, you will have to put him on a diet to lose weight.

If you have a female dog, have her spayed as this has an effect on the female hormones and will stabilize her insulin levels. And don't forget to give her all your love and understanding, since she sure doesn't understand her condition.

7 Glaucoma: Diagnosed as a painful and serious optic condition, here as pressure within the eye increases, it leads to blindness, if undetected or if not checked in time. In dogs, this is a leading cause of blindness and is caused due to increased fluid pressure within the eye. If the pressure is not reduced, permanent damage to the retina and optic nerve end in permanent blindness. Blindness can set in within 24 hours if the fluid pressure is very high or slowly over weeks and months if mild, but in all cases, it is extremely painful.

Glaucoma may either be primary or inherited or secondary due to a variety of eye disorders such as luxation of the lens, tumors of the eye, and uveitis or an inflammation of the eye.

You may detect your dog rubbing away at his red eyes or the eyes may look cloudy due to a swollen cornea and he may prove to be sensitive to light. It may seem larger or bulge outwards and your dog may consequently lose his appetite and be depressed.

➤ **An emergency called Glaucoma:** In such a situation, the vet must begin treatment immediately to save the dog's vision or it may result in irreversible damage to the retina and optic nerve within just a few hours of the fluid pressure being significantly increased.

➤ **Treating glaucoma:** In order to save his sight, immediate surgery is necessary. Initially, your vet may render emergency medical therapy but then refer him to a large and more specialized veterinary center.

8 Skin, hormonal problems and allergies: Your Chow Chow can also suffer from skin and hormonal problems. Often congenital, these problems are hardly ever obvious to the naked eye in pups. Once again, therefore, you will have to

ask the breeder about the parents of the pup and if you don't find that he is healthy or has an issue with his appearance or temperament, refrain from buying him.

Skin and hormone problems include hot-spots and allergies. If your pet scratches himself a bit too much or has irritated skin that looks red and infected, show him to the vet immediately.

1 **Heat prostration:** If you leave your pet in a hot area with no ventilation, or out in the sun, he will be very uncomfortable and suffer from heat prostration. He reacts to extremely high humidity, particularly if the temperature rises above 80°.

To avoid such a situation, keep him cool in a shady area or room, with provision for rest and peace. If he is still uncomfortable, call in your vet, but meanwhile wet him with cold water or towels soaked with cold water.

Bloat: If he eats too much, he is bound to suffer from bloat or gastric torsion—a life-threatening and sudden illness caused due to the stomach filling with air and twisting.

Chapter 7

Grooming Your Chow Chow

One of the most endearing traits of a Chow Chow is his great leonine mane and coat. While it is true that your pet won't require elaborate and extensive coat trimming, but he's sure to need a few hours of brushing, bathing and cutting of his nails just in order to look his best always.

1 When to start grooming him: Begin his grooming sessions as soon as you take him home and don't worry that he's just six weeks old or six months. It's never too early to put him on a grooming regimen, so don't feel sorry for him. Besides this breed thinks no end of itself, so pride themselves on their cleanliness and their need to be well groomed and looking magnificent. By grooming your Chow Chow, you would really be pandering to his vanity, besides also helping him to maintain his majestic look and attitude. Lastly, it will help forge a closer and better link between you.

2 What equipment will you need? To do a good job, you need the right equipment to do a good job in the shortest amount of time and for the best effect. These tools are easily available at your nearest pet store or can also be ordered from catalogs. But remember that all good things in life don't come cheap, so you have to pay for quality.

If you use a sturdy grooming table it will give you better control of the dog on a table and it'll save your back. You can also build a table using inexpensive materials found at the hardware store.

You will need:

- 1 A bath tub for a pet
- 2 A Greyhound-style medium or coarse steel comb
- 3 A fine-toothed comb with a handle
- 4 A well-balanced grooming shears, about 7" long. Maintain it well so that it remains sharp and has a good balance
- 5 A slicker brush and a pin brush
- 6 A nail clipper and a product called "Quik Stop"
- 7 A spray-on coat dressing and a conditioning shampoo. Use shampoos meant exclusively for pets, don't cut corners by using yours as dogs need a shampoo with a different pH balance
- 8 A blow dryer—you could use either the handheld variety or the hi-powered ones.

❖ **Bathing:** With your tools in hand, you can begin the grooming procedure. Bathe your dog monthly or oftener, if you like. If you choose to give him a bath once a week, don't worry about his coat drying out because if you use good shampoos, this won't happen. Usually, Chow Chows are bathed once a week.

Before you bathe him, check for any large mats in his hair or dead hair that he is shedding. Remove these, wet his coat thoroughly and apply shampoo, taking care not to let the liquid enter his eyes. Rub hard to work up a good lather, and add water if you so require.

Remember, the soap or shampoo has to go all the way down to his skin, traveling all the way through the thick maze of his coat. Rinse well, and lather again. Now, use a washcloth to wipe his face, once again taking care to keep the soap or shampoo out of his eyes and ears.

Rinse once more for the last time. This is a very critical wash for him as no shampoo should remain in his coat or this will irritate his skin and cause "hot spots". The rule of thumb is to rinse till the water runs clear, and follow it up with yet another rinse, just to be sure. While he is still in the tub, wipe him dry, ensuring that no water has remained in his ears.

Now, blow-dry his coat by laying him down on one side on a table. Initially, you may need the help of a member of your family or friend, but keep him down and make him obey you, no matter how much he may want to get up and run about the house. Once you work your way, he will find it so comfortable that he will fall off to sleep while you dry his coat.

Begin with the coat of hair on his stomach and legs, and go all the way to his spine, blowing his coat with one hand and brushing it down with the other with a pin brush. Dry the part between his rear legs and around his private parts.

Brushing is very important now as when you do this, you should be able to see the skin as you go along, no matter how thickly-coated he is. If you can't achieve this, the hair closest to his skin will pack down, collect dirt and moisture and cause skin problems.

Part his coat in small sections, and brush within these sections as this makes reaching the skin easier. Use a slicker brush or pin brush, and then comb his coat to ensure that all his dead hair has been removed. Now, turn him over and repeat the above process on his other side. When you dry his ruff and bib, let him stand up or sit, if he likes.

Being long-coated, you will need to brush his hair a few times each week. To hasten shedding and prevent hairy tumbleweeds from finding their way into your house, comb out his dead hair often enough.

You can certainly do most of the grooming yourself, with a little bit of help from family. All you need are a good brush just right to suit the texture of his coat, nail-clippers and a fine-toothed comb to run through his silky hair and weed out fleas. To get your dog into the groove of grooming, you need to first teach him to accept all the attention he gets. Begin when he is still a pup by letting you touch him all over his body, to stand and lay on his side as you command him to. He must grow used to your touch, the use of a soft brush and a coarse washcloth. But if he can't lie still, place a mat on the kitchen table and set him up on it and work with him there. All you need is patience and time to draw your shy dog out and make him confident.

If his coat is tangled, work gently weaving your hands and brush through the tangles and trying hard not to irritate his skin. Comb out the tangle by working your way inwards, but if it is badly tangled or matted, do it little by little, praising him as you go along whenever you hit a rough patch.

Alternatively, you could shave his matted areas, but do it carefully so that he doesn't get nicked and the skin inflamed. But if you can't go through it yourself or can't bear to cause him pain, hand him over to a professional groomer to do the needful.

Your Chow Chow may shed hair continuously, particularly in the household heat of a dry winter. But double-coated dogs are known to shed a lot of hair twice a year, with undercoat shedding beginning on his haunches and going up to the rest of the coat. His hair may look dull even before the new hair begins to grow back. It may take a month or more for the entire coat to shed completely.

1 Begin with your pup: Good grooming habits begin in puppyhood with teaching him to sit, stand or lie down to have their bodies examined and their hair combed.

2 Grooming equipment for your pup: For your pup, you need a basic home grooming kit comprising a soft wire slicker brush, a fine and coarse toothed comb, a Universal brush and mat comb for tangles, and an oil-based conditioner. The mat comb must have long teeth to loosen the hairs.

3 On a daily basis: Check your dog for cuts, sores, fleas, rashes, bumps, ticks or hitchhikers in her coat or dirty ears. If he has fleas, use a fine-toothed comb to draw them out and drop them into a mug of soapy water. If ticks are way under a pile of coat hair, pick them up with tweezers or your fingers and drop them in a vial of alcohol.

To do this, pick up the tick by its body, roll it back and forth and then pull firmly. Use pincers or tweezers to also remove any grass awns, seed casings or thorny twigs.

Checking his skin: You need to ensure that your pet has a healthy skin—something that begins with a nutritious diet. If he likes the food you give him, is energetic and happy, he's healthy but he wouldn't be in the pink of health if his energy levels were low, his coat dull or itchy and suffers from any medical problem including thyroid.

For a glowing and healthy skin, you need to be sure he doesn't suffer from any skin problems. Skin problems can be due to flea allergies, so a daily check for fleas is necessary, particularly during the flea season. His skin can break out in a rash due to contact allergies too when irritated skin leads to him scratching the area, which in turn can lay the skin open to staphylococcus infections.

For this, your vet will prescribe antibiotics, though expensive. Skin irritations and infections need only a night to erupt so use a fine-toothed comb to check for fleas and ticks.

1 **Ears:** Check his ears periodically for fungus; if he has drooping ears since these are more prone to fungus and bacterial infections. Cleaning agents prescribed by the vet can dry them out.

Infected ears can be very uncomfortable to the dog, and may cause a hematoma by breaking a blood vessel if he shakes his head vigorously to ease his discomfort. If he sits still, the hematoma may go on its own, or it may need to be surgically removed.

2 **Feet:** Cut your dog's toenails every fortnight as long toenails can make walking difficult. Cut them after giving him a bath. If he is reluctant to get his nails cut, he may be nipped and this may deter him from getting them cut a second time. So, early in life, you need to teach him to stand or sit still and offer his paw. Now, clip off a tiny bit of each nail for a couple of days consecutively, or allow a groomer to do the job. If he gets nipped, the quick contained in his nails has a nerve and blood supply. So, if by mistake you cut him there, it not only hurts him, but causes a lot of bleeding. Cut the flow with flour or cornstarch.

See that there's nothing stuck between the pads such as seeds from grass, pebbles, chemicals on lawns that can burn him, and fungus that can irritate him, and result in hot spots and infection.

Trim the hair between the toes and pads short as also around the outside of his feet. If you let this hair and the nails grow, they can cause the foot to spread and become flat, picking up dirt and making him slip on smooth ground.

In order to encourage nail cutting, give your Chow Chow treats and praise him for his cooperation.

3 **Shedding:** Your Chow Chow's hair growth is as cyclical as anything else. You will see that he sheds his coat twice a year and loses his guard hairs once a

year. The whole process of shedding, however, can take place between three weeks to two months. To accelerate the process, give him a warm bath and groom him twice a day.

The process of shedding is controlled by hormonal changes linked to the length of the day and is influenced by his food levels and health. Your pet may also lose hair after surgery and X-rays under anesthesia. Chows shed seasonally, certainly not daily. A couple of times a year they shed their coats.

4 Grooming him in the summer: Don't make the mistake of shaving his coat in the summer, only to make him brave the heat better. Perhaps you don't know that the Chow Chow's thick coat is specially designed to protect him from heat and cold. Its undercoat helps to insulate the skin. So, if you did shave him, it won't make him feel cooler, and certainly will cause skin problems and sunburn. Instead, groom him now by getting rid of unwanted and dead coat hair. But if his coat isn't particularly thick in the summer, don't blow dry it after a bath as this is a lengthy procedure and comes with the risk of retaining moisture and causing hot spots in humid weather.

5 Curing hot spots: Cropping up overnight, these can grow from a tiny spot to a huge, oozing and red sore. He will try to relieve the pain by biting himself there, only worsening it in the process. Though its cause is yet unknown, it may be due to unrinsed soap or shampoo, flea infestations, wounds, allergies and hormone disorders.

To relieve the itching, apply skin medication such as Panalog and Gentocin ointment and Variton cream. Over the counter drugs are also available for this condition or the vet may advise injections of anti-inflammatory steroids to reduce his sensitivity to allergens. This is common in every Chow Chow's life, so treat it as natural.

You should see a home-grooming session as an incentive to a relationship with your pet. Dogs inherently groom each other to depict and reinforce pack behavior and show subordination, and you can take advantage of this by spending a few minutes a day to check for fleas, brush his coat and talk and praise him as you go along. This will increase the bond with him and he will look smart and healthy too.

2 Choosing a groomer: If you're sure you neither have the time nor the inclination to groom your Chow Chow, hand him over to a trained groomer. For this, you need to select him with as much care as you chose your pet. After all, you must be pleased with his hair styling and treatment of your dog.

Besides, many vets also have grooming centers at their clinics, so you could choose to take your pet there. But if he doesn't have a center, he may recommend you to a good one. Alternatively, you could ask for references from friends who are dog owners, boarding kennels that don't have a grooming service,

pet supply stores, shelters and purebred breeders.

Armed with these recommendations, phone around to ask about the prevailing rates and each groomers rates and other add-on services. Usually, a good groomer will not tranquilize your dog before getting down to work on him. But if your dog has a particular problem or if he is a senior dog with a medical problem, he may need special handling.

Before zeroing in on a groomer, visit his center and ask him as many questions as you can think of until you are satisfied. Look around his place to see if it is well-lit, that he and his assistants handle dogs gently and with special consideration where it is necessary, and that the shampoos and flea and tick products are of good quality.

Your responsibility: In order to get the most out of every visit to the groomer, here's what you can do:

- 1** Teach your Chow Chow to stand when you command him to and to allow the groomer to do his job without putting up a resistance. Put him through obedience classes for this, which, in any case, is part of the Canine Good Citizen test.
- 2** Comb his coat regularly to prevent tangles and mats or let the groomer do it.
- 3** Give him crate training so that he learns to sit quietly until his coat is dried and wait for you to return.
- 4** Warn the groomer of any bad habits your pet may have that may interfere with his smooth functioning. If your pet hates her nails to be cut and bites if you try it or if he subject to seizures or is arthritic, let your groomer know in advance.

Chapter 8

Housetraining Your Chow Chow

There are many ways in life to achieve the same desired results. Of them, there are hard ways and easy ways, right ways and wrong ways. The best course is to combine the easy way with the right way and get the best results. This requires a lot of supervision and positive reinforcement. Let's see how best to achieve what we want in order to housetrain our Chow Chow.

Where to begin: To get the kind of behavior you desire, you must:

- 1 Allocate an area for elimination outside the house
- 2 Show him the way to this spot
- 3 Praise him generously after he finishes

If you praise and reward him immediately after he finishes his job, it encourages him to eliminate in that area alone. The odor of his urine that he leaves behind this time will linger till his next visit and he will soon mark that area as his sole place to do his business.

❖ **Time it right:** At age six to eight weeks, your Chow Chow should go out to eliminate every couple of hours, though as he grows older, he can go out fewer times. In puppyhood, take him out at the following times of the day:

- 1 Upon waking in the morning
 - 2 After naps
 - 3 After each meal
 - 4 After playing or a training session
 - 5 After being left alone for a while
 - 6 Just before bedtime
1. **“Hurry up” or “Potty”—the power of your command:** To hasten the dog's potty time, teach him to eliminate when you give the command for it. So, say “hurry up” or “potty” in an encouraging tone just when he gets the urge to “go”. He will soon learn that when you say the command, he will begin to sniff, circle and then get down to business. Once he's done, praise him lavishly.
 2. **Crate training:** To give your pet a safe confinement during housetraining, he needs to be crate trained. If you introduce the crate to him in a fun way, your pup will take to crate confinement quickly and without fuss. And there's more you can do too, such as:
 - To make this experience pleasurable, play with him there or spend time

watching TV there or reading as he gets busy with chewing a toy. If he is there all by himself, he begins to associate the area with isolation and may resist being there at all.

- Begin crate training at dinnertime. Give him his feed, one piece at a time, by throwing bits of kibble in to the crate and making him search for it. This is one way of making a game of his training.
- If you pick up his toys, replace them in the crate, so that when he returns he can play with them. To surprise him, hide a biscuit in the crate—even that's fun!
- Don't crate him for longer than he can hold the urge to eliminate or defecate. If you are gone for long periods each day, why not consider a larger confinement area such as an exercise pen or small room?
- If you give him a large area to eliminate in your absence, he can do it away from his crate space, say about 15-30 square feet. If he finds a particular spot eliminate, cover it with paper for easier cleaning.

❖ **Excuse him his mistakes:** If you leave him to himself, he's bound to make mistakes. He needs to be supervised, so be with him at this time. Until he goes through four weeks of not eliminating in the house, don't consider him housetrained. If he's older, this should be a longer period. Until then:

- Keep a constant vigil over him
- Set up baby gates to control his movements in the house
- When unsupervised, confine him to his crate

❖ **Does he wet himself?** If he squats and urinates when he greets you in puppyhood, he may probably suffer from submissive urination. Such dogs are hypersensitive and should not be scolded for this behavior, since punishment only worsens the problem. However, as he grows older, he will no longer do this if you are calm and quiet. Or you could ask him to sit down for a tasty treat till someone greets him.

❖ **Once he has made a mess:**

- Remove all urine and fecal odor so that your Chow Chow does not return to the same spot in your house where he made a mess.
- Use a good deodorizer for doggy odors.
- If he's urinated on a carpet, saturate it with a cleaning agent.
- Shut off all those rooms in your house where your Chow Chow has made frequent mistakes. Let him enter here only when accompanied by a family member.

❖ **Correcting his "mistakes":** It's quite natural for a dog to make a mess during the housetraining period. This is why you need to be ready to handle these problems. Here's how:

- Don't punish him sternly when he makes a mistake as this only

delays training.

- In order to correct his behavior, make a startling sound, a sharp noise or say “No” loudly. Do this when you catch him red-handed, but be sure not to be too loud or he will eliminate in front of you or perhaps even outdoors.
- Be patient.
- Don’t scold him after he has stopped soiling the area. Once he finishes, take him into the yard where he can finish in the area he has marked and when he finishes, praise him.
- Don’t rub his nose into his mess. This will not teach him not to repeat it and will only end up making him frightened of you.

❖ **Training your pup:** Your pup’s socialization process begins when he is still in the litter. When he is seven to eight weeks old, he gains in independence and is adventurous about his environment. Now’s the best time to bring home your pup. In the next fortnight, he will begin to be easily frightened and will cling to you for support and reassurance. Don’t make loud noises or surprises at this time and have new experiences that don’t shock him or threaten his peace of mind.

At 10 weeks, he is well over this phase and will now enter the juvenile phase. Watch him nose around and be more exploratory—a phase that will go on till he’s an adult. Now, introduce him to more new things He will be more inquisitive and wider ranging in his explorations. But watch him closely now as he may enter a second phase of fear in the fourth or fifth month.

While you socialize your pup, take his health needs into consideration. Vaccinate him completely or he will catch the deadly disease Parvovirus. Don’t take him out in public if his shots are still incomplete.

1 Obedience training for your pup: Even at age seven weeks, when you begin socializing your pup, you can make the whole process fun for him by injecting some gentle play. Use motivational methods and reward-based behaviors by offering treats, toys and food, apart from praise so that he wants to obey you.

Try to set up situations where he cannot go wrong. And don’t use physical punishment while he’s still a pup as this may harm him both mentally and physically.

As with all the very young of all species, pups too have very short attention spans. This means that you repeat exercises several times a day. All you need to do is to spend a few minutes a day and watch the difference in his attitude. For best results, start the process a few days after he comes home to you.

Trick training: Here are some commonly taught tricks for all dogs:

Sit:

- 1 Take a piece of food or a toy and from in front of him, move it to over his

- head and simultaneously say "Sit".
- 2 He will raise his head and follow the direction of the food or toy, and without knowing it, lower his rear end to the process, lower his rear end to the floor in a sitting position.
 - 3 Help him into this position by tucking his bottom under with your free hand.
 - 4 Now, praise him lavishly and give him the toy or treat as a reward.

Down:

- 1 Try to tease him by showing him a piece of food or toy.
- 2 Now, say "Down" and lower the toy to the floor.
- 3 If he needs help, lower his rear body with a slight pressure on his shoulders.
- 4 When he lies down, as per your commands, give him the toy, even if only for a second and reward him profusely.
- 5 Now, increase the time period for him to stay on the floor before you give him the toy.

Stand:

1. While your pup is still in the Down position, say "Stand" and raise a treat or toy high above his head. Help him get into position if he needs it.
2. Let him remain in this position for a couple of seconds, then release, reward and praise him generously.

Wait:

1. Get your pup into sitting position.
2. Say "Wait" and move back from him, by a couple of steps. Praise him for staying.
3. Now, reward him, praise him and then release. Remember to reward him while he's still waiting so that he makes the association between his action and your reward.

If he gets up too soon, repeat the exercise and slowly increase the time he waits.

Strut (Heel):

- 1 Dangle a tasty treat at his head level on your left-hand side.
- 2 Say "Strut" or "Heel" and walk forward briskly.
- 3 Allow him to touch a bit as you walk.
- 4 First, just take a few steps, then increase the range. Now, release the pup and praise him. As he gets better at this, raise the level of the treat higher, but don't reward him for jumping.

By training your pup, you will develop a close bond of love and loyalty with him, besides also being a whole lot of fun. As you know, an untrained dog can be a nuisance, and a danger to the family and the neighborhood. But a well-trained dog is a friend for life and an asset to your family.

Chapter 9

Socialize Your Chow Chow

Socializing your pup isn't something you do one fine day and then not again till you get the urge. It is an on-going process that begins when you bring your pup home and ends with his death.

To begin the process, right from the time you take him home, encourage visitors to come over and visit you and your new Chow Chow. Ideally, these people must belong to different races and cultures, be in different age groups and to both sexes. Let him go forward and be friendly, and respond to your friends' toys, treats and gestures.

Once the vet certifies he is well and healthy, take him out with you on errands. When you meet a friend, let the person hold him or give him his time, attention and a treat. Your "dog friendly" friends could be good for such occasions. Socializing him means taking him out to as many places as possible so that his breadth of experience is wider and he mixes with people better. So, take him to the convenience store, park, supermarket, mall or playground, hang around for a while till he soaks in the environment.

If, however, you don't socialize your Chow Chow for some time, he will go back into his earlier unsocialized state and turn his earlier shy self. Immediately resume the socialization process with him. You'd know he's regressing if he tucks his tail behind him when he sees a stranger or barks while backing off.

Socializing your pup: Pups need a lot of positive experiences to become confident and well adjusted adults. This is why they need to be exposed to a variety of people, dogs, children and people and to sights, sounds and smells.

■ **Adjusting to people:** Your dog is a part of your family comprising human beings, so it is necessary he get along with people. He needs to be in the company of a lot of people and earn praise or rewards for good behavior from them in order to be well behaved.

To do this:

- 1 Ask your friends over to meet and play with your Chow Chow. Make them crouch down and meet him at eye level.
- 2 Ask your kids or the neighbor's kids to come in and play with him, if they know how to be gentle with him. If a pup doesn't know what it means to be with a kid, he can be aggressive towards them when they're older.
- 3 If kids run around squealing and shouting, it sets off prey instincts in dogs if they are not familiar with them.
- 4 Gently but firmly correct bad behavior right from the start.

5 Gelling with other dogs: If dogs cannot speak the way we do, they have their own means of communication—through body posture, facial expressions and vocalization, they get across their message of fear, anger, aggression, submission or playfulness.

If he learns canine language, he will be able to put his feelings across effectively but if raised in isolation, he may misinterpret cues from other dogs or send wrong signals that will result in anger in other animals.

Like us, they too must learn acceptable norms of behavior such as when not to nip a friend or when to jump on Mom and when not to. So, from play behavior too, they learn to live by the code of their society.

How is your Chow Chow with other pets? For many dogs, getting along with other house pets is more of a problem than dealing with other dogs. So, if you have small animals beware, since hamsters or rabbits elicit prey instincts in dogs.

Fortunately, cats and larger pets aren't at that much of a risk. If you have a multi-pet home, introduce your pets to your pup at an early age. Supervise them when they are together, and reward them with praise or treats when they behave well with your pup.

When dogs and cats are raised together, the former usually accept cats. But considering your Chow Chow has strong hunting instincts, any cats in the house are in danger.

Why is your Chow Chow shy? Your Chow Chow may be shy if:

- 1 **One of his parents is shy:** Shyness in dogs is a dominant genetic trait. So, if one parent is shy, half the litter will also be so.
- 2 **He's badly socialized:** Your pup should ideally be socialized between the ages of five and 12 weeks of age. If they are left unsocialized, they are probably timid and need a lot more effort to be well adjusted.

❖ **How to deal with shy dogs:** Two winning techniques to deal with such dogs are: the flooding technique and desensitization and counter-conditioning. Flooding involves exposing the dog to a frightening situation until he is no longer scared of it.

Desensitization and counter-conditioning refers to gradually exposing the dog to the stimulus that brings on fear in a low-intensity form so that he doesn't get frightened. By counter-conditioning, we mean that you add a reward when he proves he's no longer scared. As he shows his confidence, gradually increase the intensity of the stimulus without bringing on fearful behavior.

1 **Socializing shy dogs:**

- i. Ensure he's healthy since shyness can also be due to poor eyesight or hypothyroidism.
- ii. List all the things that your pet is scared of before you begin training and rank them.
- iii. Teach him to stay in a relaxed posture, perhaps the sit-stay.
- iv. Next, introduce him to the situation he's least scared of and gradually go high up in the list you made in Step 2 till you reach the highest. Ask a friend to train your dog. Put him in a sit-stay position and ask your friend to stand at some distance from him. If his presence affects your pet, the latter will begin to show signs of concern such as sneezing, hyperventilating, shaking, panting, etc. But if he isn't concerned, he will sit in a relaxed posture.
- v. Repeat this till you're sure he isn't frightened of anyone.

2 **Spaying and neutering your pup:** If you don't intend breeding your pup, it's best you spay or alter him. Ask your vet the best age at which he can be spayed or altered, but usually it's after he reaches sexual maturity.

There are many reasons why spaying or altering is considered a good idea. First, an accidental pregnancy could lead to unwanted litters that endanger the mother's health. It also prevents the outbreak of female diseases such as pyometra. Besides, male dogs are easier to manage if neutered.

By selectively breeding the Chow Chow breed and producing only the best and the healthiest alone can you do a great service to this wonderful breed.

Chapter 10

The Right “Chow” For Your Chow Chow

You are perhaps aware that each breed of dog comes with its own unique nutritional requirements that have come down the generations much like his coat, temperament, attitude and body size.

As a pet owner, it is necessary you know that your pet doesn't look for a change in his diet. On the contrary, he finds it odd to eat anything new and different from what he's used to. And you must also take care to see that his nutritional needs are being met by his diet.

His diet should contain:

1. Sources of nutrients found in his ancestors' native environment. It should therefore not be strange and unfamiliar to his digestive and glandular systems but familiar and easy to digest and
2. The content of protein, carbohydrates, fatty acids, vitamins and minerals should match the requirements of his breed's nutritional requirements

By feeding your pet right, you could not just invest in a healthy pet but also save a lot of money by not having to take him to the vet for problems of nutrition. Problems arising out of wrong or bad foods result in dry, itchy or flaky skin, hot spots, yeast infections in the ear, thyroid, liver or kidney problems, costing you an alarming amount of money every year.

This is why you need to study the nutritional needs of your pet before deciding on which food to give him. This results in a win-win situation: not only is your dog healthy, but you save money too.

Freshly cooked food: It is widely acknowledged that the best food you can give your pet is the one you make fresh for him everyday, using quality ingredients and without preservatives.

You will observe in time that it takes only about a couple of hours a week to cook for your Chow Chow so that his nutritional needs are satisfied. It will also turn out to be less expensive than buying commercial pet food.

In the early days, the Chinese ate the Chow Chow's meat, though this breed lived on a diet of grains and vegetables. As a result, succeeding generations of this breed showed an indication of its development as a vegetarian by having a different structure of mouth, jaw and tooth as opposed to meat eating dogs. Its

teeth are flatter than the sharp incisors of carnivorous dog breeds.

In its native environment, the primary sources of the Chow Chow's food were rice, wheat, soy, and occasionally, fish. Even today, if you blend these foods, it would be the most ideal for him, On the other hand, foods to avoid serving him are beef, horse meat, lamb and poultry or their by-products.

1) Foods good for him: You perhaps don't know that there are over 170 different molecular forms of the mineral called calcium. Its source is something this breed can easily digest, avoiding the possibility of the Chow Chow ever developing kidney stones.

2) The amount of calcium he takes in depends on his age, sex, activity level, stress levels, medical conditions and other dietary factors. After the dog is a year old, let him eat one meal a day. Be consistent with the amount of food you give him and his meal timings. If you give him just one meal a day, feed him towards sunset, since then he can go to bed after his meal.

3) When choosing the right feed for your pet, bear in mind that he cannot eat a lot of meat, unlike other dogs. If you do, he will break out into numerous skin ailments. For protein, give him eggs, rice, cottage cheese and a spoonful of meat every meal. However, rice is very good for him as this does his digestive system good and is great for a shiny coat.

4) Try "Pro Plan" once he is an adult. Mix it with warm water and if you choose to give it dry, see that it is a ready-expanded meal or the gases this forms in his stomach when the dry food becomes moist could lead to the problem of torsion and lead to his eventual death.

Rather than give him prepackaged food from supermarkets that are filled with preservatives, stick to the same diet with a few changes every now and then, just so he stays healthy. Vary the amount of food every now and then. Usually, a healthy Chow Chow eats four cups of food a day, over two meals.

Don't give your dogs raw hides as this causes their deaths since they cannot digest it and sometimes choke on the hides. If you want to give him something to chew, give him a cow hoof. Make clean and fresh water available for him both inside and outside the house.

2 Feeding schedules: Usually, pups eliminate an hour or so after a meal. Once you regularize his feeding schedule, you will have some control over when he needs to eliminate.

1) Set the time for his dinner so that after the meal you can take him out of the house.

2) Just before you crate him, don't feed him a large meal or he will eliminate

when you're not around to take him out. Instead, set two or three feeding schedules a day.

3) Let him eat only for 30- 40 minutes, then take it away.

4) Several hours before he is confined for the night, feed him. This, coupled with exercise sessions, confinement periods and trips outdoors to the elimination area will help him develop a fixed routine for eliminating.

The Chow Chow is a tough customer, no doubt, but if you have the guts and grit to take him in to your home, they can make a swell pet! Remember, he's aristocratic, arrogant, reserved and aloof—so you have to adjust to his whims and fancies.

But he'll do you proud, no matter what, so take one home today. Be assured you have a life of love and understanding from your dog friend.
