

# What makes a Keeshond Different From Other Breeds

*Original article was written by Kathy Stewart and published on page 40 of the May 1993 issue of DOGS in CANADA magazine.*

What makes one breed different from all of the others? We would have to say appearance, personality and usefulness. The main characteristic which makes the KEESHOND unique from all others is his appearance.

The Keeshond is a square appearing, medium sized dog. The very first thing that one should notice about a Keeshond, is his handsome appearance with unique colour markings, and a very full coat. Our double coated Kees are shades of black and grey with cream to light silver undercoat and markings. The overall darkness of the coat is determined by the guard hairs which are agouti. AGOUTI, in genetic terminology, describes a colour of fur as a result of colour barring of each hair in alternate dark and light bands. The length of the dark tipping determines the overall darkness of the coat. In profile one will see a dog with a unique head; light, full mane; dark saddle with a light stripe or flashing running from the withers to the back of the foreleg; light tail, pantaloons, legs and feet.

The head ranges from light to dark in colour. The muzzle and ears are covered with dark, short hairs. Ideally the dog will have outstanding "spectacles". These help to make our dogs unique and are created by having dark, almond shaped eyes, surrounded by eye lids with black pigment, very light coloured hairs in an orb around the eyes, darker hairs surrounding these to give the impression of short, but expressive eyebrows; and finally a dark line, which runs from the outer corner of the eye to the lower corner of the ear. Depending on the darkness of the head, this dark line may or may not be prominent. The final finishing touch is added by a lighter coloured, full ruff which frames the head.

The Keeshond has been called the dog that constantly changes colour. This is true. Almost every time a Kees changes coat, it grows in a darker one. Therefore, we should expect our puppies to be lighter in colour than our older dogs. In theory, our dogs go through four cycles in the course of the year, each one creating a different intensity of colour. For three month periods they will, (a) carry a full coat, (b) then blow coat (light coloured undercoat first, then darker guard hairs), (c) then they carry very little coat and (d) finally will be growing coat.

How about coat length? The Keeshond's coat is similar in length to that of the Chow Chow. The main difference, aside from colour, being that there is very little oil in the coat. This makes it ideal when spun up for wool. It is soft and angora-like, with no doggy odour. Back to length -- a longer coat is seen around the neck, on the body, the tail, the rump and the back of the forelegs to the pasterns. Short coat is seen on all the unmentioned parts.