

ATTILA MÁRTON

# THE IMPORTANCE & BENEFITS OF DOG BREEDS



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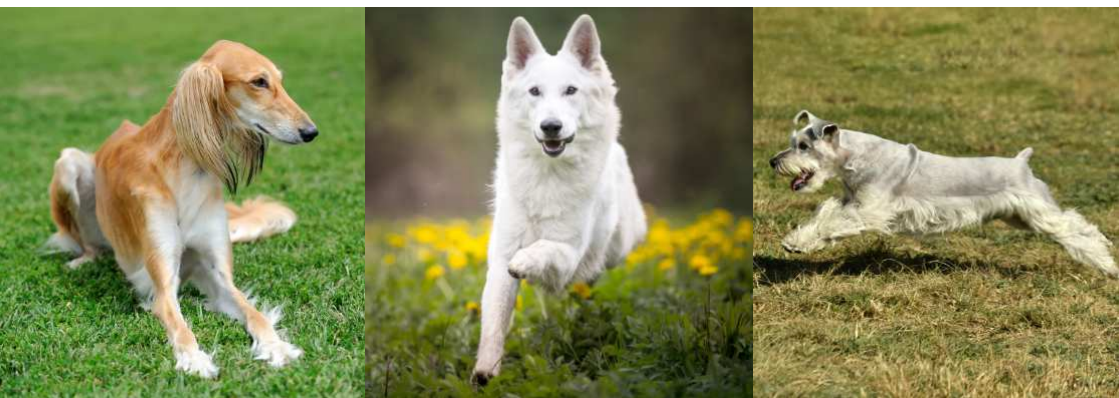
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# The Existence of Breeds

Dogs have achieved one of the greatest success stories by forming a unique and lasting partnership with humans. Over thousands of years, they have become our trusted and loved companions. This could have never happened without the diversity and versatility of the species.

Dogs come in various sizes, shapes, coat types, and colours, which makes them adaptable to many different functions and environments. They also bear various skills and abilities that make them extraordinary compared to other animals. These numerous skills aren't present in every dog at once; they vary by breed.



Breeds show different behaviours: some are highly cooperative, while others are bred to make independent decisions by evaluating the context of a situation without the need for human commands.

Dogs also vary in temperament—some are calm and patient, making them ideal for therapy work, while others are energetic and bold, which makes them better suited for sports or hunting. Basic skills also differ: some breeds are skilled at tracking scents, while others are adept at using their eyesight to find prey.

# The Existence of Breeds

Physical attributes also vary—some breeds are built for speed, others have exceptional strength, and still others possess great stamina.

What makes dogs unique is how well they can understand humans. They can read our body language, understand our emotions, and respond to us in meaningful ways. This remarkable talent makes them extremely popular as companion animals nowadays.



Dogs were bred for specific jobs for thousands of years, shaping the different breeds we have today. Each breed was formed for a reason, like hunting, guarding, herding, or being a companion. We created dogs well-suited for specific roles through purposeful breeding, making them valuable partners in many parts of our daily lives.

# History of Breeds

Most dogs today are family pets, but their ancestors had essential duties that helped people for thousands of years. Whether hunting, guarding, or herding, dogs were developed with traits suitable for completing their functions. For instance, hunting dogs needed to be fast, while guard dogs needed to be strong and protective.

To keep and improve these traits, people intentionally used selective breeding. This means they only let dogs with the required characteristics have puppies. This is how different types of dogs started to form.

Many other factors also played a significant role in shaping breeds: geography, climate, terrain, human migration, and local culture all influenced how breeds developed for thousands of years.

To understand how a specific breed evolved and connected to other breeds, we need to investigate the breed's history individually.





# What is a Breed?

We often talk about dog breeds, but what exactly is a breed? A breed is

„a group of animals that is consistent enough in type to be easily recognised and grouped together, and that, when bred together, produces the same type”<sup>1</sup>.

According to the definition, it is not enough for a dog to look like a representative of a breed; it must also be genetically capable of passing on all the traits that define the breed to future generations. Breeding is not just a single mating event—it has a long-term impact that influences the entire population.



<sup>1</sup> Clutton-Brock, Juliet. 1987. A Natural History of Domesticated Mammals, London, Cambridge University Press and British Museum of Natural History

# The Predictability of Breeds

All puppies are cute and irresistible—they make our hearts melt.

But what will they look like when they reach adulthood? How big will they grow? How much will they weigh? How often will they shed? What temperament will they express? How easy will it be to live together with?

Understanding the original function leads to understanding the breed.

A Chihuahua is very different from a Great Dane, and neither looks like a Rottweiler—it is evidently visible. But the differences aren't just about appearance.

Each breed has certain behaviours and physical traits that make it stand out at specific tasks.

The major differences in dog breeds are predictable—in both how they look and how they act.





# The Predictability of Breeds



When a dog completes a function, the anatomy also plays a crucial part in successful execution.

Imagine a Husky pulling a sledge in the Arctic or a sighthound hunting in the desert. If you switched their roles, neither would perform well. Furthermore, the unfitting environment would harm their health. Their overall body type and features—like body proportions, muscle tone, and coat texture, to pick up a few—are crucial for performance and survival in the terrain and climate.

Predictability doesn't mean each dog of a breed will be precisely the same, especially in behaviour, which is an utterly complex trait influenced by several factors. However, the fundamental breed-specific characteristics provide essential guidance in training, socialisation, activities, and creating an environment that suits the dog.

Knowing the temperament, inherited behaviour patterns and vulnerabilities, biological specifics and further traits, we will know what to expect from a dog and guide us in meeting a dog's exact needs.

Choosing the right dog is a long-term decision; if we don't choose well, the consequences will lead to harm.

# Why Do We Need Dog Breeds?

## Aesthetics

Even if we do not admit it, outer beauty matters to all of us. Otherwise, we would have no such things as art, architecture, fashion, or beauty industry. We all have our preferences, and we often find ourselves attracted to certain dog breeds due to their unique physical features.



## National Pride

Dog breeds are also a part of national identity. Many countries have national breeds that they are proud of, and efforts are made to protect these breeds when their numbers decrease. These preservation efforts help maintain a country's cultural heritage and history. By protecting these breeds, we ensure that future generations can appreciate their unique qualities and role in representing a country's culture and values.



# Why Do We Need Dog Breeds?

## Original Functions

While the majority of dogs now serve as companions living in cities or towns, there is still a proportion of dogs completing their original functions for those humans living closer to nature and dependent on the surrounding wilderness.

Working dogs, such as herding, guarding, or hunting breeds, are invaluable for those who rely on them for their original purposes. Herding breeds still work on farms, helping farmers manage livestock while guarding breeds to protect property and keep households safe from wild animals.

These dogs are not just companions but working partners contributing significantly to human activities and safety, often protecting lives.

Each of these functions requires a predictable temperament and specific skills that are genetically guaranteed.



# Why Do We Need Dog Breeds?

## New Functions

As our civilisation has evolved, we have discovered new ways to utilise dogs, leading to the emergence of new functions.

Today, we have rescue dogs, helping dogs, assistant dogs, detection dogs, and therapy dogs—all of which perform crucial roles in our society.

Each of these tasks requires their own specific skills. For example, therapy dogs must be calm and gentle, while detection dogs must have a strong sense of smell and a drive to work.





# Why Do We Need Dog Breeds?



Even companionship—a primary role for the majority of dogs today—requires specific traits. In fact, a new function has emerged: dogs are nowadays kept as family members or ‘fur babies’.

Some people mistakenly believe that the status of a dog being „just” a family member automatically means better welfare and fewer challenges. On the contrary,

being a family dog, especially in a big city, requires a complex set of skills and advanced training.

They need to adapt to a variety of situations, get along well with children, be socialised to interact with other dogs and people, and handle the numerous stimuli of urban environments. Breed type is critical in determining how a dog will succeed as a family member.

# Why Do We Need Dog Breeds?

## Breeds for Science

Purebred dogs play an essential role in scientific research. They serve as biological models for studying human diseases, disorders, and health conditions. Their consistent genetics make them valuable for understanding human and animal health problems. In fields such as genetics, neurology, oncology, and dementia research, purebred dogs help scientists develop treatments and gain insights into various diseases.

Crossbred dogs and mutts, on the other hand, lack the genetic consistency needed for repetitive experiments. Their genetic diversity makes it impossible to use them as biological models, as the variability in their genes would lead to inconsistent research results.

Purebred dogs provide a stable and predictable genetic background, allowing for more reliable research outcomes. This benefits both human and veterinary medicine, leading to an understanding of health challenges and significant advancements in treatment.





# How Understanding Breeds Improves Dog Welfare

We don't often think about how the existence of dog breeds links to dog welfare. However,

understanding the characteristics of different breeds can reduce the number of dog abandonments, behavioural problems, health issues, and dog attacks

—to mention a few of the main welfare concerns.

Dog welfare often depends on making the right choices.

Choosing a dog that is unsuitable to the owner's personality and lifestyle can quickly become the root of many future problems.

Different breeds have different needs.

Understanding the traits of a breed helps owners choose wisely and maintain better care of their dogs.



# How Understanding Breeds Improves Dog Welfare

## Different Breeds; Different Temperament and Behaviour

Different breeds have different temperaments and behaviours, both of which are influenced by their original functions.

High-energy breeds are naturally alert and need plenty of exercise and mental stimulation. Without enough activity, they are at risk of developing behaviour problems like excessive barking or destructive behaviour.

Guarding breeds, for instance, have strong protective instincts and need proper training and socialisation to adapt to living in a city. Without this training, they may develop anxiety or aggression.

It is essential to recognise that these breed-specific behaviours are natural, and dogs need opportunities to express them to stay mentally healthy. Letting dogs do activities that match their natural instincts helps keep them happy.

Recognising these differences in temperament and behavioural traits is crucial for providing adequate training, suitable activities, and environmental enrichment to prevent behavioural problems and ensure the dog's well-being.



# How Understanding Breeds Improves Dog Welfare

## Different Breeds; Different Body Size and Body Type

A breed's size and body type are both important features. Body size affects a dog's physical needs, like how much exercise, space, and food it needs.

In general, but with exceptions, larger breeds may need more space and exercise, while smaller breeds can adapt more quickly to apartment living.



There is a common misconception about the directly proportional connection between body size and physical activities. Certain smaller breeds require regular exercise and challenging tasks, while dogs with big bodies do not always require excessive physical activities. When evaluating a dog's exact needs, focusing only on the body size and type can be misleading.

When one chooses a small puppy, the probable body type and size in adulthood matter.

# How Understanding Breeds Improves Dog Welfare

## Different Breeds; Different Development and Biological Needs

Breeds also develop at different paces and have different biological needs.

Larger breeds take longer to be fully grown compared to smaller breeds, and in accordance, their nutritional needs vary significantly. Large breeds, for instance, need diets that support steady growth to avoid future joint problems.

Knowing these unique needs helps owners ensure their dogs grow up healthy and avoid potential health problems in the future.





# How Understanding Breeds Improves Dog Welfare

## Different Breeds; Different Everyday Life and Treatment

Daily care needs and everyday routines change for different breeds.

Exercise needs vary between breeds—high-energy breeds need lots of physical activity, while more relaxed breeds are happy with moderate exercise.

The breed's original function also defines what activities would challenge the dog with necessary stimuli.

These daily activities tailored for the individual dog are vital for keeping dogs healthy and happy.

The necessity of grooming is another area that differs significantly between breeds. It is crucial to see that having the fur done is more about health care than just beauty treatment. If a dog's coat is not properly cared for, it can lead to problems like matting, skin infections, and discomfort.

Different breeds also shed differently, so the owner should consider and accept this fact when choosing a specific breed.

Dental care, ear cleaning, nail trimming, and even bathing frequency may also differ in different breeds.

Understanding these predictable everyday needs helps owners provide proper care, keeping their dogs healthy and comfortable.



# How Understanding Breeds Improves Dog Welfare

## Choosing the Right Breed; Reducing Welfare Problems

Choosing the right breed is a significant decision that greatly impacts both the dog and the owner. Predictability helps owners make informed decisions for the benefit of everyone if they are aware of the differences in temperament, behaviour, body type, development, and care.

Understanding these needs helps prevent health issues by providing proper nutrition, exercise, and care.

It also reduces behaviour problems by ensuring dogs receive appropriate training and mental stimulation suitable for the breed. Properly meeting breed-specific requirements can prevent situations that lead to dog attacks.

Understanding a breed's characteristics helps reduce the chances of abandonment, as owners are more likely to choose a dog that fits well with their lifestyle and meets their expectations in the long run.

When we understand the nature and the specific needs of different breeds, we can prevent health and welfare problems, reduce the number of dogs that end up in shelters, and ensure our dogs have happy, healthy lives.





# Registered Breeding

Registered breeding has various benefits for both dogs and society.

One of the most significant benefits of registered breeding is having detailed records about a dog's ancestors.

This information helps breeders make better choices for future breeding that focus on the health and well-being of the dogs and also contributes to scientific research.



Detailed information about a breed's overall population provides powerful tools for ensuring the future welfare of dogs.

The population-level registry of a breed allows for effective management when unwanted traits—such as temperament or health problems—emerge in the population. Developing and implementing successful breeding strategies would be impossible without comprehensive information and data on the overall population.

# Registered Breeding

Breed clubs have the chance to tailor their breeding strategies and their regulations. In different geographical locations, there can be different issues within one breed; therefore, localised regulation and strategy addressing the exact matters of the local population is vital.

These breed-specific breeding regulations bear another crucial aspect: they impact selection. This is a momentum when the breeder decides which dogs they would use for mating.

This proactive tool is crucial in preventing unwanted traits and health conditions and would be impossible without a population-level registry.



# Registered Breeding

The traceability of dogs is another advantage.

Unique identification of the individual dog would be critical in many scenarios.

Identifying dogs that escaped from home is a fundamental step in animal rescue. Identification also matters where law enforcement is involved in cases like abandonment or abuse. Legal procedures cannot be successfully completed if the dog's breeder or owner is unidentifiable.

Besides the simple identification process, traceability means a broader scope: it makes it possible to identify the breeder and track the change of ownership.

Registered breeding provides transparency regarding the complete history of a specific dog.



Registered breeding creates a community of breeders who gather in breed clubs, share knowledge and resources, and engage in education. This gathering benefits the breed and enhances the dogs' quality of life, allowing for proactively managing issues and sharing best practices.

# Key Takeaways

- Breeds weren't created to satisfy purely our desire for beauty.
- Every breed has a unique combination of character, temperament, skills, behaviour patterns, and anatomy designed for a specific function—even if that function is companionship.
- Knowing a breed's original function is crucial to understanding its unique traits.
- Considering breed predictability is key to choosing the right dog and creating a suitable daily routine.
- Understanding a breed's needs helps minimise health issues, behaviour problems, and overall welfare risks.
- Understanding the breed-related characteristics and needs of family pets is crucial, as neglecting these factors will be the root of significant health and welfare problems in the future.