

The "Real" Standard

- by Kathryn Monroe (first published in the PWDCA Courier magazine)

General Appearance

Notorious as a brawler for centuries along Portugal's coast, this seafaring breed was prized by fishermen for a pushy nature and a robust, medium build that needed the mental and physical demands of a full day's work in and out of the water to reduce its energy level to one that allowed it to hear and obey its master's commands. The Portuguese Water Dog seeks and loves to splash and wallow in the mud, water bowls, toilets with open lids, and any liquid-water, paint, etc. It does this with great finesse and stamina, unendingly, while aiding his master by retrieving any item that it sees and wants to carry, regardless of size, delicacy, or ownership. Its incessant retrieving instinct leads to a dog that must have something in its mouth to carry, chew on, or swallow, whether that item is edible or decorative, be furniture or the family dinner roast.

He is a clinging companion and an incessant alarm barker. This highly manipulative breed is distinguished by two coat types, either curly or wavy, which require extensive grooming, bathing, brushing, combing, detangling, etc. far in excess of the time that would be spent vacuuming up dog hair if it were to shed, which it does not (carrying dirt, twigs, dust, mats, etc. around with it until groomed). All the while waiting grooming, the coat sheds puff balls of hair.

It has an impressive head of considerable breadth and well proportioned mass, which it uses for head and body rams; a ruggedly built, well-knit body which enables it to counter-surf and jump onto tables and over fences; and a powerful, thickly based tail, carried gallantly or used purposefully as a rudder or to clear items off coffee tables and destroy the Waterford Crystal and the children's Lego construction projects.

Expression

Direct, rude, and demanding. Yes, demanding. The Portuguese Water Dog likes to be at eye level with humans, resulting in an almost un-extinguishable jumping-up-greeting behavior and a sudden need to read the newspaper along with its master.

Temperament

An animal with a mind of its own, and determined to let you know what is on its mind. A dog of exceptional ability to manipulate people and its environment, and a strong desire to lead that makes it incessantly desire to be around humans that it can bend to its wishes. If trained by a person with patience, superior intelligence, and unilateral focus, it will obey its master with facility and apparent pleasure until it decides to test or until it devises an alternative to try.

And we aren't kidding!