

Akita's in Norway, from my point of view! By Lisbeth Hoeyem, Kennel Ak-inu-ba



This litter was born on January 1st 2004 (GAA)

The story of the Akita in Norway closely follows the Swedish story. The first imported dogs came to Sweden in the early 60's. The first Swedish Akita litter, after the Japanese imported dogs Akikaze-Go and Uneko-Go, was born in 1964. The first imports were Japanese. In the 80's most of the imports came from the UK, and during the 90's most of the imports came from Italy.

All this time we had dogs of different types. Some were quite Japanese; both in expression and colour, while others were heavy boned. Today they would have been good GJD's. Most dogs were intermediate types, also called "Old Nordic type"; these dogs came in all colours.



These dogs are "Old Nordic type", as you can see they have mixed quality. (GAA & SMB)

The first signals about the 'turn of type' came from Japan in the early 90's. Unfortunately not all breeders took these signals seriously; they kept on mixing type and colour. The breeder's mixed Akita's and "GJD's" in an attempt to make Akita's. This interbreeding of types was a major problem during the 90's, and it resulted in offspring's, which varied a lot in quality. Such breeding was rarely successful. This has led to a situation today, where the Akita has a very narrow breeding stock.



This picture, taken at the Speciality Show in 1998, shows BOB (left) and BOS Puppies.

Here you can clearly see there are two different types!

When we first started talking about a split, some people had problems understanding the term "type". They thought it only had to do with colour...



Luckily, some breeders took these early signs seriously, chose their type of Akita, and kept true to this. Today we harvest the results of their commitment.

One example is the BOB winner of the 2003 Speciality show. This dog came from a breeder who very early decided to “go Japanese”. Even the Japanese judges, Mr Hiroshi Genba and Mr Akio Kuroki, were so impressed with this dog that they said he could compete in Japan. This dog’s mother is of “old” Norwegian lines. The father is an Italian import.

This dog is a double BOB Speciality winner. First victory in 1999, but best ranking; BOB for a Japanese judge in 2003. (GAA)

Even after the split, there have been born puppies of both breeds within the same litter. The rules of the Norwegian Kennel Klub (NKK) states that puppies born after January 1st 2000 have to be confirmed as one of the breeds, if they are to be used in shows and/or for breeding. Unfortunately, for now, it is the owner who decides whether it is to be an Akita or a GJD. This, sometimes, results in dogs ending up as the “wrong” breed.

Today most breeders take the new rules seriously, and no puppies have changed breed during the last two years.

The birth ratio of the Akita has varied greatly throughout the 90’s. It started with 82 registered puppies in 1990. In the top year of 1993, there were born 223 puppies. The second high came in 1996 with 132 registered puppies. When it became clear that there would be a split, the ratio went down. In 1998 and 1999 there were registered 33 and 34 puppies.

In Norway, the new millennium has started slowly for the Akita. During the first four years (2000-2003), there have only been born a total of 60 puppies.



GJD’s in Norway based on imports from UK in the early 90’s. (GAA&HS)

Earlier, the Akita’s in Norway had “problems” with PRA. The Norwegian Akita Club made an informational letter, which informed about the disease and how it is inherited. This letter was sent to owners who had dogs that were related to affected dogs. In the resent years no Akita has been diagnosed with the disease in Norway.

Hip Dysplasia (HD) has not been big a problem in Norway. The ratio has been about 8-9%. Due to some cases of HD the last years, today the ratio has risen to 12%. Affected dogs are not used in breeding.

At the end of the 90's we experienced the first skin problems. This turned out to be allergies, SA, VKH and others. Autoimmune diseases has been recognised in Akita's of both Japanese and American bloodlines. This has given breeders even more to worry about.



Most Akita's in Norway are family pets, but they also love to work... (SMB)

Due to a small population, breeders have been forced to import dogs. Unfortunately, some of these dogs have been carriers of SA and the gene, which gives long hair.

Today we try to breed with caution. We have learned about skin problems and sick dogs are not used for breeding. Some breeders also exclude siblings of sick dogs. Hopefully, soon, there will be a breakthrough in the search for a DNA-test for SA. The Norwegian Akita Club supports the research being done in Germany today. Luckily, health has become a bigger issue in recent years.

Most Akita's in Norway are kept as family pets, but the interest in using them at tracking and hunting is increasing. There are Akita's competing in Obedience and Agility, one even made it as a Rescue dog.



Despite it's size, Akita's can show great speed and grace in motion....(GAA)



*Beauty & function!
2001 Speciality BOB also competes in Obedience, level 3.
Top Active Akita 2000&2001 (SB)*

Unfortunately there have been some episodes with Akita's biting people and attacking other animals. As a result breeders have focused on temper in recent years, so today we have Akita's which loves people and are willing to work. This makes the breed more suitable to the request of the society. The discussion about dangerous dogs has given us a new law. This will be followed by a prohibition of breeds, and we don't want the Akita on the list of dangerous dogs.

We are all pleased about the split, looking back we only wish it had happened earlier.



Hello! I'm the "Future". Do you want to play.. ?? (SMB)



*BOB Speciality 2002, Top Show Akita 2002&2003 and
Top Active Akita 2002 &2003 (GAA)*

I would like to thank Stig Meier Berg (SMB), Hege Sundsbarm (HS) Siv Bekken (SB) and Geir Aasheim (GAA) for lending me pictures, and Tor Egil Nygaard, for getting my English right