



# ARIZONA HUMANE SOCIETY

## DOG BREEDS: NORDIC

OF ALL THE FAMILIES OF DOGS, the northern bred canines are arguably man’s *most reliable* best friend. For centuries, these bold, hardy and intelligent dogs have lived and worked closely with humans performing a variety of services, from guarding to sledding to hunting. But, in addition to these critical jobs, they have also remained our eager and affectionate companions. Also known as the Nordic or Spitz dogs, these beautiful and complex canines are found in several different dog groups, from the well-known Siberian Husky in the Working Group to the pampered Pomeranian in the Toy Group. They include, but are not limited to: the Akita, the Alaskan Malamute, the American Eskimo Dog, the Chow Chow, the Finnish Spitz, the Keeshond, the Norwegian Elkhound, the Pomeranian, the Samoyed, the Schipperke, the Shiba Inu and the Siberian Husky. Despite differences in size and color, most Nordic breeds share several common characteristics . . .

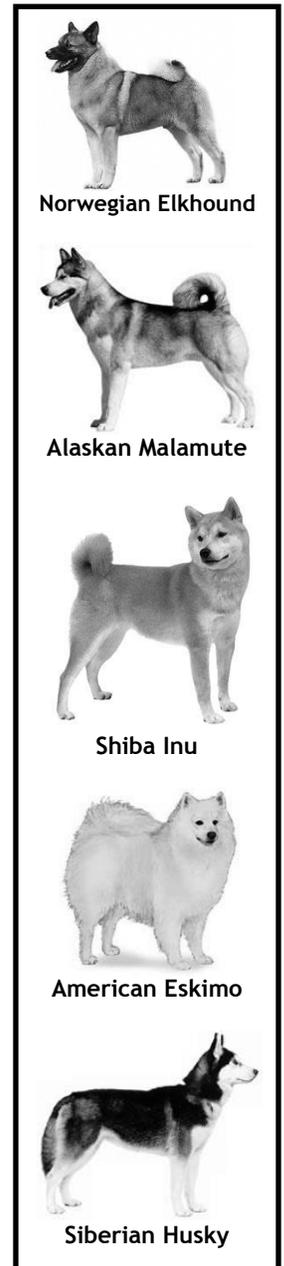
### Some Like It . . . Cold?

Though bred for a variety of different jobs, most northern dogs are, by necessity, physically built to handle the cold weather from which they originate.

- **Double Coat:** Spitzes come from a region with such extreme cold temperatures that nature has outfitted them with TWO coats. A short undercoat that is almost akin to “down” provides insulation for warmth. On top of the undercoat is a layer of guard hairs that are twice as long and water-resistant. **Twice the fur *definitely* means twice the grooming! Be sure to brush and, when necessary, trim your Nordic dog’s coat regularly to prevent painful matting.**
- **Almond-shaped Eyes:** Though captivating and expressive, the almond shape of the Spitz’s eye actually serves a more natural purpose. The shape makes squinting easier and protects their eyeballs from cold air and drafts.
- **Furry Ears:** Most dogs do not have fur *inside* their ears. To be sure, all Spitzes do, and it’s just another way they keep warm.
- **Fluffy Tails:** Not only are northern bred dogs’ tails full and fluffy, they also curl so that a sleeping Spitz can curl up and keep her face warm during slumber.
- **Furry Feet, Thick Pads:** Spitzes have also developed thick paw pads from walking on snow and ice. In addition, well-furred paws help protect them from extreme temperatures.

Unfortunately for Arizona Spitzes, our temperatures tend toward the other extreme, and many are uncomfortable spending too much time outdoors. In addition to being built for the cold, Nordic dogs are also accustomed to being part of a family or pack. In and around Phoenix and other hot Arizona climates, these dogs MUST be kept indoors to keep them out of the heat *and* to meet their need for family.

### All in the Family



Nordic, northern bred, or Spitz dogs can be found in every major dog group. And despite having been bred for different jobs, many share a few key personality traits.

- **Bright/Intelligent:** Northern dogs are highly intelligent dogs and they welcome the opportunity to use their smarts to solve new challenges. So, while they do get bored easily, they also learn very quickly. But be aware: when coupled with their innate desire to explore and roam, they can be escape artists. Be sure your house and yard are secure, and generally, NEVER trust a Spitz off-leash.
- **Strong-willed/Independent:** Many Nordic dogs are described as 'stubborn' or 'free-spirited.' But consider the following scenario: The driver of a sled dog team is commanding the team to move forward. If the lead dog sees a crack in the ice, he MUST disobey to save himself and his pack. When you consider that situations like these are what made these dogs such reliable companions, it's hard to expect them to obey 100% of the time in our urban homes. It's a charming, almost human-like quality that, when understood, can be managed (or at least, appreciated!).
- **Affectionate & Family Oriented:** Despite their independence, Nordic dogs THRIVE on attention and the feeling of belonging to a pack. As such, they are often sensitive, super affectionate dogs. When coupled with that strong will, it's often impossible to discourage a Spitz who demands to be pet! But at the same time, he'll sense when you've had a bad day and will offer unsolicited kisses to make you feel better.
- **Hardy/Athletic:** With a few notable exceptions, such as the Pomeranian who was bred primarily for companionship, Nordic dogs were bred for tough work in harsh environments. Sledding, carting and herding in extreme weather have left today's Spitzes with an abundance of energy and they MUST be exercised regularly. Many will not settle for less than a daily walk, and when coupled with their intelligence, regular activity is a must to prevent destructive behaviors. Consider walking, running, hiking, advanced obedience training or even agility training to keep their active minds busy.
- **Strong prey drive:** Northern bred dogs also tend to have a very high prey drive, a necessity for survival in rough terrain. As such, they often do not do well with cats and critters.

This is just a brief overview of what you might expect from this family of northern bred dogs. Of course, each breed has different qualities. For example, while the Akita is a stoic dog and a steadfast guardian, Huskies are often described as 'goofy' and they tend to make terrible watchdogs. If you are interested in welcoming a Nordic dog into your family, please research the breed thoroughly. Akitas, Huskies and Malamutes fill our nation's shelters because of behaviors that come naturally to them, or because their owners could not properly meet their behavioral and athletic needs. Make no mistake – Spitzes are high maintenance pets! But, as anyone whose best friend has a furry double coat and a curly tail will tell you, the depth of their bond is completely worth the effort!

For more information, please visit

[www.azhumane.org](http://www.azhumane.org)

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