

Chihuahua Secrets Revealed



Version 2.1

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What's So Special about the Chihuahua?

When you decide that you want a pet dog, the Chihuahua is definitely one that you should consider if a small dog is preferred. In fact, the Chihuahua is the smallest breed of dog worldwide. Although it has not always been the case, the Chihuahua dog is often referred to as the Taco Bell dog, because this is the breed of dog that is featured in the Taco Bell commercials.

The Chihuahua got its name from Chihuahua, Mexico, where it was first noticed. Although there is no evidence of this, it is speculated that the Chihuahua is an ancient breed that dates back to pre-Columbian Mexico, and it is also believed that the Chihuahua is the oldest breed of dog in the entire North American and South American Continents.

It is further believed that the Chihuahua was brought to the Americas by the Spanish Conquistadors and that the Chihuahuas that exist today are direct descendants of dogs known as Techichi, which were companion dogs of the Toltecs. The theory is that Techichi descendants were bred with miniature Chinese dogs to give us the breed that we know today as Chihuahuas. The Techichi can be traced back as far as the ninth century.

A breed of dog that is similar to the Chihuahua and Techichi goes back even further to the second century, and it is even believed, based on remains found, that the Techichi may even predate the Mayans.

The Chihuahua was kept as pets by the Aztecs, and it is believed that this special breed of dog was a symbol of the upper class during that time period. There is also evidence that Chihuahuas were used in religious ceremonies, and they have even been considered as guides for the dead.

The remains of early Chihuahuas are actually much larger than the small size of Chihuahuas today, and this is believed to be the result of breeding with smaller Chinese dogs, more specifically the Chinese Crested Dog. There is evidence that Christopher Columbus wrote a letter to the King of Spain, where he made reference to a small dog which fits the description of the Chihuahua. For this reason, it is believed that it was Columbus who introduced the Chihuahua to Europe.

The dog breed that we know as the Chihuahua today was actually found in Chihuahua Mexico, near some old ruins in 1850. It was first recognized by the American Kennel Club as a breed in 1904.

Throughout history, there have been many famous Chihuahuas. The World's Smallest Living Dog, as deemed by the Guinness Book of World Records, was

Boo-Boo, which was a female Chihuahua weighing in at 1.5 pounds. She was just four inches long. That was published in May of 2007.

Many people remember Bruiser, the companion dog of Elle Woods in the popular movie, Legally Blonde. Bruiser's real name was Moonie. Coco was another famous Chihuahua, featured on the Disney Channel series That's So Raven and also featured in the television series Dog Whisperer. Gidget may be the most famous Chihuahua of all, as this was the dog that was used as the original Taco Bell dog, and also as Bruiser's Mom in Legally Blonde 2.

Other famous Chihuahuas include Enrique from Evil Con Carne, Geraldo from Batman Returns, Celine from Summer Heights High, Lou from The Soup, Sharon Osbourne's dog, Mimi, Mojo from the Transformers, Paris Hilton's dogs, Tinkerbelle and Bambi, Tito from Oliver & Company, and Wheely Willy from Long Beach, California.

So, what exactly is it that makes these dogs so special? Some love the dogs for their tiny sizes. Others are enthused with the age of the breed. Still others just love the personality of these small dogs. It seems that different people find something different that they deem as special about Chihuahuas that other people may or may not agree with.

The fact remains that we are just enthralled with Chihuahuas. There are essentially two types of Chihuahuas – long haired and short haired. The long haired Chihuahuas are very easy to care for, as compared to other long haired dog breeds, because they do not require any trimming or special grooming. The short haired Chihuahuas, of course, are extremely easy to care for, in terms of grooming as well.

Chihuahuas stand anywhere from six to ten inches tall, but can grow to be as tall as fifteen inches. Pure bred Chihuahuas will weigh between three and ten pounds, but those that will be shown should weigh no more than six pounds.

Chihuahuas are available in a wide variety of colors, and may be solid colored, or have splashings or markings. Patterns that are recognized by the AKC include Piebald Spotting, Irish Spotting, Sable, Brindle, Extreme White Spotting, Masks, Tan Points, and Merle.

On top of their compact size and unique history, Chihuahuas are also extremely intelligent little dogs. At the same time, they are known as high energy dogs, which mean that they seldom sit still for very long, and may even be termed as 'nervous dogs' by some people.

Then, of course, there is the famous Chihuahua temperament...

The Famous Chihuahua Temperament

Chihuahuas are indeed prized for their temperament. The dog's temperament encompasses many different things, which will be discussed in this section. Let's take a look at each aspect of the Chihuahua's temperament:

Loyalty: The Chihuahua is known to be extremely loyal, but they are typically only loyal to one person. Not only are they loyal to this one person, but they will also become extremely protective of this one person – and will fight for the protection of that person to the death - despite their small size.

Fearlessness: This is one area that most people find amazing concerning the Chihuahua temperament. These dogs seemingly have no fear. They have no problem confronting larger animals or people if they feel threatened, or if they feel that the person that they are loyal to is being threatened. This can be a bad thing, because it often results in injuries.

Curiosity: The Chihuahua is very curious, and this can put him in dangerous situations. Despite their curiosity, they also display a certain level of caution when strangers are near, and will stick close to their owner when in this situation – although this is believed to be a part of their protective nature, where the dog is standing ready to protect their owner from the stranger if the need should arise.

Ferocity: Chihuahuas have very sharp teeth, and will use them in an instant if they feel threatened. This makes them unsuitable for small children, and there is a need for proper training and socialization because of this as well.

Jealousy: Chihuahuas become so attached to one person that they can become jealous of human relationships that this one person has, and even jealous of other animals in the household – unless the other animals are Chihuahuas. In this case, they will bond with the other Chihuahuas as well as the person that they have designated as their property.

Nervousness: Again, these are high energy dogs. This is another reason why proper training is essential. These dogs move very quickly. As intelligent as these dogs are, their nervousness can make them hard to train. Often, professional training may be required.

Affection: Not only do Chihuahuas demand affection and attention, but they are also very giving of affection and attention as well. They are excellent show dogs and companion dogs.

Chihuahua Health Information

Most small breeds of animals are prone to specific health problems, and the Chihuahua is no exception. The following is information concerning specific health problems that Chihuahuas are prone to.

- **Hydrocephalus:** Chihuahuas are at high risk of being born with hydrocephalus. This is a painful and fatal condition, where there is excess fluid on the brain, causing the head to be abnormally large. Aside from having an abnormally large head, a dog that has Hydrocephalus will also typically be lethargic. A diagnosis by a veterinarian is required.
- **Seizures and Epilepsy:** In Chihuahuas, seizures and epilepsy are considered to be genetic problems. In most cases, the condition is not recognized in the dog until a seizure occurs, at which time veterinarian treatment and diagnosis should be sought to determine the cause of the seizure, which is often epilepsy. As with humans, this condition can be treated.
- **Moleras:** Moleras is a condition that is highly specific to Chihuahuas. This is the only breed of dog that is born with a skull that is not completely closed, creating a soft spot on the skull. In most cases, as the dog ages the skull does close, but not in all cases. This condition makes it very important for the owner to use a veterinarian that is familiar with the Chihuahua breed, so that the Moleras condition is not confused with hydrocephalus.
- **Hypoglycemia:** Hypoglycemia is also known as low blood sugar. This is common among Chihuahuas, and it is important to feed your pet a nutritious diet that will help them to avoid this condition. If the dog gets hypoglycemia, veterinarian care is essential, because the condition can lead to coma and death.
- **Eye Problems:** Eye problems are common, and it is believed that this is due to the fact that the Chihuahua has large protruding eyes, and the fact that he is so close to the ground. Aside from problems associated with objects getting into the eyes causing infection, dryness of the eyes and glaucoma are also health concerns.
- **Birthing Problems:** Because of their small size, a Chihuahua should be watched closely in the later stages of pregnancy, and in almost all cases, births must be assisted – preferably by a qualified veterinarian. Unassisted births can result in the loss of puppies, and even the loss of the mother.

- **Dental Problems:** Without proper nutrition and dental care, dental problems will occur in Chihuahuas. Have your veterinarian tend to your dogs teeth twice a year, and also check them yourself for potential problems when you groom your dog.
- **Trembling:** Trembling and shaking is not a health condition in Chihuahuas. It isn't even an indication of a health problem. Chihuahuas are high energy dogs, and trembling is usually the result of excitement or stress. However, trembling could also be an indication that the dog is cold. Because they are so small, and have such a high metabolism, the Chihuahua loses body heat fairly fast.
- **Obesity:** Although Chihuahuas are finicky eaters, when you find foods that they like, it is easy for them to become overweight, which brings on a whole slew of other health conditions which include diabetes, tracheal collapse, injuries to joints, and even chronic bronchitis.
- **Colds:** Remember that Chihuahuas lose body heat fairly fast, and this often leads to colds. The best thing is to prevent the colds by keeping the Chihuahua warm, but should your Chihuahua develop a cold, you should seek veterinarian care. Also note that wheezing and sneezing are common among Chihuahuas, but if this is a common occurrence, you should get a diagnosis from a veterinarian.
- **Heartworms:** This is common among all breeds of dogs, and is often caused by fleas. Keep your Chihuahua flea and tick free, and get proper veterinarian care. Your veterinarian will start giving your Chihuahua medication to prevent heartworms as well when the time is appropriate.
- **Life Span:** Chihuahuas can live to be 22 years old, although the average is between 8 and 15 years of age. Obviously, the better the dog is cared for, the longer he or she will live.

As with any breed of dog, you should bring your Chihuahua to the veterinarian at least twice a year for a checkup. This will help to catch any potential problems early, so that they can be tended to with a positive outcome.

As mentioned earlier, it is also important to choose a veterinarian that has experience with smaller breeds of dogs, because smaller breeds tend to have special health problems and needs that larger dogs are not prone to, and for which many veterinarians are not qualified to treat.

Finding a Good Chihuahua Breeder

Once you've decided that you want a Chihuahua puppy, the next step is finding a good breeder. Not all breeders of Chihuahuas are good or ethical breeders. There are certain places that you can look to find good breeders, as follows:

1. Check with breeder clubs and dog clubs, including national, state, and local clubs. These can often be found through your local telephone directory, through your veterinarian, or through the Internet. When it comes to breeder clubs, the breeders who are members typically have to meet certain specifications to be members.
2. If a breeder doesn't currently have a litter, or the pups in the litter don't capture your interest, ask them about other breeders that they might recommend to you.
3. Check with Chihuahua owners and ask them who their breeder was. They will usually be happy to share this information with you, and give you a verbal review of the breeder that they got their puppy from.
4. Go to dog shows. Most breeders show dogs, and this is an excellent way to find a Chihuahua breeder – especially a breeder that specializes more in show dogs, as opposed to companion only dogs.
5. Check with veterinarians and your local human society. Finally, check online resources for Chihuahua puppies. In most cases, you should avoid pet stores.

When you find a breeder and choose your puppy, the breeder should receive a sales contract that includes a health guarantee. You should also receive the AKC certificate for the puppy or at the very least the registration application. You should also receive a health certificate for the parents, known as a CERF certificate and the puppy's pedigree and medical records.

Additionally, the breeder should supply you with instructions concerning the puppy's care and feeding. Many breeders will also give you pictures of the pups parents and possibly pictures of your particular puppy from a very young age.

Finally, a good breeder will not allow you to bring your puppy home until he is at least eight weeks old. It isn't good for the puppy to leave his mother, or his familiar surroundings before this age. The breeder should of course provide you with their contact information, and give you permission to contact them with any questions or concerns that you may have.

Choosing Your Chihuahua

Once you've found a good breeder choosing your new Chihuahua puppy may be harder than you first imagined. The puppies will be so adorable that it will be hard to choose just one. You may want to take the entire litter home with you!

But ultimately, if you are like most pet owners, you will only want one or possibly two pups from the litter, so decisions must be made. Obviously, the first thing that you need to consider is the overall health of the entire litter – not just the puppy that you plan to take home with you.

When it comes to some illnesses or genetic disorders, some puppies in the litter may show symptoms before other pups from the litter do. Therefore, if any of the puppies in that litter are ill, or don't look healthy, you need to find out what the problem is, and how that problem may affect the puppy that you choose.

The next thing to consider is whether you want a male or a female Chihuahua.

Once you've determined whether you want a male or a female, color may be important to you – but for most people, the personality of the puppies of the right sex is more important than color or markings, unless the puppy is being shown.

Talk to the breeder about the personality of the puppies, as he or she knows these puppies quite well. Ideally, you will choose one of the pups that match your own personality. For example, if you are a laid back person, you won't want a puppy that is in constant motion. You will want the puppy that is rather laid back, as compared to the rest of the litter. On the reverse side of that, if you are a high energy person, you will want the most energetic puppy in the litter.

Take your time when you select your puppy. Take the time to watch the puppies in action, and the chances are good that you will be able to tell which puppy will work best for you in the long run. This is also a great way to determine how healthy the puppies really are.

Certain things to look for, in regards to the litter's health include:

- Clear eyes with no discharge
- Moist nose, with no discharge
- Clean ears
- White teeth with pink, clean gums
- No coughing
- No frequent sneezing
- No vomiting, or evidence of vomiting
- No diarrhea or signs of diarrhea
- Healthy looking feet and pads

- Shiny, soft, clean coat of fur
- You don't want to see his ribs when viewing him, but you should be able to feel them.
- Evidence of worms. This is often indicated if the puppy has a pot belly.
- No fleas or ticks
- Playfulness – and sleepiness. Most puppies will sleep more than they play, but between naps, they should be very energetic.

The puppy should be at least eight weeks old before you can take him home. It is often a good idea to visit the litter for the first time when they are between six and eight weeks of age. Most breeders will allow you to choose your puppy before he is old enough to take home, as long as you pay a deposit for him.

Listen to what your breeder has to say. Some dogs will be termed as show quality, while others will be deemed as pet quality or companionship dogs. This typically means that a dog that is deemed as pet quality or companionship quality is not of the quality that would be required for shows. Note that this only applies to the appearance of the dog – not his personality or health.

Spending time with the dogs will also, as mentioned, allow you to get a sense of the puppies' personalities. While Chihuahuas are not known to be overly social dogs, they should not be vicious around strangers. Most puppies will fall into one of four categories: submissive, dominant, independent, or normal.

It really cannot be said enough...if you are not selecting a show dog, do not choose your dog based on appearance. Always go with the personality of the puppy above all else – except of course for health. You want a healthy puppy with a desirable personality – and if you choose your puppy based on those two sets of criteria, he will look exactly right to you.

When it is all said and done, one puppy in the litter will stand out to you among them all. This is most likely the dog that you are most attracted to – and there is a good chance that this same puppy is also attracted to you as well. Always go with your gut instinct in this matter, and you will walk away with the Chihuahua puppy that is meant for you.

When you leave the breeders, take the puppy to your veterinarian. Most Chihuahua breeders will give you a 48 hour health guarantee. It is wise to have an appointment set up with your veterinarian for the same day that you pick the puppy up. Most responsible pet owners will bring the puppy to the veterinarian before he or she is ever brought home.

Housing Your Chihuahua

When it comes to housing your Chihuahua, there is one very important thing to remember – Chihuahuas are small dogs even when they are fully grown, so your puppy will be very tiny. This means that he needs to be kept in a secure location – for his own health and safety, and to give him a better sense of security.

Many people will use baby play pens for their Chihuahua puppies. The space only needs to be big enough for him to play in when you aren't playing with him – but it must also adequately contain him. Playpens work out well because they have plastic coated padding in them that can easily be cleaned up, with mesh sides that the puppy can see through – and through which you can see as well.

You really don't need an actual cage for your Chihuahua puppy. A playpen will usually be just fine, and it will allow your puppy plenty of space. You can purchase a playpen new, or pick one up from a garage sale. In most cases, you won't want to use the same playpen for a human baby once your Chihuahua puppy has outgrown it, but you may want to save it for future puppies that you may have.

If you are using a playpen that has been used for another puppy, make sure that it is fully disinfected before you use it for your own puppy, because you don't know what the health of the last puppy to use the playpen was. Inspect the playpen for safety hazards before putting your puppy in it.

Another option is a special room for your puppy, but the bigger the room is, the less secure the puppy may feel. Obviously, you will want to use baby gates to keep the puppy out of rooms that you do not want him to venture into as well – but that usually comes much later, after the puppy has grown a bit, and is old enough – and big enough – to roam around the house. Until then, he really needs to be contained so that you don't lose track of him.

Inside his enclosure, he will need the following:

- A food and water dish. Don't leave food down for him constantly, but make sure that he always has fresh water.
- Several blankets. These will typically be used as his bedding. These are easy to wash, and the puppy can arrange them in a way that keeps him warm.
- Toys. Give your Chihuahua puppy a wide variety of small toys. Just be sure to inspect those toys for small pieces that can easily be torn or chewed off and ingested.

- Chewing options. You can purchase raw hide chew 'bones' for small dogs. These will be very important to your Chihuahua throughout his lifetime. Make sure that you always get the size and age appropriate raw hide chew bones for your dog.

During the first several weeks that the Chihuahua puppy is in your home, you will always need to be aware of his location. This is essential because he is so tiny that he could easily become lost – or injured. When you have him out of his enclosure, it is vital that you keep a close eye on him. Think of your small puppy as a toddler who needs your constant attention for his own safety.

Once your Chihuahua is fully grown, he won't need his own enclosure. Instead, he can freely wander about your home. However, it is wise to establish where he will sleep, and provide him with a pet bed, or at the very least blankets or towels to make his bed from.

He should also have a designated place to eat, and if he is paper trained or litter trained (yes, many small dogs are litter trained), a designated place for relieving himself.

Remember that when your puppy is new, he will most likely be very scared, and will most definitely miss his mother and his siblings. He isn't used to being alone, or sleeping alone. You might leave a television or radio on for him, and use a tick-tock clock wrapped in a towel where he sleeps. These things will help him to feel less lonely.

Make sure that he sees you as often as possible. Talk to him as much as you can, and let him become accustomed to your voice. Hold him often as you can, so that he feels safe and secure, and so that he bonds and socializes well with you. Avoid leaving your new puppy alone for long stretches of time. If you work during the day, consider a baby sitter for your new puppy.

Once your new puppy has grown enough to roam your home freely, it is important to remember that he will chew most anything that fits into his mouth, or that he can wrap his mouth around. This is his natural instinct, and while he can be trained not to chew on things he shouldn't chew on, this takes a while. In the meantime, it is your responsibility to keep things that you don't want chewed out of his reach.

Make sure that you wash your Chihuahua puppy's bedding often. Also disinfect his room or enclosure at least once a week, with an organic cleanser. Avoid cleaning his bedding or his space with anything that may be toxic.

Feeding Your Chihuahua

In most cases, your breeder will have specific feeding instructions for your new Chihuahua puppy. It is often best to stick to the puppy's regular feeding schedule, as well as the food that he is used to eating, until he has either outgrown it, until your veterinarian makes a different nutritional suggestion, or until the puppy develops a problem with the food that he is eating.

For dog food, you should choose a food designed for puppies, and the main ingredient of the dog food that you use should be meat. It should contain at least 30 percent protein, and 20 percent fat, with at least four percent of fiber content.

Your Chihuahua puppy should be eating three times each day, and your breeder or veterinarian should be able to tell you how much food to feed your specific puppy at those times. Even when the dog is grown, he or she should still be eating three times per day. Overfeeding is very easy – and very unhealthy for your Chihuahua puppy. These little dogs can become overweight very easily.

Snacks and treats are always welcome, but should be given with caution. Never feed your Chihuahua chocolate, as this is toxic to him. Appropriate treats include peanut butter, cheese, raw hide snacks, Bonz, and Alpo Snacks. There may be other snacks that your veterinarian recommends.

Chihuahuas are often picky eaters. This means that finding foods that they will eat, which is good for them, isn't always easy – but finding foods that they will eat, which are not good for them is almost always very easy.

Snacks can be given daily, but it is essential to make one favored snack a special treat – meaning that the dog is not given this snack every day. This snack should be reserved for training or special occasions, so that it continues to get a positive response from the dog when he is being trained.

Keep a close eye on your Chihuahua's weight. In most cases, if the Chihuahua gains too much weight too soon, you can cut down on the amount of food that he is eating during mealtimes, or cut down on snacks. Let your veterinarian tell you how much weight your new Chihuahua puppy should be gaining per week or month, and keep an eye on his weight with a kitchen scale for accuracy.

If he is gaining too much weight or too little weight make an appointment with the veterinarian. Keep a food chart so that you can show your veterinarian what the dog has been eating for the past two to three weeks.

Grooming Your Chihuahua

Chihuahuas are one of the easiest breed of dogs to groom – regardless of whether they are long haired or short haired. Despite how easy they are to groom, it is essential to understand that grooming is indeed necessary.

There are several reasons for frequent grooming of your Chihuahua. First, this will keep long haired Chihuahuas free of tangles and mats. It will help keep both types of Chihuahuas free of fleas and ticks, and of course proper grooming helps you to fully inspect the physical condition of your dog on a regular basis.

Grooming should include daily brushing. This is not only an activity that will improve the overall appearance of your Chihuahua, but it will also give you and your dog special time together each day, where all of your attention is on him. This should be done at the same time each day, as your Chihuahua will come to expect it – he will always enjoy it as well.

Brush short haired Chihuahuas with a slicker brush. Brush long haired Chihuahuas with a soft bristled brush, followed by a steel comb. Check both types of Chihuahuas for fleas, scratches, dry skin, red skin, or small cuts as you brush them. On the day that your Chihuahua is bathed, brushing should occur before and after the bath if the Chihuahua is long haired.

Check your Chihuahua's ears and eyes at least once a week. You can also opt to check eyes and ears on a daily basis while brushing him. Be on the lookout for redness, discharge, and foul smells. Look out for wax build up in the ears, and if you notice this, ask your veterinarian to recommend a product to remove ear wax. Never stick anything down in the ear canal, and when you clean the ears, just clean beneath the flap, and to the outer edge of the ear canal.

You should keep your Chihuahuas nails trimmed regularly. Trimming will keep the dog from scratching you and your floors, and from tearing up your furniture, but it is also important because long nails are uncomfortable, and can even become painful for your Chihuahua.

There are essentially two types of nail clippers for dogs: the scissor type and the guillotine type. It is vital that you not cut into the quick of the dogs nail. In case you accidentally do cut that far down, you should have styptic or Kwik Stop on hand to stop the bleeding, as dogs have blood vessels in the quick of the nail. Not only will the quick bleed profusely, but it also causes your dog pain.

You should make it a habit to trim your dog's nails while he is very young, so that he becomes used to it. He will usually be a bit nervous the first several times, but he will get used to it.

If you have never clipped a dog's nails or you are nervous about doing it, take your puppy to a groomer or a veterinarian, and ask them to show you how it is done. If you are still nervous about doing it yourself, your groomer or veterinarian will usually do this for you on a regular basis, for about twenty dollars or so.

Some pet owners recommend bathing Chihuahuas only once a month, while others prefer to bath them once a week or every two weeks. There is no hard and fast rule, and this is based only on your preference, or on how dirty your dog gets on a regular basis.

When you bathe your Chihuahua, use a basin that is just big enough to contain him, instead of using a sink or tub that is way too big. This makes it easier to handle the dog in the water. When he is a tiny puppy, you can bathe him with one hand and hold him with the other...there is really no need to stand or sit him directly in the water. As he grows bigger, you can use a kitchen sink, bathroom sink, or a dishpan that is just big enough to contain him.

Remember that these tiny dogs lose body heat very quickly. Use warm water, but don't use water that is too warm. Never wash or rinse your Chihuahua in cold water. Use shampoo that is designed for dogs. Tearless shampoo for dogs is preferable. Do not use baby shampoo or any other shampoo that is designed for humans, as this will dry out his skin.

Avoid getting water in his eyes, nose, or ear canal. Most Chihuahua owners recommend putting cotton balls just inside the ear canal to protect them during the bath. Make sure that you rinse his coat well after you shampoo him.

After the bath, use cotton balls to wipe out his ears. Clear any discharge from around his eyes with a warm damp cloth. Wrap him snugly in a towel, and if he likes it, you can blow dry him...just be sure that the heat isn't so high that it burns him.

For long haired Chihuahuas, it is best to avoid combing out wet fur, as this can lead to hair breakage. Instead, wait to comb him until he is dry. You can also use a special dog conditioner on long haired dogs to help control tangles and matted hair.

If during any grooming procedures you find evidence of fleas or ticks, call your veterinarian and purchase special flea and tick treatments to handle the situation effectively. You can waste tons of money on products bought in discount stores that simply do not work. It is important to deal with fleas and ticks at the first sign of them, because they can lead to skin problems, as well as to heart worms.

Training Your Chihuahua

Some people think that it is impossible to train a Chihuahua. This simply is not the case. All dogs can be trained, and there are some dogs that are more difficult to train than others, but there is one thing that all dog breeds have in common when it comes to training.

All dogs respond to positive results. If they do something – anything – and get a positive result from it, they will be inclined to do it again and again and again...always hoping for the same positive outcome.

This is what you must base your training on – in the form of treats and praise. In the beginning of your training attempts, treats are usually required in combination with praise. Later, when the dog has been trained to obey a command or to perform a trick, praise will be sufficient, but a treat is always appreciated as well.

Training is important. You may not care if your dog performs a single trick, but you will care whether your dog is house trained or not, and you will care whether your dog listens to you or not – especially when it can mean the difference between life and death for him. Again, training is essential, even if your dog never performs a single trick.

Treats are really essential when you first start training. Peanut butter and cheese are excellent for this, and because the incentive to perform a trick or to obey a command is to get the treat, it's more effective to hold training sessions while the dog is hungry – right before his regular meal time is great.

The next thing we must address is what doesn't work. Punishment does not work. Your Chihuahua will view punishment as a negative result, and when you punish your dog for failing to perform as you want him to, you will find that you will have a very hard time ever getting him to obey you – and if anything you will be reducing his desire to please you at all.

Don't expect too much from each training session. These little dogs are smart, but they do not have long attention spans. Your training sessions should be no more than fifteen minutes long, and you can do two or three training sessions each day. As training progresses, start your training session with a command or trick that the dog has mastered, and finish with a command or trick that the dog has mastered. This leaves both of you with a good feeling.

Chihuahuas excel when it comes to obedience and agility. These are the two areas where your training should start. Obedience includes commands, such as sit, stay, come, fetch, and things of this nature. Agility includes any trick that requires the dog to be agile, such as dancing, jumping, rolling, flipping, etc.

When it comes to obedience training, you need to determine what you want your dog to respond to. There are essentially two choices – verbal commands or clicker commands. Clickers are special dog training tools that are sold in pet stores. The dog responds to a certain number or pattern of clicks, performing the command or trick that he has learned to associate with that number or pattern. This method of control of the dog really shows us just how smart these little dogs really are.

When training your Chihuahua, never try to force him to do anything. You just need to show him what you want him to do, in relation to the word or click that you are using. For example, when training him to sit on your command, say the word, or click, while holding his chest and gently pushing down on his backside to help him sit – do not, however, use greater force to make him sit.

He really does want to please you, and he only needs to know what it is that you want from him in order to be successful. Whether he had your help or did it on his own, reward him with a treat when the trick has been performed or the command followed.

This lets him know that there is even more benefit than just pleasing you in exchange for performing the trick or following the command. Eventually, you should only give the dog a treat when he or she has performed the trick or followed the command on his or her own, without your guidance.

So, if Chihuahuas can be trained just like any other dog, where does the rumor that they are one of the harder breeds to train come from? When you hear this, in most cases, the reference is to housebreaking the dog, and unfortunately for you, this is the first thing that you will want to work on with your Chihuahua.

Why is it so hard to housebreak a Chihuahua? It is because Chihuahuas are extremely territorial, and both males and females are notorious for urinating in different areas of their home (your home) in an effort to mark their territory.

There are two ways for you to get around this when it comes to housebreaking your Chihuahua. First, use pet odor remover and every time your dog urinates in your home, clean the area well with soap and water, and then spray the area to fully remove the scent of the urine – remembering that their sense of smell is about 100 times greater than yours.

The next thing to do is to always take the dog outdoors to relieve himself at he appropriate times, and reward him for going outside to take care of his business. As with any other dog, your Chihuahua will need to relieve himself upon waking, shortly after eating or drinking, and immediately after playing.

Be very diligent about this – and patient. Always remain outdoors and encourage him to urinate before you return indoors. Use a word or phrase that he can

associate with urinating outdoors, such as 'outside to potty.' Once he has done this, reward him immediately and give him praise – just make sure that you are consistent...this cannot be said enough. If you work, make sure that you provide paper or a litter box, and confine the dog to a small space while you are away from the house.

Use the same philosophy with housebreaking that you use with other types of training, understanding that discipline will not have any positive effect. Never spank your dog, rub his nose in his waste, or harm him in any way. Do not raise your voice, but use a stern voice that lets him know that this does not please you – without crossing the line into being verbally abusive to the dog.

Regardless of how sociable or 'people like' your darling Chihuahua is, he or she is still an animal, and will behave as an animal – happily marking his or her territory, unless you show the dog what it is that you expect, and that praise and rewards follow.

Other types of training will be much easier than housebreaking. As mentioned, it is really just a matter of letting the Chihuahua know what it is that you want him to do, and rewarding him for doing it. If you repeat this process over and over, your Chihuahua can easily master any trick or command in about two weeks – possibly three weeks if he is a bit more stubborn.

When it comes to tricks and commands, you can teach the dog virtually anything that it is in his physical power to do. Some tricks and commands will take more time and patience than others, and as mentioned earlier, it is wise to start with the simple commands and tricks, and work your way into the more difficult or complex tricks and commands.

Some dogs are harder to train than others, and it can be an exercise in frustration for you and your dog. If this is the case, you might want to consider professional dog training. This is not a situation where you send your dog to school for training. Effective behavior training means that the dog and the dog owner attend classes together.

There are numerous dog schools to choose from in most areas. Contact past clients of those schools to see how happy they were with the results before settling on one school.

Don't wait too long to determine whether professional training is needed. Remember that the younger the dog is when the training begins, the easier he or she will be to train. Ideally, training should begin by the time that the dog is about twelve weeks old.

Showing Your Chihuahua

If you have a show quality Chihuahua, this means that your Chihuahua has the appearance that is required for showing. In fact, it only means that he meets the minimum requirements for showing. There are several things that you need to do to prepare your Chihuahua for dog shows.

The first step is to make sure that your Chihuahua is properly trained. Behavior training is absolutely essential, and if you plan to enter the dog into the agility category, he will need the ability to run various types of obstacle courses.

The next step to preparing for shows is grooming. You should groom your Chihuahua as you normally would in preparation for a show. Make sure that his coat, skin, ears, eyes, and pads of his feet are all in excellent shape. Wipe out his ears and brush his teeth before the show as well. If your dog doesn't respond well to bathes, try bathing him the day before the show.

It is always a good idea to attend two or three dog shows before entering your dog into one. This allows you the opportunity to see how the shows operate, and what is expected from you and your dog. You should also talk to your breeder, and ask them if you can tag along with them to a show – without your dog. This will give you valuable insider knowledge from an experienced show dog owner. Bring a long a notebook to take notes.

When you do enter a show, make sure that you pay close attention to the entry deadline and any applicable fees that must be paid. Make sure that your entry form is completely filled out, and the fee is enclosed. If you don't understand any portion of the entry form, call the host of the dog show to find out what information is being sought.

Bring along your dog's shot record, and if required, a health certificate from your veterinarian. These are required at most dog shows. In most cases, there is a licensed veterinarian on the scene and he will give your dog a brief examination to ensure that he is in good health. Dogs that are in poor health are often turned away. At some shows, if your dog has fleas or ticks, he will not be allowed into the show.

Make sure that you are dressed appropriately for the show. Wear comfortable clothing, but dress in nice casual clothing, unless dressier clothing is required. If you are not sure about the attire expected for owners, call the host and simply ask. No matter what the attire is, make sure that you have comfortable shoes to wear. This is vital!

Bring your own chair. In most cases, seating for owners is not supplied, and if you don't bring your own folding chair, you will be on your feet for the entire day.

Make sure that you know what you are expected to bring. Obviously, you will need a kennel and leash for your dog. You will need your own food and water dishes, and your own food. Often water is provided – but not always. Find out if a specific type of kennel or cage is required.

Make absolutely sure that you are very clear about what you are expected to bring, the check-in process, and any other information pertaining to the show that you need to know.

To find out about various shows, check with the American Kennel Club. Most of the dog shows worth attending are sponsored or sanctioned by the AKC. Determine which categories your dog fits into, and which ones you want to enter him in. Note that you are not required to enter your dog in all categories, or even in all categories that the dog fits into.

Again, the best way to learn the ins and outs of dog shows is to attend those shows and to talk to the participants. In most cases, your breeder won't mind if you attend a show with them, and they may even be willing to mentor you when it comes to getting started with dog shows.

If you will be showing your dog, begin doing so as soon as he or she is old enough. This is important because you want the dog to become accustomed to the activity that goes on at these shows. Remember that the dog's high energy, combined with the high energy of dog shows can create a situation where your dog becomes excessively nervous or stressed if the dog isn't used to this.

While you want to win or place at dog shows, remember that winning isn't everything. These shows are really quite a bit of fun – as they should be – and there is a great deal to be learned from the other participants as well. This is an excellent way to make friends who share a love of Chihuahuas.

If the dog shows are stressful for you and/or your dog, you might want to rethink participating in those shows. Even show quality Chihuahuas can be pet quality or companionship quality dogs.

Above all, make sure that you are enjoying your Chihuahua – whether he is show quality or pet quality. If you plan to enter shows for fame or fortune, don't enter. Remember what these shows are really all about, and make sure that you are getting as much as you and your dog possibly can from each show that you participate in.