

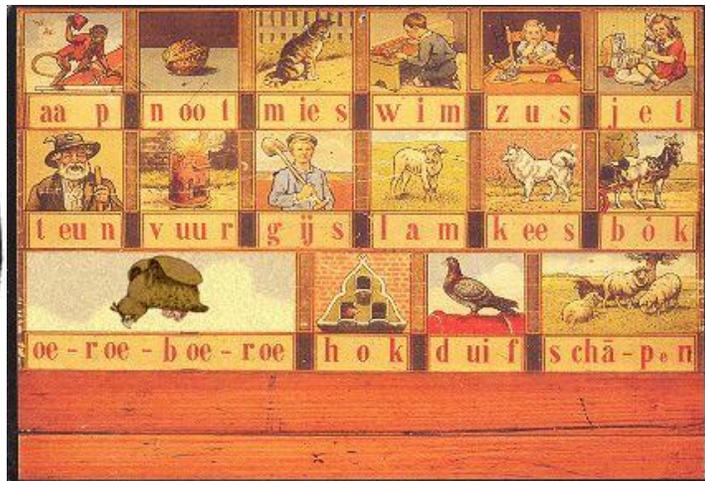
The German Spitz in the US

History of the German Spitz from Early Times to the Middle Ages

The Spitz is the oldest breed of dog in Central Europe and served as the progenitor of many European breeds. Well preserved specimens of Stone Age “Peat Dogs,” known as the “Torfhund” (*Canis familiaris palustris* Rüthimeyer) and dating back 6,000 years, have been found in the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, England and Ireland and closely resemble modern European Spitz dogs.

The term “Spitz” is derived from the Old Dutch language and literally translates as “pointed peaks,” referring explicitly to the image of snowcapped mountain peaks that span the northern European and sub-Arctic regions. The pointed ears and wedge-shaped muzzle of the Spitz looked like snow-swept peaks. Even now, the German refer to them as “tips” or “peaks”.

During the Viking era, circa 800-1100 AD, Norsemen from Denmark, Sweden and Norway built superior ships and engraved their mark in history as explorers and warriors. Vikings are famous for their conquests of coastal and river towns throughout Europe (raiding, rampaging, pillaging and worse), but they also established colonies, engaged in trade and fortified the military and naval strength of their regions. They brought the basic elements of their culture with them, most significantly introducing a small furry dog with a curly tail and foxy face to the heart of continental Europe. There is a tale from around one thousand years ago of a Viking ship that foundered off the coast of Friesland. The crew perished except for one man saved by a local fisherman in his cog (the style of fishing boat) with his dog. The two men and the little white dog were caught in the storm and forced southward until they eventually managed to land on a small area of higher ground. On that site, they built a small chapel to give thanks for their deliverance. This is the place where Amsterdam slowly grew to become an important town. The Great Seal of Amsterdam illustrates this event, depicting a white Keeshond (Dutch for Spitz dog) standing guard at the railing of a boat on it is watch. In 1790, an unknown writer in the Netherlands wrote the first book showing the large white German Spitz (aka “Keeshond”): “Cases of a Keeshond in the Netherlands”.



Stamp of the City of Amsterdam The white keeshond also appeared on the reading board

The German Spitz was primarily a watchdog, selected for its territorial behavior and lack of hunting drive; therefore, he did not leave the territory assigned to him and, if necessary, defended it. This lack of hunting behavior of the German Spitz played an important role,

especially in the Middle Ages. At that time, the nobles attached particular importance to preserving their game. The hunting-capable dogs of the farmers were usually destroyed. In many cases, the feudal lords decided to give the peasants a German Spitz because they did not hunt game animals such as deer. A good watchdog must be willing to submit to his master, of course, but in the absence of his master, he must make independent decisions in his own interest. As a result, the Spitz is very affectionate, but they are also self-confident and sometimes obstinate. Intruders are immediately reported loudly and usually guarded until the dog owner decides how to proceed. [From: Economic Encyclopedia, JG Krünitz \(published: 1773-1858\)](#) In earlier times, major concerns on the farms included rodents, weasels, and stray dogs and cats, who had to be driven off or killed, so the German Spitz was useful for its excellence in vermin control.

Photos from old postcards, picture book, and a photo of a working dog.





Registration and Separation into Colors and Sizes

The Association for German Spitz (Spitz) was founded in 1899 for large Spitz ("Großspitz" or "Gross spitz"). At the time, only the colors white, black, and wolf-grey were recognized. Although the white Spitz were usually only paired with each other, they were crossed every few generations to a black Spitz to strengthen the pigmentation.

- In 1906, all colors were allowed for small Spitz, but not for large Spitz.
- In 1958, colors for the small Spitz were limited to white, black, brown, orange and other colors including parti-colors. The large Spitz were still only registered as the wolf-grey (called the Keeshond by the AKC), white, black, and brown. Merle is not an acceptable color.
- From 1958, colors were separated for breed exhibition, with one exception: black can be paired with brown, and as of 2019, the black and brown can have white toes, chest patch, and tail tip.
- In 1959, the sizes were further divided into four different sizes: Zwergspitz (Pomeranian), Klein spitz (toy), Mittel spitz (miniature) and Gross spitz (large or giant).
- In 1969, the size variant of the Mittel spitz was added to the Standard.
- In 1974, the Zwergspitz / Pomeranian was included in the FCI breed standard, with the same colors as the Mittel spitz, but it continued to be separately recognized by the AKC. The "different color" was recognized in 1990.

While the color of the small Spitz (klein, mittel) had no special meaning, the large Spitz (Gross spitz) had different areas of distribution and characteristics depending on the color. This was not because certain properties are genetically linked to the color, but because of the different uses of the dogs. The white Gross spitz was mainly in northern and central Germany. He was a typical guardian of the farm and was very heavily used for herding sheep (pommerscher Hütespitz). The white color is of particular importance to a herding dog, because it is so easy to distinguish it from the wolf over long distances and in the dark. The black Gross spitz were especially widespread in the southern German wine-growing regions. During the day, they guarded the yard, and at night, they were sent to the vineyards. This is why the black Gross spitz

was once often referred to as vineyard or vine spitz. The most important robbers in vineyards, however, include wild boar. Especially in vineyards, the Gross spitz can quickly scurry through and between the vines. The size and the thick black coat provided protection from the dangerous tusks of wild boars. The black Gross spitz is probably the most dashing because of his work in the vineyards. As he was especially bred around Mannheim, Germany, he was also called "Mannheimer Spitz". The brown Gross spitz was also common in southern Germany. He was considered extinct for a long time. In 2011, the first brown Gross spitz was bred by backcrossing from the black Spitz. White, black, and brown are now bred and shown, although white is most common.

Tafel LXVII.



The early black and white Spitz



Very old photo of a brown Spitz

The Spitz in the 20th and 21st Centuries in the US

Many of the German Spitz were brought to the US in the late 1800s and early 1900s by German immigrants. Due to the negative perception of immigrants as poor, uneducated people, the breed was denigrated as sneaky, bad tempered, and difficult. Early NY Times articles disparaged the breed but can now be understood as not being directed against the dogs, but against the people that imported them. They were not associated with a wealthy class who could seek out AKC recognition. Instead, beginning in 1911-1913, the white German Spitz were registered by the United Kennel Club, where the name was later changed to the American Eskimo in view of World War I.

It was not until the early 1990s that German Spitz owners sought recognition by the AKC. The AKC accepted the German Spitz for recordation in the Foundation Stock Service in 1996. The AKC does not separate the different sizes and colors, as is done under the FCI and by the European registries, but records all as a single breed. They are also all shown together.

Since 1996, there have been 121 litters recorded and 265 dogs recorded. Gross spitz were first recorded in 2021. The first litter of Gross spitz born in the US and recorded by FSS as German Spitz was born in January 2022.

The dog who was awarded the first Certificate of Merit was Dragonfly U Stitch. More recently, Mystic Phantom VH Bearehofke (aka "Nook") achieved this title, and, pending AKC

confirmation, Thunderpas Annika has also achieved her Certificate of Merit. She is the first AKC-titled Gross spitz and is from the first Gross spitz litter in the US recorded by the AKC.

The following six dogs have a total of 25 titles:

Cassandra's Rolf The Red Baron THD

Dragonfly U Stich CM

Kingsfield Bouncin' Into My Heart MX MXJ MXF

Milord Fortuitous Fox CGC TKN

Kunhegyesi Bleki Calisto-Macko IICGC TKN

Mystic Phantom VH Bearehofke CM CGC TKN

Aisknekht Tolyan OA OAJ NF

Many other German Spitz are actively competing in non-AKC conformation and performance events, and several have demonstrated their superstar qualities in agility, including Kathy Harris's Bear, Cindy Lett-Little's Tonka, and Terry Woods' Nook.

The German Spitz Club of America

In mid-2020, a group of individuals decided that it was critical to form an AKC parent club for the German Spitz to advance the breed to full recognition with the AKC. Bylaws were drafted, meetings held, and officers and directors appointed. The German Spitz Club of America ("GSCA") held its first meeting December 1, 2021, with the goal of promoting the AKC recorded German Spitz and moving it to the miscellaneous category. The GSCA currently has over 50 members, participated in the AKC Meet the Breeds in April 2022, and manned booths at various FSS shows. The club reformatted the FCI breed standard to AKC guidelines (submitted June 2022; not yet reviewed by AKC). The GSCA has a website, private and public Facebook pages, holds regular meetings, and has prepared and distributes the reformatted standard and marketing materials, and is working actively with European breeders to bring in more bloodlines, to encourage and support showing in AKC events, and to educate and encourage breeders in the US to promote their dogs and participate in the GSCA. The GSCA has a strict code of ethics based on the guidelines of the FCI parent club for the German Spitz. These require health testing, maintaining genetic diversity (low coefficient of inbreeding), and not breeding too often.

The German Spitz Club of America was approved by the AKC Board of Directors as the parent club for the AKC German Spitz in August 2022. The club has applied to host two FSS open shows in December 2022 in Perry, GA.

We are all very proud of the German Spitz and look forward to sharing them with many more people.



Mystic Phantom VH Bearehofke
CM CGC TKN
(Mittel spitz owned by Terry Woods)



Thunderpas Annika CM pending AKC approval
(Gross spitz bred and owned by Patrea Pabst)

Black gross spitz currently showing in FSS.



Walda Destiny Von Kauthen Ruh
and Kristina Chaput



Chili Zemni Sen
and Patrea Pabst

White klein (toy) and mittel spitz currently being shown in FSS:



Kunhegyesi Bleki Ivolett-Mano
8 lb female shown as puppy

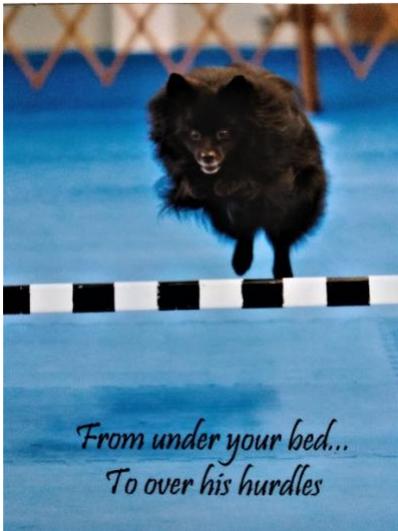
Owned by Patrea Pabst



Kunhegyesi Bleki Calisto-Macko II CGC TKN
Mittel spitz bitch competing in nose work and
conformation

Owned by Terry Woods

Due to their skill and quick comprehension, the German Spitz excel in obedience, dog-dancing, rally, agility, and barn hunt, and in Europe have proven themselves in tracking and been used successfully as guide dogs.



Kathy Harris Bear



Mary Champagne's Spitz



Cindy Lett-Little and Tonka

Of course, no history of the German Spitz would be complete without mentioning their long history as circus dogs. Currently, the brother of Linn von Millus (Edward Kalkreuter's "Theia") is actively performing with Sirkus Finlandia.



Circus Antoni



Circus Liliput



Sirkus Finlandia



Competing in Obedience

And not to be left out, we have those who just love meeting people, providing comfort and joy.

