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THE COURAGEOUS, CHARISMATIC COLLIE

Everyone wants a dog like Lassie. During the 1950's, the rough-coated valiant Collie took the popularity of a once-upon-a-time-working dog to new heights. Even before her TV celebrity days, Lassie became immortalized in Eric Knight's novel *Lassie Come Home*. Qualities such as loyalty, devotion and courage gave definition to the charismatic breed.

Though no one is quite sure just how the lineage of the Collie emerged, the American Kennel Club notes that in its early days the Collie worked primarily as a herding dog. With sheepherding being one of the world's oldest occupations, the breed's ancestors date far back into the history of dogs. Until the last two centuries, both Smooth and Rough Collies were strictly working dogs without written pedigrees.

The Rough Collie Lassie-look-alikes first began their rise from the working class during the 1860's when Queen Victoria enthusiastically endorsed them. Soon the Rough Collie split from its hardworking, sheepherding-cousin the Border Collie and began living the high-life as a popular family dog. The Collie Club of America notes that the first English Collie was imported into the United States in 1879. The breed's parent organization was later organized in 1886, two years after the establishment of the breed into The American Kennel Club (AKC). Having a special affinity for small children, the general popularity of the Collie has placed it among the top twenty favorite dogs registered by the AKC.

beautiful dog breeds. There are two variations of coat types: rough and smooth, with rough being the more recognizable of the two. There are also four different color variations that contribute to the breed's appearance and appeal: "Sable and White", "Tri-color", "Blue Merle", and "White".



The main difference between the Rough and Smooth Collie is the length of their hair, according to Sarah Rebernick, a Smooth Collie owner from Milwaukee. "Smoothies have the same dense, soft undercoat but with a shorter, coarser top coat. They adhere to the same breed standards as the Rough Coated Collie. My favorite description is 'Lassie with a crew cut,'" she explains. "Their personalities are similar, but there is some speculation that because of their shorter coats Smoothies were used more to round up livestock that wandered into wooded areas or brush and so have slightly different herding techniques."

According to The Collie Club of America, the intelligence and sensitivity of the Collie, along with its attractive coat varieties have led to the breed's success as a family dog. It's been noted that Collies have a

well-developed sense of "home" that revolves around the family, its schedules and routines, and the home's physical surroundings.

"I've had Collies since I was little and the days of Lassie on TV," says Pattie Schcy, a Wauwatosa resident and volunteer with Minnesota Wisconsin Collie Rescue. "They bond very quickly to their owners and are a very loyal, wonderful family dog. They have little idiosyncrasies like grumbling when they lay down, as though someone let the air out of them, as well as lying flat on their backs asleep at times. They're easy to train and sometimes can be a great four legged treadmill if you're looking to lose a few pounds, yet they can relax after a good daily walk. Some Collies can move on to obedience, agility training or herding, but that

depends on the personality of the dog. Of course, they are very smart and a joy to train."

Due to its herding heritage, the Collie is also very vocal and has a large range of sounds. They have various pitches, from barks and grunts to the famous Collie "singing." The Collie also has a multitude of expressions, such as cocking the head to one side, puffing cheeks, smiles, nose nudges or teeth snapping. Also, an advantage from its sheepherding days is the Collie's ability to get along with other dogs or other animals in the household.

"Because of their easy-going personalities, Collies are a good choice for either an active or more relaxed lifestyle," explains Rebernick. "They are eager to please and sensitive, which makes them easy to train. They also respond well to gentle training

techniques. Just like Rough Collies, 'Smoothies' have a tendency to herd, especially younger children, other animals and moving things like bikes and lawn mowers. Owners should be aware of techniques for controlling this behavior. Collies tend to be barkers, but it has been my experience that they are usually trying to 'talk' to you about something rather than just randomly making noise."



Though the overall health of the Collie is generally good, there are various conditions that prospective owners should be aware of when considering adoption. According to the Collie Health Foundation, a condition known as Collie Eye Anomaly (CEA) could affect various parts of the eye, and though the condition may be present, its effects range from the dog having no vision problems to blindness. This is something that does not worsen with age.

Collies are also sensitive to certain drugs such as ivermectin, an active ingredient in some heartworm medications. The human drug Imodium also poses issues for the breed. "The drug ivermectin is deadly to Collies be-

cause of the MDR1 gene mutation," says Schey. "Because of this gene it's recommended that Interceptor be the only heartworm treatment given to a Collie.

"My now 12 year-old-Collie, Sully, is a mutant/normal. These dogs carry the mutation and may pass on the mutant gene to their offspring. These dogs may also experience toxicity after normal doses of loperamide (Imodium), some anticancer drugs and high doses of ivermectin, greater than 50 micrograms per kilogram. I don't want anyone to be scared off from getting a Collie, but these things are important to the health of a Collie or any dog."

So whether you're looking to adopt a Lassie look-alike, or simply looking for a well-mannered family dog, the Rough or Smooth Collie is certainly a good choice. Rebernick says "Collies are loving, gentle, eager to please and loyal. One of my favorite qualities is that even though they are always up for a walk or playtime, they are equally happy to simply hang out and cuddle."

Contact Minnesota Wisconsin Collie Rescue at www.mwcr.org.

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Jamie Klinger-Krebs is a freelance writer and web designer from Jefferson. She shares her home with her husband, daughter, two cats and one rambunctious Border Collie.

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