

# Want To Be the Talk of the Dog Park? Choose This Striking Breed

You'll attract attention no matter where you go when you own one of these show-stopping breeds. Acting dignified and aloof one minute and endearingly goofy the next, this peaceful and calm pet will fit perfectly into the right household. Here are five things to know about them.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Before any other feature, the Afghan hound's long, silky hair will be the first thing you notice, and while it does take special care, it's the dog's crowning glory and a showstopper wherever they go
- Afghan hounds have the heart of a hunter, initially to chase rabbits and gazelles, and even today have a strong, inborn desire to run
- This dog's personality has been described as both dignified and aloof, but sometimes endearingly goofy and exuberant
- Although Afghan hounds are very smart, they're also very independent; a small animal running through the yard will likely kick in their chasing instinct, so not only is a fenced yard recommended, a leash for walking is, as well
- You can expect your Afghan hound to live from 10 to 13 years, on average (some longer)

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Take an Afghan hound on a walk just about anywhere and you'll be sure to get lots of looks of admiration — well, not you as much as your dog — because more than any other feature, these canines have long, silky hair that rivals any human's. In fact, only the Afghan hound's face is free of that long, elegant fur, which seems to match their lithe bodies and long, aristocratic noses. Afghan hounds have the heart of a hunter, initially to chase rabbits and gazelles, and even today have a strong, inborn desire to run.

While the term "hound" may seem odd when you compare them with others, e.g., basset hounds, the quintessential lazy "porch" dog, or spunky dachshunds, but underneath all the hair is a body designed for protection from the home that gave them their name. (Note: In their native Afghanistan, they're called Tazi.) As Vetstreet explains:

*"Studies of the canine genome indicate that the Afghan descends from one of the oldest types of dogs. The dogs in Afghanistan were found in several different types, depending on the region they were from.*

*Dogs from mountainous areas were more compact with darker, heavier coats, while desert-dwelling dogs were more rangy, with coats that were lighter in both color and volume ... Hunting in partnership with falcons, they flushed quail and partridges for the falcon to bring down or the hunter to shoot."<sup>1</sup>*

This dog's personality has been described as rather contradictory, as the same animal will display both a dignified and aloof bearing, but sometimes be endearingly goofy and exuberant. They may take their time warming up to people outside their own family and generally take commands at their own pace, so patience may help prevent frustration.

Is an **Afghan hound** the right dog for your household? Here are five observations regarding the breed to help you get a better handle on their basic characteristics.

**1. Unlike what you've heard about hounds, these aren't "lounge lizards"**



Like any other member of a close, comfortable, loving family, Afghan hounds enjoy hanging out on the couch as much as anybody, but don't make the mistake of thinking that's all they're interested in. These dogs are high-energy, so they'll be right there with you if you want to take them for a run or a long stroll. Exercise, then, is a prerequisite for these guys, as a natural athleticism is one of the things they were initially bred for.

Having a fenced yard will be necessary (read: high fence, as Afghan hounds stand an average of 26 inches tall at the shoulder and have an innate ability to jump), because they need to be able to run freely.

If it runs, they will chase it. Nearly every owner of an Afghan hound will tell you that if a small animal streaks by, their inherent chase instinct will likely be too strong to resist, and these dogs are lightning fast. Until your dog is well-trained, make sure small animals aren't accessible.

**2. Afghan hounds give you an excuse to slow down and bond with them**



Whenever you interact with your dog, regardless of the breed, it's an opportunity for bonding. In the process



of grooming them, you'll find Afghan hounds to be just what you'd expect — a little more high maintenance than a shorthaired dog. But that's part of what makes them unique. That long, silky fur can get tangled just as easily (or more so) than a human's, in part because their hair is so fine, but there's also a lot of it.

It's also prone to tangling and getting things caught in it, like leaves, twigs and whatnot, depending on the dog's activity. Because these dogs require a good brushing three times a week, it's a perfect opportunity to communicate your care for them with gentleness and patience. This is where your Afghan hound can begin to sense your fondness for him, as you demonstrate careful attention to their well-being.

You'll need both a brush and comb to detangle and prevent knots and matted hair from forming, and remember, prevention may save you time and your dog some discomfort. If you bathe your dog often, a professional blow dryer designed for dogs may be a good idea.

### 3. **They're independent thinkers**



When dogs don't respond immediately to commands, some owners assume they're, shall we say, not very bright. Although it's hard to say with every dog, with Afghan hounds one thing is certain: They're very smart and have the capacity to learn quickly, but they're also very independent. A leash will be an important safety tool for them.

Being an independent dog means they do things their own way, so consistency is key. As Vetstreet notes, they can be "drama queens," gentle but a little bossy, and sometimes goof around when you're trying to be serious with them:

*"He's happy to do what you ask — as long as that's what he wanted to do anyway. He's highly intelligent and learns quickly, but he won't always respond to your commands, er, requests. He's thinking about it. Maybe he'll do it later. Or not. This can make him frustrating to train and even more frustrating to compete with."*<sup>2</sup>

You may have to draw heavily on patience and perseverance when training Afghan hounds, and a sense of humor will be worth its weight in gold. It's not defiance, per se, that makes them slow to obey, but early training that relies on positive reinforcement, especially food rewards, will help establish what's in their best interest.

### 4. **They'll help you keep your kitchen organized**



Keep food, dinnerware, serving platters and utensils well out of reach. Like a growing teenager with a seemingly endless appetite, it's not just their height, but the 50 to 60 pounds they reach by adulthood that puts them in the "large dog" category, that makes them perpetually hungry and makes this a potential problem.

With this habit in mind, you'll want to feed your dog a fresh, properly portioned species-appropriate diet as opposed to keeping their food dish full all day and night, as they're very likely to overeat. Another bit of advice is to make homemade dog food rather than relying on commercial brands. You also want to make sure your young dog doesn't grow big too quickly.

#### 5. **Keep calm and be companionable**



Some breeds prance around, jump on you, bark and generally make their presence known, but this dog isn't one of them. If owners were asked to describe their Afghan hound in three words, you might hear "peaceful," "calm" and "dignified." That said, these dogs want their surroundings to be similar.

They don't respond well to abrupt schedule changes, loud noises (including people) or quick movements, which children, being children, exhibit, which is why homes with young children don't often work well for the breed. According to Your Purebred Puppy:

*"Be honest ... is there tension in your home? Are people loud or angry or emotional? Are there arguments or fights? Afghan Hounds are extremely sensitive to stress and can end up literally sick to their stomachs, with severe digestive upsets and neurotic behaviors, if the people in their home are having family problems. Sight hounds are peaceful dogs who need a peaceful, harmonious home."*<sup>3</sup>

As with early training, early socialization is particularly important to arrange for Afghan hounds, as being around different situations and people from a young age can help get them used to — and consequently more comfortable with — unfamiliar sights, sounds and settings.

## Afghan Hound — Notes on Health and Longevity

Healthwise, you can expect your Afghan hound to live from 10 to 13 years, on average (some longer). Some of the problems found in this breed include:

- Hip and/or elbow dysplasia (although not as common as in other large breeds)<sup>4</sup>
- Juvenile cataracts
- Laryngeal paralysis
- Thyroiditis, an autoimmune disease that destroys the thyroid gland)
- Von Willebrand disease or other blood clotting or bleeding disorders

At the end of the day, your Afghan hound will be a smart, adaptable, athletic, independent and elegant-looking dog, but has one of the highest needs for hair care in the dog kingdom. If you know that going in, and want a faithful pet for a lifetime, you'll find it with this beautiful dog. Visit an Afghan hound rescue group in your area if you're considering adding one to your family.

### Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [VetStreet, June 27, 2011, The History of Afghan Hounds](#)

<sup>2</sup> [VetStreet, June 27, 2011, Afghan Hound Temperament and Personality](#)

<sup>3,4</sup> [Dogster, March 7, 2025](#)

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