



Information Pamphlet
Old English Sheepdog

Board Approved 2012



History of The Old English Sheepdog

The origin of the Old English Sheepdog remains a question of keen interest to Bobtail fanciers, and is still open to new theories and discoveries. However, there are traces of evidence which place its origin in the early nineteenth century, centered in the Southwestern Counties of England. Some maintain that the Scottish Bearded Collie had a large part in its making; others claim the Russian Owtchar as one of the progenitors of the Old English Sheepdog.

Writings during that time refer to a “drovers dog” which was used primarily for driving sheep and cattle to market, and it is speculated that these drover’s dogs were exempt from taxes due to their working status. To prove their occupation, their tails were docked ... leading to the custom of calling the sheepdog by the nickname “Bob” or “Bobtail”. Since this dog has been used more for driving than for herding, the lack of a tail to serve as a rudder, so to speak, has in no way affected its ability to work with heavier kinds of sheep or cattle.

The Old English Sheepdog was first promoted in the U.S. by Pittsburgh industrialist Wm. Wade in the late 1880’s, and by the turn of the century, five of the ten wealthiest American families - the Morgans, Vanderbilts, Goulds, Harrisons and Guggenheims - all owned, bred and exhibited the Old English Sheepdog. In fact, the social prominence and importance of the owners and spectators at the Old English ring in the 1904 Westminster Show in New York prompted the show superintendent to discreetly advise the judge to “take plenty of time; the dogs in the ring are the property of some of our leading Americans.”

It should be noted here, that these prominent families also had kennel managers and staff to care for and groom their OES!

The Old English Sheepdog Characteristics

The Old English Sheepdog is by no means a rare breed, however the OES is still rather uncommon. He is big and hairy (dogs - 80 to 100 lbs.; bitches - 60 to 85 lbs. generally), robust yet easygoing, fun-loving to the point of being clownish and is credited with being one of the few breeds of dog with a sense of humor. The breed's intelligence is great and although even-tempered, when provoked, he can gallantly dispatch any situation that may arise. He exhibits deep devotion to his friends and will bark at any unusual occurrence as a warning; however, the OES is not a true guard dog ... and definitely not adaptable to attack training. He is making a mark in the performance events even though they are credited with having a mind of their own.

The Bobtail is a loving pet, a perfect companion to children, and equally at home in apartment, city or country home ... provided he is with his family. Coupled with an inbred trait of stubbornness, he is determined to be the center of attention at all times.

The Old English Sheepdog does not adapt to confinement as he demands human attention and lots of it ... neglect will negatively affect his temperament and emotional well being. Although the Sheepdog needs more love and care than most breeds, he returns that which is given to him many times over. Few breeds of dogs demand and inspire the emotional commitment as does the Old English Sheepdog



Let's Buy A Bobtail!

Certainly, this is a decision not to be taken lightly. A strong commitment must be made to maintaining this breed to keep it looking “just like the ones on TV and magazine advertising.” You should be able to answer ~ to the following:

1. Do I really want a dog that big? (60 - 100 lbs. as an adult and 21 inches and upwards at the withers).
2. Do I have a *minimum* of 3-4 hours per week to groom an adult dog? Sounds easy now, but with **busy** schedules, 3-4 hours per week for grooming may prove difficult for some families. Professional grooming is costly!
3. Am I prepared for dog hair on my clothes and furniture and occasionally in the butter?
4. Can I cope with wet, muddy feet around the house following a rain or snow storm; leaves and grass clippings too, depending on the season. Old English Sheepdogs have “drippy” whiskers following a stand at the water bowl.
5. Do I have a fenced yard to keep a dog safe? No dog should be allowed to wander.
6. Is there enough time to exercise an OES every day? Few will exercise themselves but love a long walk with their master or a brisk game of fetch the ball.
7. Am I prepared financially to adequately care for a large dog? The purchase price is only the beginning - food, grooming supplies and veterinary care (sometimes quite costly) will follow.
8. Perhaps last, but not least, do I have the time to give an Old English Sheepdog the care and love that it requires? Remember, owning a dog is a ***lifetime commitment***, 10-12 or hopefully more years.

All groomed out to perfection, there is no more beautiful dog than the Old English Sheepdog, but it takes a tremendous commitment to maintain it in that condition.

If you are prepared for *all of the preceding*, you are now ready to begin the OES selection.

The economics of owning an Old English Sheepdog are not unlike that of any other breed, the most salient difference in the requirements for owning this special breed, is the time required to devote to its care. It is not at all unreasonable to say that the OES requires more time and attention for proper care and maintenance than any breed recognized by the American Kennel Club.

Making The OES Selection

Once you have acknowledged the commitment OES ownership requires, you will undoubtedly arrive at two basic conclusions.

- ***Where and how can I purchase an Old English Sheepdog?***
- ***How can I learn to maintain, groom, exercise and discipline my Old English Sheepdog?***

To gain the required background to fulfill these conclusions, it is very important to attend some dog shows, seek out a local OES club if one is established in your area, study various books and especially the OES Standard and the Old English Sheepdog Club of America's (OESCA) Code of Ethics. You should also purchase the OESCA *Breed Handbook*, an award winning, 48 page, soft cover book, which delves into great detail regarding the Bobtail. You can't beat the advice that should certainly be studied before making your OES purchase.

Upon attending some shows, study the various OES for structure, movement and appearance in relation to the OES standard. Ask exhibitors if you can "visit" with their dogs - after they have been shown. (As human nature has it, many exhibitors are anxious and excited prior to show time and always want that extra few minutes of preparation before entering the ring). Most breeders and exhibitors love to extol the virtues of their particular breeding program. A conscientious breeder has the commitment to the breed and will take the time to discuss traits, characteristics and maintenance of the Old English Sheepdog.

After talking with various breeders, you will soon learn the strong advantages of purchasing your OES from a breeder. Most pet shops receive their puppy supply from "puppy mills." They cannot answer all the specific questions you may have since they are also selling other breeds, as well as cats, fish, rabbits, birds, food and supplies, etc., etc. and will not be able to address the health issues common to the breed.

Typically pet shops are unfamiliar with the background of their puppies regarding temperament, genetic soundness, conformation quality of the parents, even whether the sire and dam look like Old English Sheepdogs! ... and whether the parents are free of hip dysplasia and genetic eye disorders. Reputable breeders proudly offer to show their O.F.A. (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) certificates for sound hips and C.E.R.F. (Canine Eye Registration Foundation) certificates for normal eyes. Also, be prepared for pictures of various dog show achievements.

Remember, conscientious breeders subscribe to an established code of ethics for the purpose of protecting the breed, their own breeding program and their puppy buyers as well. They spend an enormous amount of time, energy and money on each litter and carefully place their puppies where they will be properly maintained, loved and enjoyed as a member of the family.

As to the second basic conclusion regarding maintenance, it is simply a firm fact that you will need to learn to groom your OES. Grooming a puppy is easy but that is where your OES learns that it will become a natural part of life. The neglected coat becomes an awful, tangled mess, it will require a full shaving to the skin to “start over” and you just lost the charm of that “shaggy character” that so attracted you in the first place. Without question, grooming is the most common challenge encountered in owning an Old English Sheepdog.

While the Old English Sheepdog is a healthy breed, it is not without health concerns. Preventative health care, such as vaccinations, worming, heartworm prevention, diet, weight control and exercise, helps ensure a healthy OES with an average life span of 10 to 12 years. As is true for all dogs, the most frequent cause of death is cancer. The second most frequent cause of death for an OES is old age.

The Old English Sheepdog Club of America works in partnership with health care professionals, breeders and owners to protect and promote the health of the breed and the quality of life for each OES. To broaden efforts and positively impact the health and care for OES, the Club provides an online health website. A sampling of health content includes, updates on diseases and health problems, surveys profiling the health of the breed, reports of breed sponsored health research, a breed pedigree database, open registries with health data on individual dogs, and a list of contacts for inquiries and questions. To access the OES health website, enter

<http://www.OldEnglishSheepdogClubofAmerica.org/Health/index.php>

In addition to professional health care, as with any breed, routine health care involving ears, eyes, teeth, update shot record and diet control is essential. The OES will also need adequate training and discipline.

The OES doesn't automatically become that docile, delightful "Teddy Bear." Some training and discipline for control purposes must be planned. An obedience training class is recommended.

OES who end up in dog pounds generally do so because of lack of discipline and ultimately an uncontrollable dog or a neglected coat with its resultant "matted to the skin" problem. The overwhelmed owners often give up because they can no longer cope with the demands of OES ownership.

After reviewing the above, along with studying the OES Standard and OESCA Code of Ethics, you should be able to ask any number of questions of a breeder. Some very important, relevant questions should be:

- *Are the puppies AKC (American Kennel Club) registered? Even if they are, AKC is only a registry of parentage and does not guarantee the quality of any breeding nor the health clearances of the parents.*

- Are the sire and dam free from hip dysplasia? Ask for proof of O.F.A. certification and the number of generations O.F.A. clear hips have been known to exist in this particular line. O.F.A. (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) certification of normal hip conformation (ratings of excellent - good - fair) requires the opinion of three Board Certified Veterinary Radiologists. Reputable breeders will obtain O.F.A. clearances on all of their breeding stock.

- Are the eyes of the parents clear of any genetic problems? Ask for proof of C.E.R.F. certification for the parents. C.E.R.F. (Canine Eye Registration Foundation) clearances can only be obtained if the sire and dam's eyes have been examined and found normal by a Board Certified Veterinary Ophthalmologist. Ask the breeder for paperwork confirming the puppies' eyes have been examined and found to be normal.

- What is the temperament of this particular line? Ask to meet the dam (and sire too, if possible). Are they friendly and outgoing? Check the puppies and look for the bright, alert pup. Are the puppies clean and well cared for? Are they being raised in sanitary conditions? Are the breeder's adult dogs clean and properly housed?

■ Has proper veterinary care been maintained. Are the puppy shots current? When does the puppy go for its next round of shots? Have they been wormed? Get shot and worming information (dates and products) in writing. Do you have the opportunity for an independent veterinary examination within few days of ownership before consummation of the sale?

■ What is the breeder's reason for having this litter? To produce quality puppies for future generations or to make a few dollars? Or, to have the children experience the "facts of life"? Go for the breeder that has sound reasons for breeding sound animals.

■ Is there an obedience training class nearby for you and your dog to learn the basic elements of discipline and control? The breeder should be able to assist you in locating an obedience class and other applicable resources in your area.

■ Are there any contractual arrangements? Try to avoid as many "strings attached" to the sale as possible ... but do remember, the better-known the breeder, the greater the possibility for a number of conditions to be involved with the sale. This will most likely apply to dogs being sold as show prospects. What are the feeding directions now and in the future? Does the breeder require you to get the hips and eyes checked at the proper time (two years of age). Get these things in writing.

Remember also, conscientious breeders are interviewing you as well. They are interested in where their puppy is going and in what environment that pup will be living. High pressure salesmanship has no place in a reputable breeder's dealings. You may be expected to give references as well. This is something you should not be offended by, because it reflects the breeders' concern for their puppies! This is a breeder that raises quality dogs - not moneymaker pups.

In making your determination, the more you know up-front, the more selective you can be when the purchase time arrives. This is not an impulse purchase. Carefully select your new family member. Puppies are almost irresistible. Study, observe, ask questions and be satisfied that your selection will be a healthy sound dog, physically and mentally. The first puppies you see may not be the best selection. Walk away if you are not satisfied with the answers to your questions.

Would an adult dog fit your life-style better than a young puppy? You may want to consider adopting a "rescue" dog, thereby giving an older or unwanted OES a good, loving home. A rescue contact is provided on page 11 of this pamphlet.

Do you plan to exhibit your Old English Sheepdog in dog shows? If not, you will definitely want to spay or neuter your pet. Spayed and neutered dogs may compete in obedience trials, agility competition and other types of performance events. (They cannot compete in the conformation ring at dog shows). Most reputable breeders sell non-show puppies on an AKC Limited Registration, (this restricts the dog from being shown in conformation classes at dog shows and offspring cannot be AKC registered) and/or a spayneuter agreement.

Once you purchase your Bobtail ... you will find that the companionship of an Old English Sheepdog is profound. Your life will be enriched.

The Old English Sheepdog Club of America

Founded in 1905, the OESCA is one of the oldest clubs recognized by the American Kennel Club. The objectives of the Club, as related directly to the OES, are as follows:

- (a) To encourage, protect, and promote the breeding of purebred Old English Sheepdogs and to do all possible to bring their natural qualities to perfection;
- (b) To urge members and breeders to accept the standard of the breed as approved by the AKC as the only standard of excellence by which Old English Sheepdogs shall be judged;
- (c) To do all in its power to protect and advance the interests of the breed, to encourage sportsmanlike competition at dog shows and obedience trials.

As you can see from the objectives, the nonprofit OESCA, Inc. is oriented toward the best interests of the Old English Sheepdog. But, you may ask, “What’s in it for me?”

First and foremost, the Club publishes a quarterly magazine of about 48-60 pages entitled the “*OLD ENGLISH TIMES*.” This publication contains articles relating to health, care and welfare, breed historical features, OESCA National Specialty Show results and pictures as well as local Specialty Show results, all-breed show and obedience trial reports and statistics, special features such as Judges and Breeders Forums, photo features, updates on dog legislation, just to mention a few subjects. A representation of member-sponsored Old English Sheepdog display advertising, presenting recent show accomplishments, makes up about 16 pages of the *TIMES*.

The Club maintains a website which contains a wide variety of subject matter and information and can provide resources and contacts in the world of the Old English Sheepdog.

<http://www.oldenglishsheepdogclubofamerica.org/>

The Club has traditionally published an approximately 200 page Yearbook that summarizes the previous two or three years' activities and offers a great deal of study by virtue of the display advertising presented by the members from around the world.

An annual Membership Roster is published and distributed enabling members to be in contact with breeders around the country, Canada and overseas. The aforementioned Breed Handbook is available to all members as well as other educational materials including a library of data related to past OES activities, a wealth of OES books and magazines, as well as video tape/DVD selections. The Club has a Librarian as well as an Information Materials Chairperson - contact information is on the website.

Upon completion of any special project (such as by-laws, changes in breed standard, etc.) a copy will be sent to all members, at no charge. Educational seminars are promoted and local club organization is encouraged.

Club membership also helps when you have a problem and need an answer - most member breeders will respond to the cause and find an answer or solution for you.

You will also find many members plan their vacations around the date of the annual OESCA National Specialty Show where 100-200 OES congregate to compete for various honors and particularly "Best of Breed" at this most prestigious event. The Specialties also offer an opportunity to participate in all the performance events.

The OESCA, in its efforts to protect the breed, requires that its members abide by a "Code of Ethics," further assuring that buying from a member breeder will bring to you a *sound* (both mentally and physically) dog.

For an up-to-date study of the Old English Sheepdog and affiliation with devotees seriously interested in the breed, OESCA membership is invaluable. Join us in our quest to protect and ensure the future of the Old English Sheepdog.

Applications for membership are available on the website.

Suggested Reading

OES Breed Books

Mandeville, John: The Complete Old English Sheepdog, 1976 & 1982

Mayfield, Marilyn: A New Owner's Guide to Old English Sheepdogs (J G Dog), 2000

Walker, Joan Hustace: Old English Sheepdogs (Barron's Complete Pet Owner's Manuals) 1999

Raising and Training Puppies

Lee, Muriel P., The Whelping and Rearing of Puppies: A Complete and Practical Guide, 2000

Hastings, Pat and Rouse, Erin Ann, Editors: Puppy Development: Another Piece of the Puzzle, Dogfolk Enterprises, 2004 and 2008

Monks of New Skete: The Art of Raising a Puppy, Rev. Ed., June 2011

Rutherford, Clarice & Neil, David: How to Raise A Puppy You Can Live With, April 2005

The 2012-2013 Board of Directors of the Old English Sheepdog Club of America has revised and approved this pamphlet as an official publication of the Club and sincerely hopes you find the information useful and instructive.

The Old English Sheepdog Club of America

OESCA Regional Director

Name:
Telephone:
E-Mail:

Local OES Club Contact

Name:
Telephone:
E-Mail:

OESCA Breeder Referral

Name
Telephone:
E-Mail:

We cannot guarantee the honesty and reliability of every OESCA member or the quality of their puppies, but our breeder referral list (available on our website) is a good place to begin.

Rescue Contacts

Name:
Telephone:
E-Mail:

National (OESCA)

Name:
Telephone:
E-Mail:



NOTES: