

## HISTORY OF THE CHODSKY PES

Almost nothing is known for sure about the history of the Bohemian Shepherd because the breed was developed many centuries prior to the keeping of written records of dog breeding and in any case was primarily kept by illiterate farmers. What is known for sure is that the breed developed in the heavily forested southwestern portion of the Kingdom of Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic) and that it appeared no later than the 1300's. Although it is unclear if they developed the breed themselves or acquired it from others, the breed first enters the written record as the companions of the Chodove, a unique subset of the Czech people who have lived in the region since the 14th Century. The Bohemian Shepherd is very similar in appearance to a number of other Continental shepherding breeds, especially the German Shepherd, Belgian Sheepdog, and Dutch Shepherd. Although these breeds are much better known around the world, all are significantly younger than the Bohemian Shepherd and may be descended from it.

The homeland of the Bohemian Shepherd has had one of the most turbulent histories of anywhere in Europe. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, the region known as Bohemia has seen countless battles, invasions, and waves of immigration. Located in almost the dead center of Europe, Bohemia sits right between a number of different cultures, languages, religions, and nations most of which have involved themselves in the region. The region's longest standing and most intense struggles have been between the Germanic and Slavic peoples, both of which have inhabited and attempted to dominate Bohemia since at least the 1st Century A.D. Eventually, most of Bohemia (and the neighboring region of Moravia) came to be inhabited and controlled by Czech speakers, although German-speakers remained dominant in certain areas such as the Sudetenland and all of Bohemia was a member state of the German-dominated Holy Roman Empire.

One of the most wild and disputed parts of Bohemia was the country's southwest. Much of the area is covered by the Bohemian Forest, one of the few remaining major wilderness areas in Europe. Sparsely populated by humans since time immemorial, the Bohemian Forest was home to significant numbers of major predators such as wolves and bears until quite recently. Part of the reason for the region's lack of population is that it has long served as a border between the major regional powers of Bavaria, Austria, and Bohemia, and has been heavily disputed by all three for many centuries.

The result of this great instability and competition was that the Kings of Bohemia constantly needed to protect their lands, especially the border regions. In order to do so, they recruited the Chodove, which translates in English to, "Rangers," "Patrollers," or "Walkers." The exact origin of the Chodove

is disputed, with different experts claiming that they were originally Silesians, Poles, or Czechs and that they were either driven from or voluntarily left their homes in either Silesia or Poland. The Chodove were invited to settle the Bohemian Forest, provided that they swore loyalty to the King of Bohemia and defending the territory from rival Germanic powers. One of the major factors in the success of the Chodove was their dogs, which proved to be of great assistance to them in their national defence efforts. Their dogs became known in Czech as the Chodsky Pes and in German as the Chodenhund, both meaning "Chodove Dog." The relationship between the Chodove and the Bohemian nobility was formally codified in 1325, when the Bohemian King John of Luxembourg granted significant unique rights and freedoms to the Chodove in exchange for their continuing service. Included in these unique rights was special permission to keep large guard dogs, which were otherwise illegal for commoners to own. These special ownership rights were one of the first formal historical mentions of the Bohemian Shepherd.

It is unclear where the Chodove first acquired their dogs. Some have suggested that they brought them with them from Silesia or Poland, others that they were native to the Bohemian Forest, and still others that the Chodove acquired them after they arrived in the area. The relationship of the breed is also unclear. It has been suggested that the Bohemian Shepherd was descended from other herding dogs, Pinscher/[Schnauzer](#)-type farm dogs, Spitzes, some combination of the three, or possibly even a dog/wolf hybrid. Unless more evidence comes to light, the full truth will probably never be known, but since the breed shares many features in common with Spitzes, herding dogs, and Pinscher/Schnauzers, it has very likely been heavily influenced by all three. In the opinion of this author, the breed was probably originally a result of crossing Spitzes and Pinschers, which gave the breed its coat, face, head, ears, coloration, and protective instincts. Once it began to be used for herding as well as guarding, it was probably crossed with herding breeds which introduced herding instincts, the long straight tail, and the long body.

The Chodove served as border guardians for almost 400 years, continuing to serve even after the Bohemia fell under the rule of Germanic Austria. Some evidence suggests that the Bohemian Shepherd was being professionally bred and trained by the Chodove as early as the 1400's. If so, this would be one of the earliest records of such practices and also of a purebred dog in the modern sense. Over the centuries the Chodove began to use the Bohemian Shepherd for other purposes besides border patrol and war. Because the breed proved equally effective in guarding against wolves as it did against people, it began to protect and herd the sheep kept by the Chodove and neighboring peoples, becoming a very highly regarded sheepdog in the process. After a day

working along the border or in the fields, the Bohemian Shepherd guarded its family's home at night. Because the breed was in close contact with its family, only those dogs that were most trustworthy with children were allowed to breed, and the Bohemian Shepherd transformed into a beloved family companion as well as a feared guard dog and respected herdsman.

There is now a growing belief that the Bohemian Shepherd was imported to German-speaking lands during this time. Those who believe this think that the Bohemian Shepherd was so popular that it either became the primary ancestor of, or at least strongly influenced the development of, a number of similar continental sheepdogs among them the Belgian Sheepdog, Dutch Shepherd, and the [Old German Shepherd Dog](#) (the ancestral landrace from which the German Shepherd was developed). There is substantial reason to believe in this theory. Not only does the Bohemian Shepherd bear an extremely close resemblance to both the Old [German Shepherd Dog](#) and its modern German Shepherd descendant, but the primary homeland of both German breeds is Bavaria, which borders the Chodove lands and has a long history of military conflict and economic relationships with them. In fact, it is known that the Bavarian military and traders must have been introduced to the breed since by 1325 at the latest, because the breed has already been employed as a border guard specifically against them at that time. If the border patrolling Bohemian Shepherd was one of the major ancestors of other continental herding breeds, it might explain why so many of them exhibit strong protective instincts and suitability for military and police training, abilities largely absent from other sheepherding dogs such as the [Border Collie](#) and [Australian Shepherd](#).

Because of their long history of border defence and royal service, the Chodove were one of the most nationalist segments of the Czech population and played a significant role in almost every major Czech uprising and revolt until the 20th Century. Partially as a result, the last of their special privileges and rights were stripped away in the late 1600's by the local German aristocracy. Despite the loss of their special status, the Chodove remained in the area and kept their identity as a unique group. They also continued to keep their beloved Bohemian Shepherds, although they were now primarily used as herding dogs and farm guard dogs rather than for military patrol. The Bohemian Shepherd served as the region's primary working dog until the early 20th Century. During the final years of the 19th Century, German breeders developed the standardized German Shepherd from the Old German Shepherd Dog. This breed proved to be immensely successful as a police, military, and farm working dog and quickly spread to the Czech lands, which were at that time a part of the German-controlled Austro-Hungarian Empire. The German Shepherd became the primary working dog across most of Bohemia, but was never able to completely oust the Bohemian Shepherd in its

native land. A significant number of southwestern Bohemians continued to keep their native breed, especially those in the vicinity of the cities of Domazlice, Tachov, and Primda. In the aftermath of World War I, the Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia were granted their independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, forming the new nation of Czechoslovakia in union with the closely related Slovak peoples.

Czechoslovakia briefly prospered but it soon came into direct conflict with Germany. The territory granted to the new nation contained a very sizable German-speaking minority, a minority that wanted to be a part of either Germany or Austria, not Czechoslovakia. Germany's (in particular Adolf Hitler's) desire to reclaim what they considered to be German lands in Czechoslovakia and Poland became one of the major causes of World War II. First the Sudetenland, then all of Czechoslovakia was occupied by Germany and the Czech population suffered immeasurably as a result. Millions of Bohemians of all ethnicities perished in World War II, as did untold numbers of their dogs. Luckily for the Bohemian Shepherd, a relatively significant number of breed members managed to survive the war and they continued to be bred in their homeland in its aftermath. The Bohemian Shepherd was one of the only native Czech breeds to survive the war, along with the diminutive Pražský Krysařík or Prague Rat-Hunter. Despite pleas to the Allies, Czechoslovakia, which had been "liberated" by the Soviet Army, fell under communist domination. Communist thought at the time was generally against deliberate dog breeding for anything other than working ability, and any potentially nationalist symbols such as the Bohemian Shepherd were strongly discouraged. This made the breed's initial recovery very challenging.

By the 1980's the harshness of Communist rule had significantly lessened, especially in Czechoslovakia. There was a greatly renewed interest in dog breeding, especially of native Czech breeds. In 1982, Mr. Vilem Kurz sent several photographs of rare dog breeds that he thought were capable of being revived to Mr. Jan Findejs. Mr. Findejs was especially interested in those which depicted the Bohemian Shepherd. In 1982, he wrote an article in a major canine journal about the breed, and what he thought its ideal standard should be. Mr. Findejs quickly found Bohemian Shepherd owners very interested in reviving the breed which their ancestors had cherished for at least six and a half centuries. These original owners were all very insistent and aware that they possessed Bohemian Shepherds and not German Shepherd mixes. 3 individual dogs of unknown parentage that Findejs considered to be the best examples were initially chosen to revive the breed, and the first Bohemian Shepherd registry was founded. In 1985, the first every registered litter of Bohemian Shepherd puppies was whelped, followed by a second the following year. The goals of

Mr. Findejs and the other early breeders was always the same, to maintain the health, working ability, excellent appearance conformation, and family companion nature of the Bohemian Shepherd. Realizing that three individual dogs was not nearly enough to revive a healthy breed, other surviving examples of Bohemian Shepherds were sought out and added to the gene pool, although each new dog was carefully examined to ensure that it was an ideal and pure specimen. Throughout the revival of the Bohemian Shepherd, the litters produced even by dogs of unknown ancestry have bred true to standards without exhibiting characteristics of other breeds such as the German Shepherd. This has seemingly confirmed the belief that the pure Bohemian Shepherd had survived, and that it is not actually a recreation of an older type by use of mixes.

In November 1991, the "Klub Pratel Chodkeho Psa" (Friends of Bohemian Shepherd Club) was founded to promote and protect the breed. Five years later, the last Bohemian Shepherd of unknown parentage was entered into the breed's studbook. As time passed, more and more Czech citizens became interested in owning and reviving one of the country's oldest dogs. Although initially slow, recovery efforts have significantly picked up. From 1982 to 2005, more than 2100 breed members were registered by more than 100 individual breeders. An additional 1400 were registered between 2005 and 2009. The breed has quickly earned a reputation across the Czech Republic for being both an excellent family dog and a highly driven and capable worker. The Bohemian Shepherd has especially made an impression in the Schutzhund and general protection dog community. The breed's medium size and attractive appearance are greatly increasing its popularity as well. Although the breed still has a relatively small population, it is now well-established in its native country and it is generally agreed that it will continue to substantially increase in popularity there. The health of the breed has continued to remain a very important consideration among breeders and mandatory screenings of parents (and acceptable scores on these tests) for several health conditions have been a condition of registration for almost 15 years.

Throughout its long history, the Bohemian Shepherd has figured prominently in the culture and art of its homeland. The breed has made repeated appearances in Czech works since the 14th Century, the most prominent of which is the novel "Psohlavci" (Dogheads) by Alois Jirasek and the Mikolas Ales paintings that accompany it. The novel describes one of the many Czech uprisings against German rule in which the Chodove played a major part. Jirasek claimed that the breed was so popular a symbol among the Chodove that they included it on their revolutionary flag. Although that is not technically true, Ales included the Bohemian Shepherd flag in his paintings. Psohlavci and Ales's paintings have gone on to have a major impact on Czech nationalism and iconography in

much the same way that Emmanuel Leutze's Washington Crossing Delaware has had in America. This iconography is best known to Czech youth because it has been extensively used by Czech scouting groups (much like the American Boy and Girl Scouts), and one of their badges still shows a version of Ales's Bohemian Shepherd. Jindrich Simon Baar, perhaps the most prominent Chodove author, also extensively described many aspects of the breed in his works.

In recent years, a growing number of Bohemian Shepherds have been exported to other countries and the breed is now known outside of its homeland for the first time in centuries. Most breed members outside of the Czech Republic live in continental European countries, but a few individuals have made their way to the United States and Canada. Despite these more recent introductions, the breed has not yet become well-established outside of its native country, where it remains very rare. It is generally believed that the breed will slowly increase in popularity in the world at large as it has in the Czech Republic, although this is no guarantee. The Bohemian Shepherd is not currently recognized by the Federation Cynologique Internationale (FCI), but such recognition is the eventual goal of most fanciers and may occur sometime in the not-too-distant future. The Bohemian Shepherd is granted full recognition with the Czech National Kennel Club, also known as the Cesko-Moravska Kynologica Unie (CMKU), the Swiss Kennel Club (SCS) and the kennel clubs in Scandinavian countries. The breed remains essentially unknown in the United States, where it not registered with either the American Kennel Club (AKC) United Kennel Club (UKC) or any of the larger rare breed registries. Unlike most modern breeds, the Bohemian Shepherd remains just as much a working dog as it is a companion animal. Roughly equal numbers of breed members are working dogs (mainly in the herding and personal protection fields) and companion animals. The high intelligence, immense trainability, and gentle family-friendly temperament of the Bohemian Shepherd have inspired many fanciers to train the dog for new tasks, most of which it has excelled at. Breed members have been successfully trained as seeing-eye dogs, service dogs for the handicapped, therapy dogs, police dogs, search and rescue dogs, and military dogs. This breed is also quickly gaining a major reputation as a successful competitor in canine sports such as schutzhund and agility. The Bohemian Shepherd is one of the few breeds that is seeing its working role actively expand. While the breed will probably be more commonly seen as a companion dog and competition dog as time goes on, it will likely continue to serve as a working dog for the foreseeable future.

The Bohemian Shepherd looks very similar to a small, long-coated German Shepherd, and many confuse it for a German Shepherd/[Chow Chow](#) cross. This breed is one of the only truly medium-sized working dogs. Males generally stand between 19½ and 23 inches tall at the shoulder, and females typically stand between 18½ and 21¼ inches. Although breed weight is determined by height and gender, the average Bohemian Shepherd in good condition weighs between 39 and 55 pounds. This breed tends to be noticeably longer from chest to rump than it is from floor to shoulder although not excessively so. The back of this breed is slightly raised at the shoulders but generally straight. Overall, the Bohemian Shepherd is a very natural looking breed and is devoid of any features that might impair its working ability. Although most of its body is obscured by hair (which makes the breed look much more thickly constructed than it actually is), underneath is a very well muscled dog that is sturdily yet lithely built. The tail of the Bohemian Shepherd is relatively long and is either held straight out from the body or down with a very slight curve.

The head and face of the Bohemian Shepherd look like a cross between those of a herding breed such as a German Shepherd and a Spitz-breed such as a [Keeshond](#). The head itself is proportional to the size of the dog and tapers somewhat to form a slight wedge. The skull should be flat. The head and muzzle generally blend in smoothly with each other but usually remains very distinct. The ideal muzzle is roughly 85% as long as the skull, but only moderate in width. The muzzle tapers noticeably but not significantly towards the nose, which should always be solid black. This breed should have tight-fitting lips which conceal powerful jaws and significant teeth, which should meet in a scissors bite. The eyes of the Bohemian Shepherd are medium in size, [almond](#) shaped, slightly slanting, and brown in color. The ears of the Bohemian Shepherd are naturally erect, forward-facing, and medium in length.

The Bohemian Shepherd is a double-coated breed. The undercoat is short and soft. The outer coat is glossy, long, thick, and coarse over most of the body, but short and smooth on the face, top of the head, and fronts of both sets of limbs. The hair is longest on the neck, back, tail, thighs, and insteps. Ideally, the coat should be between 2 and 5 inches in length. The hair on the neck sometimes forms a pronounced rough or frill around the face. Most breed members have a substantial amount of hair in the earlobes. The coat may either be straight, slightly wavy, or some combination of the two. The Bohemian Shepherd comes in one color combination, black and tan. Black should be the base coat which covers most of the dog's body and should range in shade from a deep black to gunmetal. Tan markings should always be found on the edge of and inside the ear, above the eyes, on the cheeks and throat to form a characteristic crescent shape, on the chest, on the legs and feet, around the



vent. Tan markings are also acceptable on the abdomen and tail. Breed members may be born with alternate markings. Such animals are penalized in the show ring and probably should not be bred but are just as suitable companion and working dogs as any other Bohemian Shepherd.

The Bohemian Shepherd has been bred as both a working dog and a family companion and possesses a temperament suited to both roles. In the Czech Republic, the breed has an excellent reputation for temperament. The Bohemian Shepherd is incredibly devoted to its family, with whom it forms intense bonds. This breed can be very affectionate with those it knows well, although some are slightly more reserved. This is a breed that wants to be in the constant company of its family, which can lead to separation anxiety in some cases. This breed has a very good reputation with children in its homeland. With proper socialization, most breed members are gentle and tolerant of children. However, as a herding breed, this dog may occasionally attempt to round up children which must be carefully and deliberately trained out. The Bohemian Shepherd is known to have a substantially less harsh and dominant temperament than most working breeds and is regarded as an excellent choice for both novice and experienced dog owners.

Different individual Bohemian Shepherds react differently to strangers. Bred as a guard dog for almost 700 years, this breed tends to have a strong protective instinct. As a result, breed members that have not been properly socialized often regard strangers with suspicion. However, this breed is considerably less wary than most closely related breeds such as the German Shepherd and those individuals which have been provided socialization and training are usually very polite with strangers. Many individuals are actually very friendly and engaging. This breed is not only inherently protective but extremely alert, making it an excellent guard dog whose mere appearance will likely deter most potential intruders. There is much more to this dog than bark alone, and Bohemian Shepherds makes excellent and incredibly determined guard dogs. This breed is actually better suited to personal protection than property guarding and is rapidly earning a reputation in the protection dog community. This breed is considered an ideal choice for those who want a dog to serve as both a trustworthy family companion and a courageous protection animal.

Unlike most similar breeds, the Bohemian Shepherd was bred to work in concert with other dogs, both as a border guard and as a shepherd. As a result, this breed tends to exhibit low levels of dog aggression. When properly socialized, most breed members will be very accepting of other



dogs, and many are friendly. While this breed can be happy as an only dog, the vast majority of breed members would greatly prefer to share their lives with at least one other dog. The utmost caution is always advised when introducing strange dogs to each other.

Bohemian Shepherds have a somewhat mixed reputation with non-canine animals. As a herding dog, they tend to have very high prey drives, which if not properly trained can turn into animal aggression. However, breed members that have been socialized with cats and other creatures usually are generally quite trustworthy around them. Even the least animal aggressive Bohemian Shepherds will attempt to round up and herd other creatures, which can cause some issues.

Bohemian Shepherds are regarded as extremely intelligent and trainable dogs, and if compared to other breeds would probably rank in the top ten overall in both categories. There is probably no task that any breed is capable of learning that a Bohemian Shepherd is not, and these dogs have proven themselves very capable of seeing-eye work, serving in law enforcement and the military, search-and-rescue, sled-pulling, and essentially every canine sport. This breed is highly motivated to please and generally trains quite quickly and readily. While all dogs respond better to experienced handlers, the Bohemian Shepherd is known to work very well with novice handlers as well. There is probably no excuse for having a poorly trained Bohemian Shepherd, and those willing to take the time and effort can end up with a fabulously trained animal that can perform at the highest levels of work and sport. Because this breed is very prey driven, experienced trainers have found that training methods that use toys and play as rewards actually are more successful than those that use treats.

Bohemian Shepherds were bred to work for long hours. This breed is incredibly physically gifted and is one of the canine world's greatest athletes. As one would expect, this breed has very high exercise requirements. A Bohemian Shepherd should get at least 45 minutes to an hour of vigorous physical activity on a daily basis, and would ideally receive more. Breed members who are not provided with a proper outlet for their energy will almost certainly develop behavioral problems such as destructiveness, excessive barking, hyperactivity, and over-excitability. That being said, this breed does not have the extreme and constant drive of a breed such as Border Collie or [Jack Russell Terrier](#), and active families who are willing to commit the time and effort necessary will certainly be able to meet a Bohemian Shepherds needs. This breed is very adaptable and will adjust its level of activity to its owners. This breed greatly prefers a home with a yard but can adapt to apartment life with the proper exercise. This breed makes an excellent jogging or bicycling

companion and also greatly enjoys the opportunity to run around in a safely enclosed area. The Bohemian Shepherd is capable of performing any canine activity no matter how extreme, and would be an excellent choice for families that enjoy going on strenuous adventures on the weekends but only have time for a daily jog the rest of the week.