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Three new dog breeds recognized by AKC

Meet the Icelandic sheepdog, Cane Corso and Leonberger



Bruce Harkins for AKC
Muscular and intelligent, the Cane Corso is native to Italy. The breed is one of three being newly recognized by the American Kennel Club.

TODAYshow.com

updated 6/29/2010 10:49:31 AM ET

Three exotic strains of pooches that put the “wow” into bow-wow are being recognized by the American Kennel Club — allowing them to strut their stuff at AKC-sanctioned breed competitions in the U.S., including next February’s Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in New York’s Madison Square Garden.

The AKC announced exclusively to TODAYshow.com that the Icelandic sheepdog, the Cane Corso and the Leonberger will be added Wednesday to the list of 164 breeds already registered with the organization.

“It’s great: We’re adding three new dogs to our registry,” AKC spokeswoman Christina Duffney told TODAYshow.com. “As of Wednesday, they’re able to compete in shows and take part in any AKC activity.”

Old dogs, new recognition

Though new to the AKC, the three breeds have been around for centuries.

The Icelandic sheepdog, for example, arrived on that island nation with the Vikings, who settled there more than 1,000 years ago. The breed — part of the spitz family, which includes chow chows and the American Eskimo — was used to herd sheep, cattle and horses. Revered in their homeland, Icelandic sheepdogs are regarded as one of the oldest dog breeds in the world, but are only now

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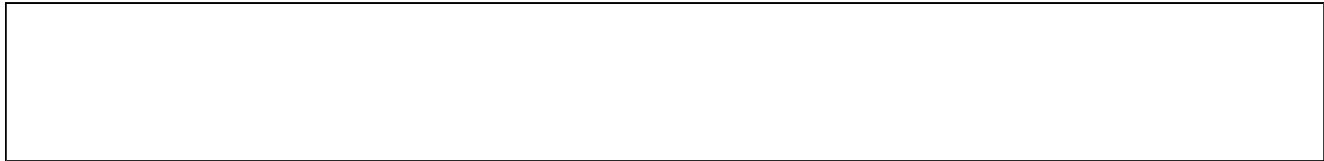
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getting formal AKC recognition.

The lion-maned Leonberger, named after the town of Leonberg, Germany, from which it hails, has been part of that country’s culture since the 1800s. Its exquisite long fur made it popular with German artists, who often used Leonbergers as models. Despite their large size, they’re considered cuddly and get along well with children and other family members.

But the Leonberger is more than just a pretty, friendly face — they’re athletic and have been used as water rescue dogs and been trained to jump out of helicopters.

The third newly recognized breed is also the rarest. In fact, the Cane Corso was nearly extinct until a small group of breeders brought it back in the 1980s. It’s a member of the mastiff family, and as such, it’s a muscle-bound dog that was highly prized in its native Italy for hunting difficult prey such as boar and fighting alongside soldiers in ancient battles.

But these days, the Cane Corso isn’t overly fierce. They’re known to be very attached to their owners and families, and they’re intelligent and easily trained.

Just being a distinct type of dog is not enough to be called an official AKC breed, Duffney said.

Breed all about it

How long it takes for a breed to obtain AKC certification depends on a number of factors.

“There’s not a set number of years. You never really know how long it’s going to take,” Duffney said.

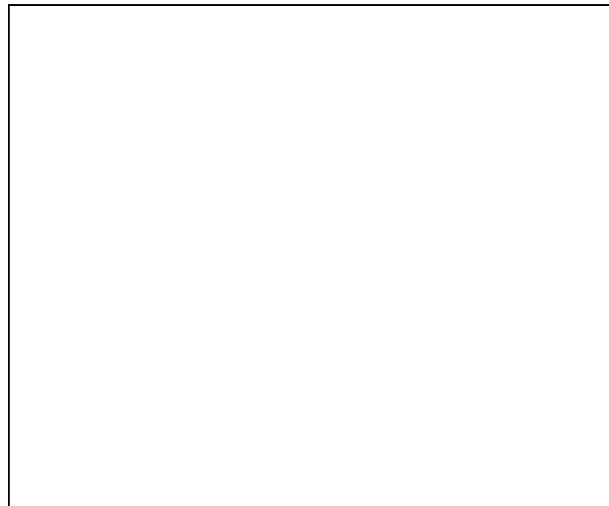
It’s required that there be an official organization for the breed, and recognized standards such as size, coat and temperament.

AKC recognition benefits families who are choosing a pet, Duffney said. “You can get a dog that has specific qualities that are going to work with your family.”

For example, as a new mom with a 4-month-old son, Duffney said that if she were to get one of new breeds, it would probably be the Leonberger, which gets along with small children so well that its nickname is the “nanny dog.”

“That’s the great thing about a purebred dog,” Duffney said. “There’s one for

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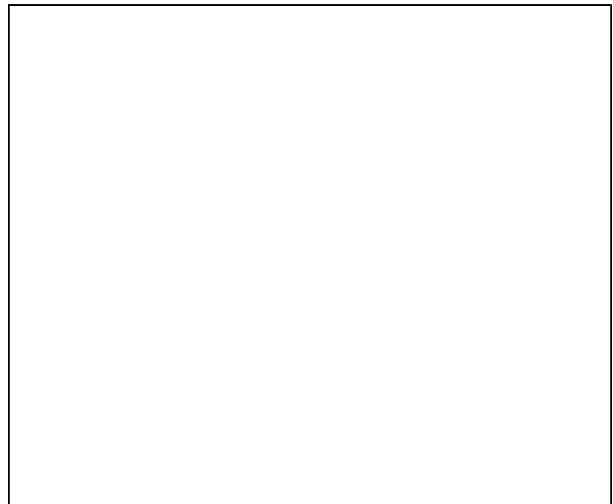
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