



## “Furry Navidad”...The Happy Havanese

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Possessing a personality as sunny as the breed’s native island of Cuba, the Havanese is a fun and devoted fur friend. A Havanese is an ideal canine companion for individuals who seek a small, sturdy dog with a playful, entertaining personality that is good with other pets. Adding to its appeal, this breed tends to be a very people-oriented pooch, one that loves snuggling in laps. Because of their reputation for this type of doggie devotion, these petite pups have sometimes been referred to as “Velcro dogs,” since they prefer to remain close to their owners.

Officially recognized by the American Kennel Club as a member of the toy group in 1995, Havanese dogs are small in stature, but well-built, with a height of 8.5 to 11.5 inches and weight between 10 and 16 lbs. Their eyes are dark brown featuring almond-shaped lids that are surrounded by black pigment. Since their coats are thick, soft, light, and do not shed easily, these petite pups are an excellent fit for pet lovers who have allergies. Coloration for the breed ranges from white, black, black and tan, sable, and gray, to myriad other colors and markings. These diminutive doggies have long-haired coats in straight, curly, and even wavy textures, which is considered the standard for Havanese show dogs. Its silky, beautiful coat requires regular brushing and grooming care, so many owners opt to keep it cut short; however, for those living in Florida and other warmer climate areas, it is recommended to keep

it long, as this helps the dog stay as cool and comfortable as possible.

While Havanese dogs may have an independent streak, since they are not a more dominant breed, they respond well to training, particularly when it includes food rewards. This can help them with practical skills such as housebreaking and behavioral issues like barking, plus present them the opportunity to learn tricks, an activity these tiny toys especially love. Given its inquisitively bright, happy temperament, these petite pups enjoy games and dexterity challenges, such as being asked to pull a hidden object from beneath a cabinet using its paw. A surprisingly energetic breed, this type of dog excels in canine sports, such as competitive obedience and agility events, and is a natural for careers ranging from performing in a circus to assisting individuals with physical disabilities.

Although not typically a guard dog breed, these fur friends make good watchdogs: one of their favorite pastimes is to take a perch on a couch or other area with clear visibility and to keep a lookout for any visitors to the home. When company comes over, they will bark to signal that guests have arrived. Though these dogs are peaceful pups that have a gentle approach toward other people and pets, they can be more conservative with strangers; however, by making sure that their canine companions have plenty of opportunities for socialization, their pet parents can help them develop a more confident, outgoing personality.

The breed, as its name reveals, developed in Cuba. After Christopher Columbus claimed that country for Spain in 1492, the settlers that later arrived on the island brought their small companion canines with them, pups that were the ancestors of today’s Bichon family of dogs. Owing to their isolation on that island, trade restrictions at the time, and through interbreeding, the Havanese emerged, with their silky, thick coat that helped to insulate them from the tropical sun of that climate. At the start of the 1800s, these distinctive doggies became a favorite among the country’s aristocratic families. When European visitors encountered them on their visits, they were so taken with the petite pups that they transported dogs back to Europe, where they became the trend of the day. Upon their introduction into England, France, and Spain during the mid-1800s, they found devoted fans in notable figures such as Charles Dickens and Queen Victoria.

After the trend ran its course, the Havanese almost became extinct, even in its homeland of Cuba; however, some families there kept and continued to breed them in small numbers. After the Cuban Revolution, 11 of these petite pups were brought to the U.S. in the arms of their owners, and most of these dogs found outside of Cuba today are related to those original canines. The Havanese resurgence began in the 1970s when a few descendants of those refugee doggies were discovered by an American couple. The pair was so charmed by the warm, loving personality and intelligence of the Havanese, that the duo began working to reestablish the breed. Since most of the dogs found outside of their native country can trace their ancestry to those 11 dogs, breeders are actively working to increase the gene pools of the American-bred Havanese.

Best wishes for a “howl-y,” jolly holiday!

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