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## WHY CHOOSE A KOOIKER?

### Character and breed temperament

Courtesy from Monika Dassinger's English edition of "The Big Kooikerhondje Book"

The Kooikerhondje is – to bring it to the point – always happy and cheerful, and an attentive, highly intelligent companion. He is usually resistant to the cold and rain, sturdy, full of endless energy, calm, reliable, and most of all – willing to work. It is a joy to watch the vivacious and well-trained Hondje bouncing through the outdoors.

Let us go back to the origin, the duck kooi: a quiet and natural area in which the dog is working together with his handler. It does not make sense to use a loud and restless dog that barks and is not able to get through the brush because of its coat texture, or that does not have enough endurance or self-confidence and gives up easily. A Kooikerhondje comes with all the traits, beginning with the body structure and character, which are important for the work in the kooi. It is a careful, attentive dog, in tune with his surroundings, adaptable, and inexhaustible. Once a Kooiker's mind is set, it is difficult to change since a Kooiker has a strong will.

It is crucial that the breeder expose and socialize the puppies from the beginning since it is naturally reserved towards strangers and new situations, – and that the future owner continues to do so. A Kooiker who lives the first few months of his life isolated from human and animal contact and was not exposed to new situations will approach everything new with mistrust later in life.

The breed is often described as sensitive, which can be observed as a cautious behavior in new situations, and around sudden loud noises like shrieking children or dropped items. This is independent of the gender! A properly socialized Kooiker can deal with the sound of road construction, such as pneumatic hammers. In today's hectic and noisy world, a young dog needs to be able to cope with his environment, which you can influence positively from the beginning. That is why you cannot isolate him and keep him in a bubble. He can only become less sensitive to noise if he gets exposed to similar noises over and over again. Try to integrate your Kooiker into your life as a family member and do not react when he gets spooked. It is normal for a dog to get spooked but he should not get out of control or hysterical. The sensitivity of the Kooiker is often misinterpreted. It is very important to react appropriately during training.

The Kooiker can be a dog with two personalities, with his sensitivity and his dominance during youth, in addition to a high level of intelligence. This goes back to the breed's origin. On one hand, a Kooiker is supposed to keep the duck kooi free of rats, mice, and other vermin, which includes hunting and destroying them. At the same time, a Kooiker is not supposed to scare the ducks, but should behave quietly in the kooi and should not hunt them. The ducks would fly off once the dog goes after them, and the kooi baas would

be left without any ducks. The two-sided temperament of the Kooiker makes him highly fascinating, but the training can be a small challenge. The owner needs to have lots of love, understanding, sensitivity, and a good portion of willpower and consistency to get to know the individual personality of the puppy and young dog....

The Kooiker is a very versatile dog. He is a working dog, a watch dog, a companion dog, but also a hunting dog. As described earlier, it is his job to keep the duck kooi clean from rats, mice, and vermin, which means he has to hunt and catch them. He even kills mice and groundhogs.... Like most other dogs, he will go into prey drive when he sees a possible prey. A similar behavior can be observed in a poorly trained dog when a biker, runner, or something similar crosses their path. But, even in those situations, a Kooiker should be re-directable with training, patience, and consistency. But, all this takes is time of course!...

The trait to be very close and clingy around his family, and the willingness to work with his handler are inherited in a Kooiker. He does not just listen out of obedience, but due to his strong connection with his handler. Your dog may take over the dominant role and be in charge if you spoil your dog, or are inconsistent during training, or if you do not appear confident. That can cause problems within the family. And this leads us to another contradictory fact in this breed: dominance. It is strengthened once a young Kooiker is trained inconsistently and gets the wrong impression of being in control. Consistency simply means to deliver your “yes” and “no” clearly. This means you need to put your foot down without being harsh or applying pressure, which could lead to unfixable issues. Every puppy will try to manipulate you at some point. But, the “Oh, he is so cute and still so little,” approach is not appropriate from an educational standpoint! If the young puppy is allowed to play with the guinea pigs, rabbits, and chickens for half a year and starts to “hunt” once he enters puberty, he will not understand your disapproval at first. Once on the couch – always on the couch...If he growls when you try to take his food bowl away, and you accept it, he will continue to do so. At the beginning it might be cute and funny to see a puppy growling, but he will continue with the same behavior as an adult dog. Please consider that! Be consistent in interacting with your puppy.....

If you do not have confidence in training your dog without help, ask your breeder for advice, or people in your breed club, and go to local dog training groups. But be aware, please do not confuse training with a circus atmosphere. Every dog training club is different, and there are definitive quality differences! Please inform yourself before you get your puppy.

A Kooiker is an active animal, and since he does not like to be bored, he prefers to be around his pack. If it is not possible to take him with you, he will go to sleep in a corner and patiently await your return when he can greet you full of energy and enthusiasm. He is alert and follows every sound and every situation without being a barker.

In summary: The Kooiker is a lively, happy, spirited, attentive, diligent, and sometimes sensitive dog. He is reserved towards unknown experiences and strangers. He is a dog with high intelligence and the ability to adjust.

The lively and joyful Kooiker will be the right breed for a person who can teach him according to the dog's individual personality in a sensitive and loving, but firm way!