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What Is A Wolfdog?

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What is a Wolfdog? A simple question like this should have an equally simple answer. Unfortunately the answer to this question isn't really as easy as one would think.

Wolfdogs have gone by many names in the past. A short reflection upon days gone by will reveal names such as Wolf Dog Hybrid, Wolf Hybrid, Wolf Hybred, and many more that the Wolfdog has been referred to over the years. In 1993 the name Wolfdog unofficially replaced the then most popular name Wolf Hybrid. The reasoning behind this was due to a biological species reclassification deeming Wolves and Dogs as the same species. This made the term "Hybrid" less applicable when referring to them. Like many new breeds and types of dogs, names can change several times until an official name is decided upon by owners seeking to register their special canine. One would think then that the Wolfdog is a newer type of canine.

In reality, the Wolfdog is one of the oldest canines to share its life with man. That is a really long time to have such an identity crisis.

Biology has taught us that all dogs have descended from wolves in some form or another. Wolves were undoubtedly the first canine for man to domesticate. Most breeds and types of dogs were created by man. Nearly all of these breeds and types were created with a specific purpose in mind. Not just a companion, but a working one too. In many of these creations the Wolf was used. Wolves possessed many traits that man wanted in a working and companion animal. Traits such as strong family bonds, high prey drives, superior hunting abilities, high intelligence, and physical strength were selected and used in the creations of the first Wolfdog. The exact date of creation is unknown. However, Wolfdogs can be documented as far back as when man first crossed the Bearing Straight and Settled into North America. The Canadian Museum of History contains this information as well as fossilized Wolfdog remains dating back 11,000 to 14,000 years.

The initial creation of the Wolfdog was accomplished using a pure wolf (*Canis Lupus*) and a dog that had evolved slightly from the wolf (*Canis Lupus Familiaris*). Undoubtedly these Wolfdogs were called something. However, since they predated effective documentation, we may never know what their original name truly was. Thankfully this practice of creating crosses between wolf and dog continued on. During this time, many Wolfdogs were created and tailored into large numbers of working and companion animals. Most of these have gone on to become registered breeds of dogs that can be found in many average homes. The Husky, Malamute, German Shepherd Dog, and many more, can trace their roots right back to the Wolfdog.

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Current breedings of Wolfdogs are not as simple as they use to be. There are more and more Wolfdogs now that do not have a pure wolf parent or even a grandparent. The majority of current Wolfdogs are crosses between Wolfdog and dog. With this complexity, arise questions of how much wolf still resides in a given Wolfdog? Unfortunately these answers are even more complex. Many people will disagree, but most Veterinarians, Biologists, and Kennel Club officials will classify and recognize a new type of canine as a dog after it has successfully been bred 4 generations away from its wild or pure roots. This would mean that a Wolfdog's offspring would no longer be a Wolfdog after 4 generations of crosses with traceable domestic dogs. This is commonly referred to diluting or breeding the wolf out of the dog.

Looking back we have seen some of the extensive history of the Wolfdog. It has showed us that they are not just dogs with recent wolf heritage. They were the foundation to many of our beloved companions. They were the guides, companions and protectors when man was still very young. They have shared our homes and our love longer than any other. So, what is a Wolfdog? Despite the individual answer, history has showed us that the Wolfdog is quite possibly the most important dog of all.

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