



Quirks of the Breed

Every breed has certain habits, traits, and quirks that when owners start to compare notes, eyes start to roll and laughter erupts as they instantly relate. Tibetan Mastiffs (TMs) are no different. As we start a new year, I thought it would be fun to look back and reminisce about the things we have all experienced that define the breed to a seasoned owner.

I'll take the high ground

Tibetan Mastiffs have a natural guardian nature, and will find the highest point from which to survey their kingdom and gain an advantage. Outside, that might be the highest hill, the top deck of the house, or maybe even the roof of the house. Inside, that might be the kitchen counter or the dining room table.

Cold is cool

TMs love the cold. The colder it gets, the harder it gets to convince them to come inside. So it's -30°F? They are in their element. If you insist they come inside because your eyebrows have turned to icebrows, they will bypass the \$200 custom-made dog bed you just bought off Etsy and find the coldest tile or cement floor in the house to lie on. In the summer, your a/c vent will have a heavy fur coated cover until the snows come again.

The other half

When a double coated breed loses its winter undercoat, we say it "blows coat". A deceptive term, conjuring up gentle summer breezes with wisps of hair floating on the breeze. When a TM blows coat, a more accurate image would be a hurricane tearing through your world, leaving piles of destruction in its wake. When it's over, half your dog is missing. Miraculously, it all reappears in the fall, to begin the yearly ritual all over again.

Watch your step

I won't say that Tibetan Mastiffs are lazy, but a Jack Russell they are not. I tell people they make great throw rugs. Nice room accessories during the day, but a definite indoor trip hazard at night.

Let sleeping dogs lie

We all like to think they sleep with one eye open, but truthfully, Tibetan Mastiffs can sleep sounder than any breed I have ever known. Maybe because they know they can handle whatever comes while they are sleeping. If startled, they awake ready to roll. Best to avoid any surprises awakenings.

Neighborhood watch

Speaking of nighttime, when the sun goes down, TMs wake up. They are famous for their nighttime barking. Maybe infamous would be a better choice of words. They are such great neighbors, too; They take great pride in watching not only your home and yard, but your neighbors; and their neighbors; and all who are lucky enough to live within eyesight or earshot of your TM. Rest easy. The Tibetan Mastiff has the night patrol.

Maintaining order. Maxwell Smart was right

As every TM knows, Chaos is the enemy. Tibetan Mastiffs want their environment to be calm and orderly. This is not the breed for someone whose home is a revolving door of residents or visitors. If you don't establish order, they will. Routine rules in the TM world.

Homeward bound

Any dog may dig, but a Tibetan Mastiff can DIG. My kids had a book called "The Diggingest Dog": That dog had nothing on TMs. They deserve not only a book, but a whole encyclopedia on how to do it right. We have always joked that they are digging home to Tibet.

Houdini was an amateur

If there is a way, *any* way, to escape from a space they want to get out of, a TM will find it. In record time. “Securely fenced yard” is a must, but almost an oxymoron for a TM.

Counter surfers

First rule of owning a Tibetan Mastiff is to never leave any food you ever want to see again out on your table or counters. A sandwich, a steak, or a cake will disappear in the blink of an eye, without even a tale-tale crumb of evidence to pin the crime on the canine perpetrator. Your TM will be sitting there, all angelic-like, looking at you with those big brown eyes like, “What?” And of course, you can’t resist, so they get another sandwich, steak, or cake, so just buy two to begin with.

Food is optional

While counter surfing for *your* food is a favorite pastime, your Tibetan Mastiff may pass on eating his own food, sometimes for several days at a time. Most TMs are not food driven and are notorious for being picky eaters. They only eat when they are hungry, get bored with seeing the same thing in their food bowls day after day, and cannot be bribed with food, no matter how enticing. If you want your TM to eat, you have to make it new, interesting, and appealing. We have considered offering Gordon Ramsey a retainer.

Window on the world

Tibetan Mastiffs love to watch the world around them and an owner who provides them with a window seat is much appreciated. By their TM. Sometimes, though, your mailman, or neighbor, or package delivery service is not so thrilled to see a huge dog barking at them up close and personal with only a pane of glass standing between them and the beast. Be aware that if there is a perceived threat, a window will not stop a Tibetan Mastiff. I hear frosted window coverings or decorative scroll work has come in handy for many TM owners.

Women and children first

In Tibet, it is the women and children who are tasked with caring for the dogs, and in the nomad camps, the TMs are left behind to guard the women, children, and camps when the men are gone. We have often seen photos of TMs being led by a rope by a very small Tibetan child. So, it always surprises me when someone says TMs are not suitable as family dogs. They are absolutely suitable as family dogs, and are strong protectors of women and children. Most TM owners will tell you that their dogs will accept people in this order: Children first, women second, and men third.

“Baby come to me”

Keep on singing it. It will help to keep you occupied while your TM wanders around the yard ignoring your pleas to come. I have known TM owners who actually took their dog to the vet to check if he was deaf! Most all references on Tibetan Mastiffs will say they are stubborn and independent, but you won’t know the meaning of those words until you actually have a TM. Then it’s all over but the crying. Or the singing. “Baby, come to me. Let me put my arms around you” becomes your theme song. Learn it well.

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Noble Legacy Tibetan Mastiffs