

# Is the Mini Schnauzer Right for Me



## **Canadian/Australian Champion “MINUTEMAN TO THE BATMOBILE imp Can” “Robin”**

The Miniature Schnauzer or Mini is one of the most popular canines and certainly the best known among the three Schnauzer breeds.

Its small stature, generally between 12 and 14 inches makes the breed a good size for many households.

But don't let size mislead, the Mini packs a lively punch in any environment and you will never miss the terrier bark and loving personality.

First bred as early as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Mini evolved down from the original Standard Schnauzer, with the purpose of creating a small companion dog and working farm ratter. Through years of breeding, several consistent characteristics came to distinguish the breed. After size, which is the notable feature, Minis typically have dark brown eyes, elongated eyebrows, a hard dense or wiry coat along the back and thighs, soft leg hair or furnishings, and of course, a beard or whiskers that extends from under the eyes past the nose. Most Minis will have docked tails, typically removed shortly after birth, and either cropped or natural ears. Ear cropping is not allowed by law in some countries. Natural ears have a soft fold that frames the head creating a gentle appearance. The greatest variety in the breed is colour. The most common and popular colour is pepper and salt, a grey and white mixture, but solid black and black and silver also. In other cases there may be light grey or white but the latter is not recognized as a true color in some countries.

But is a Mini right for YOU? There are several breed characteristics that should be considered if looking at one of these as a companion. First, as a blessing in many

households, the Mini is largely a non shedding breed. That means that there is no natural seasonal removal of hair.

Non shedding, however, means other things, you have to groom the Mini on a regular basis. For pet owners, you should plan on having the dog clipped about every 8-10 weeks. Most commercial groomers are very familiar with the Mini and can keep it in good condition and appearance if regularly visited. Prices vary between groomers but average \$40-\$70. Let me warn you, however, every owner of a Miniature should own some grooming supplies because you will quickly become unloved by groomers if you neglect the soft leg, beard and under belly hairs. Why!! Because these areas of the coat are light and fluffy with an easy tendency toward matting. The hair along the back of the Mini is quite different and naturally dense and wiry. However, unless the dog is heading for the show ring, this is best clipped leading eventually to a soft permanently exposed undercoat.

Besides grooming considerations, the Mini is an active, robust dog that wants to be near you at all times. It is hard to overlook these dogs or ward them away. The breed thrives on attention and affection. They are alert, responding to almost every noise and every stranger. Most are highly intelligent with quick minds that make the easily trained, especially in obedience class, and always the clown or entertainer. The Miniature Schnauzer, unlike its related Schnauzer breeds, is considered to be a Terrier. That distinction means these dogs are tenacious, clinging to most tug of war toys to the bitter end. It also means they are fast moving, quick in response and ground coverage, and for some, able to release a high pitched bark to get your attention. These are great natural skills for the working Mini as he heads for vermin in your yard, but may be difficult for some owners who want a quiet and settled pet that rarely demands to be near you.

As a whole, Miniature Schnauzers are a healthy breed. This may in part explain their popularity and relatively large number. Despite general good health, some problems do present themselves in the breed. In recent years, some Minis have experienced eye problems like PRA ( Progressive Retinal Atrophy), LOC (Later Onset cataracts), Congenital Cataracts, or Juvenile Renal Disease. Other Minis suffer recurring skin problems. One of the most common is proliferation of small bumps under the skin that are similar to blackheads in humans. Treatment may require use of medicated shampoos and in severe cases an oral medication from the Vet. Given the small size, Minis rarely suffer from hip or elbow problems. However they can be susceptible to arthritis and other bone and joint diseases common to all canines. Minis tend to live long lives up to 15 years, so a new Mini in you life may be there a long time.

The Miniature Schnauzer is right for you if you want a small, active, loving canine companion where you can tolerate a welcoming bark and find time to groom a coast. Its widespread presence and abundant popularity means a few seem able to resist the charm of the small bearded one. As the owner of many small Schnauzers, I can honestly say that I always look forward to coming home and snuggling with a loveable Mini, Maybe you will too?

