

KRISTIN MORRISON

Full Moon Schipperkes



by Krish Swaminathan

► **Krish:** *Would you classify the Schipperke a slow-maturing breed?*

Kristin: I would say that most Schipperkes tend to be slow to mature however, schipperkes are a breed that excel in conformation as puppies, then tend to go through a teenage stage where they lose the puppy coat and appear to be all legs. They then start to come back into their own and put on body and coat again, but many Schipperkes do not reach their full maturity until 4-6 years old and can easily be campaigned into older years of 8-10 years of age. This is a breed that should get better as they age.

► **Krish:** *The Schipperke is characterized by its fox-like head and its cobby body. It is also subject to criticism for the extreme hypertype for being*



► **Krish:** *How did you get introduced to dogs and to your chosen breed, Schipperkes?*

Kristin: I was born into a family that showed Alaskan Malamutes, and when we would visit a friend of my parents who bred Malamutes with them, they had a small black dog that would be my constant companion during our visits. I found out years later that he was a Schipperke.

► **Krish:** *How did you come up with the name "Full Moon" for your Kennel?*

Kristin: I struggled to find a kennel name that fit and one night when I could not sleep, I looked outside and saw the moon so full that it finally made sense, and my kennel name seemed to choose me.

► **Krish:** *How important is it for a breeder to have a goal with breeding? How would you define your ideal Schipperke?*

Kristin: I do feel that it is important as a breeder to have goals to work toward, and that each breeder's goals may be different, but knowing what your goals are can help you move forward. My ideal Schipperke would possess the thickset body type with a nice short back, but also carry some elegance in length of neck and leg. Of course, coat pattern is essential, and a sound dog in structure and movement can set itself apart from dogs lacking in this area. My ideal head type would be a Schipperke with a sweet, pleasing look to its face, without coarseness, and a slightly tapered wedge from the tip of the nose through to the skull, neither too broad nor too narrow. The stop would be apparent but not prominent, and the skull would appear almost flat when the small, high-set ears are up. The eyes would be small and dark to impart that mischievous look that we are seeking,

overly short, compact body and overly short muzzle to create a mischievous expression. How do these hypertypes impact the breed?

Kristin: It is my feeling that the breed should be moderate and balanced as outlined in our standard. To me balance equates to the whole dog. The head should be in balance with the neck and body; the front and rear angulation in balance. Is the movement balanced? I have seen some dogs that to me exhibit the overly short muzzle, and it seems to detract from the ideal look and type of the schipperke. As matters, they should possess a strong underjaw to be able to catch and grasp rats, but not so much so that they no longer look like a schipperke or even a dog for that matter. Oftentimes the shorter head is accompanied by the very thick, overdone dog. Many of the top winning dogs in the US exhibit the proper balance of thickset body and correct head proportions, not too long nor too short.

▶ Krish: Though originating in Belgium, the breed has grown and developed into 2 distinct styles – the American and European. What are the advantages that you see for each of these styles?

Kristin: It seems that not only the schipperkes in America carry some differences, but other breeds as well. It is not uncommon to see schipperkes with a very abundant coat in the US, where in other countries many specimens lack the undercoat that helps accentuate the pattern. It is interesting to me too that in France, they have moved away from a

more traditional thickset dog, to wanting something more resembling a Belgian Sheepdog (which is more in line with their version of the schipperke history as a herding dog), being more up on leg and lighter in body, while Australia and England still try to hold more true to the thickset dog. I feel that in America, we are somewhat in between those groups, wanting some of the elegance that the French are looking for while still wanting a thickset dog which is more in line with other parts of Europe and Australia. If you go back to the history of the breed (at least that written for US purposes) since the breed was a ratter on barges, it would make sense that the dog be thickset so as not to be set off balance on a moving barge. A dog with too long of leg, may easily be caught off balance with movement on a water vessel.

▶ Krish: What do you strive for in your breeding program?

Kristin: I strive to breed dogs that are sound in body and mind and that meet the AKC standard. Coming from a working breed background, Alaskan Malamutes, structure and movement are very important to me. Maintaining a level of genetic diversity is also important to me.

▶ Krish: What are your personal likes and dislikes in the breed? What catches your eye?

Kristin: I tend to lean a bit more toward an elegant look of the schipperke, while still maintaining the thickset look of the breed. I like a nice length of neck with

a moderate amount of leg under the dog. Dogs that are short on leg or long in back do not appeal to me, nor should they according to the AKC standard. A well-balanced dog most certainly catches my eye, as we are sorely lacking balance in this country.

▶ Krish: Inbreeding, line breeding, and outcrossing. What breeding practice have you found the most success with?

Kristin: In the US, some show/breeding dogs have an inbreeding coefficient well over 40% and even into 50% or more. I have seen faults within those lines, that even when the breeder tries to breed to a stud dog to help correct their faults, they can't seem to get away from the problem. I have always learned that Line breeding helps set your type, but can bring about all the negative attributes as well. I have utilized some line breeding, but do find that it is important to keep some out crossed lines in the pedigrees. I have imported dogs from different countries to help "open" up my pedigrees while still maintaining type, structure and movement. I hope to not get my pedigrees so tightly line bred, that I have nowhere else to go in breeding.

▶ Krish: How important is it for a breeder to establish their own kennel type? If so, how long does it take to create a type (in generations).

Kristin: I think a breeder needs to choose what is important to them and set those goals. For me it, aside from silhouette, coat and body type, was movement and structure. I have not always had what I





consider to be my ideal head type, but I still did well with my dogs at the National Specialties and have received comments about my dogs having clean, correct movement year after year at the SCA Nationals. To form a type can take just a few generations if you breed to dogs of correct type, but oftentimes structure is the hardest thing to correct.

► **Krish: What would you consider the most difficult fault to remove through breeding?**

Kristin: In the US, many breeders struggle with poorly constructed fronts and fronts that flip anywhere from the toes, pastern and even up to the elbow. Once you have that within your breeding lines, it seems difficult to breed away from.

► **Krish: What is the right age to evaluate the puppies for temperament? What are you looking for?**

Kristin: I start evaluating puppies for temperament at about 5-6 wks. I observe how they react to everyday noises in our home and then watch them as they develop more of their personality. Oftentimes in a litter, the standout show dog is the one that is not bothered by noises even at a young age, but maintains it's cute little stack and just watches everything that is going on.

► **Krish: What are some of the health issues that can affect the breed, and what health testing do you consider mandatory?**

Kristin: Schipperkes seem to have a predisposition to seizure disorders and unfortunately because there are so many factors that lead to seizures including environmental factors, there is no test for it. Other health concerns that are common in smaller breeds are Legg-Calve-Perthes, a disease that affects the development of the hip joint, and luxating patellae. There seems to be a genetic component to the latter, so not breeding from dogs that have either of those in their lines would be helpful. The SCA has outlined that the following tests be performed on breeding dogs: Autoimmune thyroiditis, Eye exam, Hip dysplasia and luxating patella. We also are finding through Embark testing, that we have carriers for Von Willebrand disease (bleeding disorder) as well as Copper Storage disorder. Both of those need more research in my opinion before dogs are eliminated from breeding because we have a smaller gene pool which is evidenced by our COI's being over 50% in some of the tested dogs.

► **Krish: What would you say would be the top 3 attributes a discerning Schipperke breeder should look for to preserve or strive for in their breeding program?**

Kristin: Of course the silhouette of the schipperke and the distinct pattern of the coat that are hallmarks of the breed should absolutely be of great importance. I also consider soundness in structure and movement to be very important. If the structure is off, the

dog will not move properly. I would say also to consider maintaining that males are masculine without coarseness and bitches should be decidedly feminine without over refinement. In this country we are finding a trend toward bitches being the size of males, and bordering on an overdone or coarse look instead of appearing feminine. Likewise, males should not resemble the size and refinement of bitches. There is a fine line between wanting a short backed, cobby dog, and having a dog or bitch that is overdone.

► **Krish: What would be the must-have tools in the Tack Box for grooming the Schipperke?**

Kristin: Some of the must have items include a good quality steel comb, a slicker brush for getting out dead undercoat and brushing up the legs, a good quality pin brush to fluff up and smooth out the pertinent areas of the coat, a spray bottle of water for misting as you do not want to brush a dry coat, a good waterless shampoo as schipperkes seem to get themselves into messes just walking to the ring and a quality dremel tool for nail grinding. I prefer one with a light so it is easier to see their small black nails.

► **Krish: Do you think a Schipperke is an easy breed to judge for an All rounder Judge?**

Kristin: As an exhibitor in the United States, I feel that our standard is rather



clear about silhouette, coat pattern, movement and structure, so to me it would not seem too difficult for an All Rounder judge to judge the breed, however as Chair of the SCA Judges Education Committee, we often get questions about the coat and distinct pattern, and after we are able to show them dogs with proper pattern and texture, they have commented that they have a better idea of what to look for.

► **Krish:** *Looking back, can you share the names of Schipperke that you are proud to have owned or bred?*

Kristin: I was lucky to start with a few quality schipperkes bred from Top show lines. My first show litter was bred from this pair, and even though the person I got my dogs from told me not to do the breeding, my instinct said to do it anyway. From that litter was my first Bred By Champion, Ch. FullMoon Knight Rider at Daradan “Kitt” who won Winners Dog at the 2008 National; his daughter Ch. FullMoon Devil in Disguise, Devlin was WB at the 2010 National. Devlin’s daughters were Reserve Winner’s Bitch at the 2014 National (Mira) and Reserve Winner’s Bitch at the 2015 National (Nora). Devlin was bred to a male whose sire was in France. That litter produced a male that influenced our breeding program from there as well as pedigrees in France. His grand-daughter is our female Ch. FullMoon Written In the Wind, Willow, who recently won Best of Breed at the 2026 SCA National.

► **Krish:** *Can you share with our reader about the SCA and its role in promoting*

the breed?

Kristin: SCA is the AKC parent club for schipperkes in the United States. Through public education at AKC’s Meet the Breeds and our continued efforts for Judges Education, the SCA works to support and promote our breed.

► **Krish:** *Can you share some of the highlights of your journey with Willow, from birth until her most recent victory at the SCA Nationals?*

Kristin: Willow was born from a litter of just 2 girls. From the beginning I had a feeling about her, especially as she started to waddle around and strike her pose. I knew from an early age that she was the “show dog” of her litter, but also liked things about her sister, so both stayed. It was clear in their first show, that I was right in my thought that Willow was the one who loved to show, while her sister, Nyx did not present herself as proudly as Willow did. At their first National in 2022, Willow won her puppy class being shown by my good friend, while I showed Nyx. Willow’s showmanship shined even though she had blown her coat so was not quite the flashy puppy she had been just weeks before the show. She obviously needed some time to grow up, so we waited until the 2023 National to present her again. We flew across the country to Oregon for the 2023 National where she was awarded RWB, obtaining points for her championship. She then followed that up with Best of Opposite Sex at the 2024 National where Best of Breed was awarded to the number 1 schipperke

in the country. We had only shown Willow a few weekends in 2024 and 2025 where she won placements in the Non Sporting groups. Willow had blown her coat a few months before the National but with weekly bathing, drying with a forced air dryer and daily brushing, she was in condition to compete at the 2026 SCA National and came home as the big winner of Best of Breed among 155 schipperkes entered.

► **Krish:** *Thank you Kristin for sharing your journey with the breed with the readers of Indian Kennel Gazette. What is your piece of advice to the up-and-coming breeders and fanciers of the breed?*

Kristin: Thank you Krish and IKG for the opportunity and the honor. My first breeding pair of schipperkes where both very sound in movement and structure and I put a lot of emphasis on this. The sister to my foundation bitch, had a prettier head and more coat than the bitch I purchased, but mine was a sound moving girl. She continued to pass on her structure and movement, while the sister passed on her flipping front. I have been able to move forward with dogs of correct type while maintaining the soundness that I strive for. I know breeders in other breeds have been known to say “purchase the best that you can to form a good base for your breeding program” I would also suggest that to get the most from your dog while showing, find some way to make it fun for them, and they will give you the “sparkle” in the end when you most need it.