The end of the wrinkles dilemma (I hope…)

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For me, wrinkles have become my everyday topic. Did this grab your attention? I´m going to disappoint you. This time, it´s not about my wrinkles. However, stay focused because maybe it also involves you...

It is about Shar Pei wrinkles. Surely, you agree that this has been an oft-discussed issue for breeders, owners, as well as referees for a long time.

Once there were too few, then too many, now there are too many and too few only somewhere, and the right answer to the question: “What is right?!” is left hanging in the air.

Firstly, let´s see what Shar Pei owners have had to listen about this topic in show rings or during various debates...

We often face these claims:
- only 3 wrinkles on the neck
- the less, the better
- marked wrinkles = reduced mark
- the wrinkles on the forehead must form a marking which resembles the Chinese Symbol for Longevity
- wrinkles only on the forehead, other wrinkles on the head are undesirable

Are wrinkles on the body and head mentioned in the breed standards shown below as they are with the Shar Pei?

No. So, what is behind the popular theory of 3 or less wrinkles on the body in Shar Peis?

Now. Let´s search for the Symbol for Longevity on the forehead... It looks as follows:

The FCI Standard contains no reference to the Symbol for Longevity. You can find it in the Hong Kong Standard and this picture is showed with it.

Of course, it doesn´t mean a precise print of mentioned symbol. For breeders, maybe the form and course of wrinkles on the picture are noteworthy. In this line, the wrinkles usually cause minor eye problems. However, as a referee, you don´t need to remove the picture of the longevity symbol from your pocket and compare it to what you see on the dog. For you, the information from the standard is important:

“Wrinkles on the forehead and cheeks continuing to form dewlaps.”

And we add, with an emphasis on health ... “And do not irritate the eyes. This means, that the eyes are healthy, functional, and sufficiently open...”

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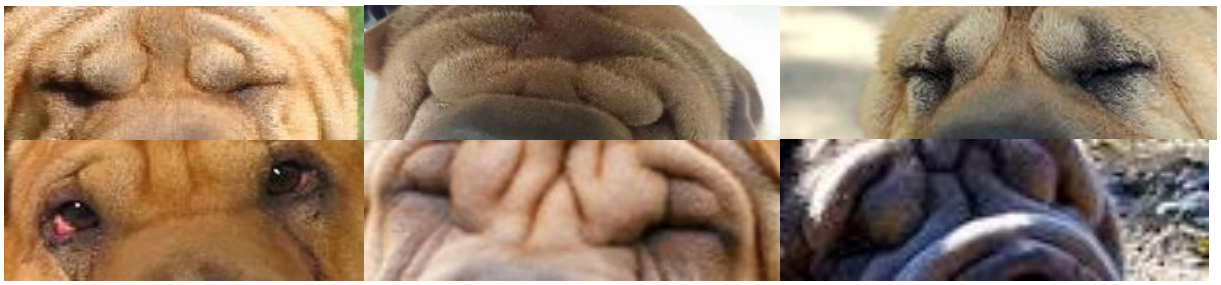
Next pictures show different healthy condition and we must do our the best to eliminate this problems in breeding and in show ring as well.



Polemics, rumour, and discussions about wrinkles have some reason. They have been associated with this breed since its rediscovery in a modern cynology. They are associated with the period when the following principle was applied “The more wrinkles, the more expensive. The more wrinkles, the more beautiful. The more wrinkles, the more typical...”

Thus, let´s go back to the standard and let us remind ourselves about the typical characteristics of this breed that should always be kept in mind when assessing it:

- Silhouette
- Hair structure
- **Loose skin – wrinkles on the body and head**
- Strong muzzle
- Setting and carrying of the tail
- Small ears, triangular in shape...

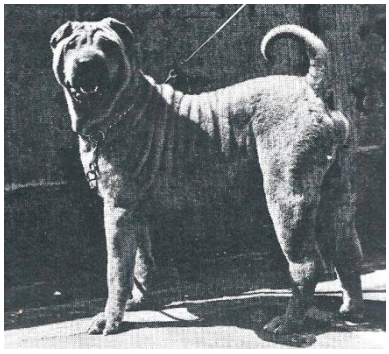
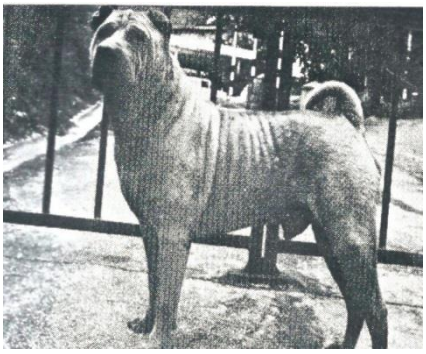
Of course, there are many details that make the breed and we have to draw attention to them when assessing and breeding. The mentioned typical characteristics are extremely important and make this breed special.

Thus, wrinkles on the body and forehead are important and typical characteristics of the breed and make the breed unique and differentiate it from other breeds.

So, where is the standard and interface determining minimum and maximum limits? The standard makes it clear:

“Wrinkles on the forehead and cheeks continuing to form dewlaps. Folds of skin on the body in mature dogs are highly undesirable except on the withers and the base of the tail which show moderate wrinkling.”

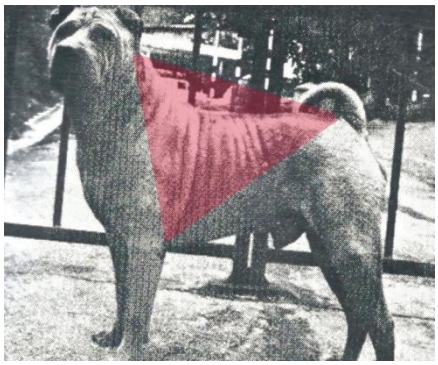
Before specifying details, let's look back at history, specifically how dogs from China looked before the breed expanded to other continents.

Is it really necessary to innovate, re-formulate and unnecessarily change or complicate the interpretation of the standard from 1999? According to photos, it seems that it´s not necessary...

If we mark body areas that should be wrinkle-free according to the standard, at the same time we mark the dog´s bodily areas where wrinkles should be and can be. This answer reflects the requirements of the FCI standard that we follow and is binding for us as well as AKC (the Hong Kong Standard is somewhat stricter and it does not mention wrinkles at the base of the tail).

Thus, the standard wrinkles in the Shar Pei breed are not about number but location and size, which is not only aesthetic but it also meets the health requirement. Now, let´s look at the areas where wrinkles are acceptable (without focusing on their number...). Wrinkles in the indicated red area are standard. The pictures below show the acceptable area indicated by a red colour and it creates an imaginary triangle.


Historical photo

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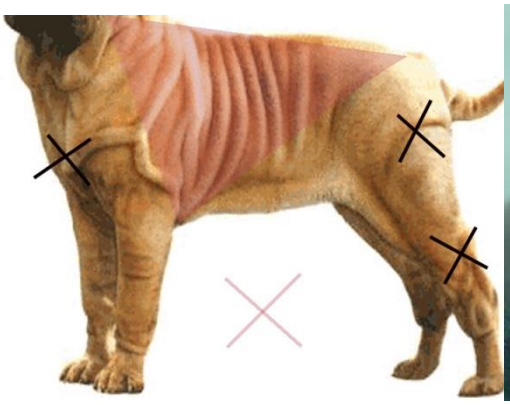
Wrinkles <u>outside</u> marked triangle (as below)are not acceptable and should be penalized (no Excelent)



It´s <u>extremely important</u> to know that excessive wrinkles in puppies and sub-adults are normal and such individuals can grow into them, and this usually happens. We have to consider the number, markedness and location of wrinkles in relation to the dog´s age.

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Therefore, <u>wrinkles outside the triangle are acceptable in puppies, sub-adults and young juniors</u>.
Similarly, a dog in the veteran group can have more wrinkles. This is caused by the natural loss of subcutaneous fat or muscle mass.
I´m sure that the wrinkles issue in the show ring has already been explained.

Finally, I would like to highlight:

Wrinkles are typical for the Shar Pei breed and make this breed unique. Let's permit this breed to have more wrinkles than others.
BUT…!

I place greater emphasis on the word MORE but “quitely” because it requires not only the certain extent described above but also a sense of aesthetics and a regard for the health aspect. Because none of us want to experience a period of dogs with many loose wrinkles causing irritation and subsequent inflammations, purulence production and stink, and dogs which have never seen their surroundings due to inflamed, impaired eyes with entropium.

Let history be a warning for us but the present should not mean the eradication of one of the typical characteristics of the breed – wrinkles. However, we should be strict when requiring a dog to be healthy. Let us enjoy the Shar Pei and let the Shar Pei enjoy a full life.

***Thank you to owners of dogs for a permission to use the pictures of their dogs!*

1-BIS/BISS GCh. Shine's Deck The Halls – Tinsel
2-MCh. Bailandijiu´s Daphne Moon
3-MCh. Elite's Whiskey Bid'Niz
4- M Ch Chesapeake's MY Sundance
5-Precious hug pitta style
6-MCh WW, BUW Pei Attention Next Top Model
7-MCh. Laiyang's a Wing and a Prayer
8- MCh. Deakie Duke Shira Victory
9- Ch Lolitka Zuzkin sen
10-MCH. Pei Attention Sparkling Lemon
11-MCh. PRECIOUS HUG KAPHA STYLE
12-MCh. RoseMary Magic Sonet