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Jindo's gaining pawhold in U.S. but don't qualify for Best in Show

BY **AMY SACKS**
 DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

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Minnie (left) a purebred Jindo, and Max, a Jindo mix, are among the many Jindos that land in shelters. Max is available for adoption through TreasuredK9's at www.treasuredk9s.org.

This week, more than 2,500 of the nation's most primed and pampered dogs will vie for the title Best in Show at the 133rd annual **Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show**, which begins barking Monday night at **Madison Square Garden**.

But it will be years before one very attractive but little-known blood line will be among the 170 breeds recognized by the **American Kennel Club**, making it eligible for title of nation's top dog.

The Korean Jindo, a hunting dog that originated from **Jindo Island** in Korea, is that country's most popular dog breed and considered a national treasure. Until recently, it was rarely seen outside Korea.

"People love them because they're smart, you can train them well and they are very loyal to the owner," said **Yuri Pak**, a Korean national from **Manhattan**, who has fostered many Jindo dogs that have landed in **U.S.** animal shelters.

Despite being illegal to export from Korea, many Jindos were brought to the U.S. and are now bred for sale here. Most are no longer purebred.

With no organization to regulate breeding, an increasing number of Jindos are being sold by backyard breeders to people who cannot handle them.

New Jersey Jindo rescuer **Kristen Edmonds** believes AKC registration will help regulate the breeding, so fewer Jindos will end up in the wrong hands.

The medium-size dog with a thick white coat and pointy ears can be a fabulous companion, but is not for everyone.

"They can be either the best dog or the worst dog you've ever had," said Edmonds, founder of **Treasured K9s**, one of the only U.S. groups that specializes in Jindo rescue.

People adopt Jindo dogs because of their beautiful appearance, high intelligence, fierce loyalty, and sometimes for their fighting spirit.

They are lovable, are easy to houstrain, even as puppies, make great guard dogs and rarely bark.

Despite a common misunderstanding that a Jindo will be loyal only to its first owner, Edmonds says many Jindos being adopted out of shelters become very bonded with

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their new owners.

Still, many people realize that raising a Jindo to be a well-behaved member of the family takes a lot of effort and time.

The highly active dogs require a lot of exercise. Known as escape artists, Jindo's are able to scale a 6-foot fence and must be kept on a leash. Their strong independent nature requires clear leadership, and firm and consistent handling in order for them to become obedient. They crave attention and if not entertained, will find their own source of entertainment.

For this reason many Jindo dogs land in animal shelters. And because the breed is not well known, many people don't know they are available for adoption.

Edmonds currently shares her home with two Jindos, including Minnie, a purebred who she adopted as a puppy, and Max, a Jindo/Shiba Inu mix, who she rescued from a Connecticut shelter, and is available for adoption.

One of her rescues, Sawyer, was featured last week in *Animal Planet's* super cute "Puppy Bowl." The dog had been plucked from a Philadelphia shelter where he landed with his six littermates.

She hopes more people will fall in love with the dogs as she has.

"They just become part of your soul," she said.

And who knows, in a few years maybe Sawyer will get his shot at top dog.

To inquire about adopting or fostering a Jindo, contact Treasured K9s at www.treasuredk9s.org or call (877) 774-8597.

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I hope people really understand the needs of dogs, and these dogs in particular, before adopting them. Our neighbors next door went through two successive Jindos as guard dogs; they were neglected: tied all day and night outdoors, no exercise, no affection. Ultimately, one ended up with a nasty temperament as a result, and had to be put down and the other, a very sweet young dog, refused to eat and died.

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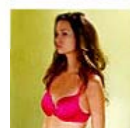
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