

# Shetland Sheepdog

The group of islands to the north east of mainland Scotland, collectively known as the Shetland Isles, has provided the world with several tiny species of animal that are supremely adapted to their local terrain. Not least amongst these being the Shetland Sheepdog or 'Toonie' as it was locally known. Created from a mixture of herding dogs from the mainland and Nordic species introduced by Scandinavian settlers. Their purpose being to control the equally diminutive sheep reared in tightly packed folds on the islands sparse pasture land.

Early examples brought to the mainland were of widely differing types and in an effort to standardise the breed for the Show World at least one infusion of Show quality Rough Collie breeding was introduced. The Sheltie, as it is now universally known, gained official recognition early in the 20th Century and has since become a popular pastoral variety throughout the world.

The Sheltie shares many genetic conditions with its larger and more long standing cousin the Rough Collie, including the MDR-1 mutation with approximately 30% of all Shetland Sheepdogs carrying at least a single copy of the mutant gene.

*Photo: Sally Ann Thompson*

