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# Great Pyrenees Dog

(*Canis lupis familiaris*)

**Class:** *Mammalia*

**Order:** *Carnivora*

**Family:** *Canidae*

**Characteristics:** The Great Pyrenees, also known as the Pyrenean Mountain Dog, is a beautiful, large working dog bred to protect livestock and as a companion dog. They are large and solid with a thick, coarse, long fur coat that is either white with tan, gray, badger or reddish brown. The head is wedge shaped, ears triangular, nose black, eyes dark brown. The tail is feathered and curved upward. Males: 27-32 inches tall, weigh 100 lbs plus. Females: 25-29 inches tall, wt 85 lbs plus.

**Background:** Proof of existence of dogs similar to the Great Pyrenees goes back to 1800 BC in Siberia and Central Asia. But, most often the origin is traced to the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain. In addition to guarding livestock, they have served as rescue dogs, sled dogs and possibly war dogs. The breed was first recognized by AKC in 1933.

**Behavior:** Great Pyrenees tend to be gentle, very affectionate, and easy-going unless provoked. A firm hand and calm approach are required for training. Nurturing by nature, they usually get along well with children and cats but may not be tolerant of other types of pets. They may suffer from hip dysplasia and skin problems aggravated by hot temperatures so cool climates are best. Pyrenees will shed heavily once a year and need regular brushing. Their high fat diet consists of lamb, poultry, wheat and potatoes.

## **The Story of Justice the Zoo Dog!**

Justice, the zoo's Great Pyrenees, was adopted by the zoo in 2017 from the Humane Society of the Upper Valley (HSUV) in Eastern Idaho. She was rescued after being found abandoned in the countryside with 8 puppies. When she was found, not only was she sheltering the babies but nearby was an injured sheep. While she didn't appear to be caring for the sheep, she wasn't harming it even though she was suffering for hunger. The puppies have all since been adopted. Justice was assumed to be approximately 3 years old when found.

Justice came to the zoo as a companion to a lion cub, Hondo, which was separated temporarily from its mother while he was being treated for a medical issue and were together for about 8 weeks. After the cub rejoined the pride, Justice was a companion to a baby gibbon, a rhea chick, and a serval cub. Justice is now a member of the zoo family serving as an Animal Ambassador where she has her own little house and is cherished and cared for by zoo staff and zoo volunteers. She occasionally visits schools and nursing homes in the zoo's off-site programs and can be frequently seen out for walks on zoo grounds.



### **Range of Origin:**

Central Pyrenees Mountains in Spain, France, Andorra



**Lifespan:** 10-12 years.

### **Special Adaptations:**

Nurturing by nature for working with livestock. Solid, thick coat for outdoor living.

**IUCN Conservation Status:**  
**Not Evaluated**

