

PULI CLUB OF AMERICA

PULI HERDING DESCRIPTION

Approved by the Puli Club of America: April 1992

Introduction: The Puli was developed in Hungary as an all purpose herding dog, bred to gather and drive the flock as the shepherd commanded. He can work and control all types of stock, but was developed particularly for sheep. The Puli's power lies in his bouncy, active movements, and occasional high pitched yelp that starts the stock moving. The Puli is a loose-eyed dog and rarely grips or bites except as a last resort.

Historically: Flocks were kept on huge pastures and vast plains. Pulik gathered the stock from the villages and drove them from one area to another to graze. This often involved moving the stock for miles along the roads and by crops. Driving the stock to market from the grazing lands meant the dog often worked a full, hard day. The Puli was developed as a medium-boned, wiry, agile dog with a thick protective all weather coat, often of black color to enable him to be easily distinguished from the sheep.

Shepherd/Puli Relationship: The relationship between shepherd and Puli is fundamental to understanding how the breed herds. There was an unwritten law that a Hungarian shepherd did not sell a Puli to anyone other than another shepherd or as a gift to a family member. The shepherd felt that non-pastoral people would not understand the Puli temperament and intelligence. To the shepherd the Puli was more than "just a dog;" he was the flock's "second man."

The Puli serves as a constantly alert foot dog for the shepherd. When the sheep are grazing he is at the shepherd's side. When commanded verbally or by gestures from the shepherd, he responds with a tremendous burst of speed and activity, forcing movement of the stock away from him by his bouncy, bounding manner. Then he returns to the shepherd to await the next order.

Although clearly subordinate to the shepherd, the Puli is expected to work on his own initiative. A Puli who is familiar with the order of things will hasten to correct even a complex problem without a command.

The Puli's buoyant, self-confident and joyous enthusiastic working style can be very effectively turned off by inappropriate training. This occurs when attempts are made to make the very sensitive Puli work in a manner not natural to him, such as insisting that he work in a highly precise manner, as is done with some other sheepdog breeds and/or by making excessive corrections during training. When this happens, frustration sets in for all and the Puli can lose his self confidence and with it his desire to herd.

Training: Upon the Puli's first exposure to stock, he often shows a definite gathering instinct. In Hungary, the Puli grows up with stock and learns all about them at a very early age. He receives on-the-job training with the experienced dogs and he gradually learns to drive the stock from the farm and down the lanes to the grazing lands or from pasture to pasture while keeping the flock loosely gathered.

The Puli is one of the most intelligent breeds of dogs. He is a willing worker and can be trained easily to follow commands and directions. In this country, the ideal situation would be to have the novice Puli start working with the more experienced Puli as they did in Hungary. Care must be taken, however, that the younger dog does not get overly accustomed to acting in an assistant's role, thus reducing his ultimate task, that of learning to carry responsibility for the care of the flock. This trainability combined with the Puli's natural urge to gather and move the stock make the Puli an ideal herding dog.

Herding Style:

- 1) The Puli has a strong desire to please his master. He works in harmony with him and is usually at his side. He does not work away from the shepherd unless performing a task. After responding with his characteristic lightning speed, he returns to his shepherd. While at the shepherd's side he may be standing, sitting, or lying down, but he is always alert.
- 2) The Puli does not use "eye" to control the stock but rather he utilizes his natural bouncy, energetic, quick, feinting movements and the occasional high pitched bark.
- 3) The Puli's approach to the stock is usually close running but may be widened through training. The Puli works close to the stock, often stopping and turning them with his body.
- 4) The Puli is fully capable of moving and gathering the stock as directed by his shepherd. The Puli does not work with the intensity of some of the other breeds and this looseness of style is natural for this breed.
- 5) The Puli who is with his flock attends only to his shepherd and will remain aloof from the casual human bystander. The Puli will protect his shepherd and the flock from predators and strangers even if it means his death. This was the unfortunate fate of many Pulik during World War II.

Applications To Testing: The Puli works from his shepherd's side. Typically he is not in constant motion patrolling the flock. The Puli will not naturally patrol a boundary, but can easily learn to guard a boundary from a position near the shepherd.

The Puli should not be faulted for returning to his master's side after completing a task.

The Puli runs rapidly towards the livestock. Sheep worked by other breeds may at first find the Puli's speed upsetting.

Summary: Lest we forget the Puli was developed by and is still used by very practical men. Men who most likely did not (and do not) have the time, patience or desire to spend endless valuable working hours going over and over practice exercises with a dog in order to teach it how to work with the mechanical precision seen demonstrated in many of the herding trials today. They depended on the Puli's intelligence to enable the dog to pick up and learn from the older Puli. The men who developed the Puli could not afford to feed a dog who did not work. A

dog who could not measure up within a reasonable time was disposed of. Whether from a lack of mental or physical abilities, “weak” dogs were thus eliminated from the gene pool. In either case, with neither the competition of the breed ring nor the organized herding trial to goad him on, the practical shepherd sought only to produce a practical dog for his own personal use. The Puli has stood the test of time.

He was then as he is today, a practical dog for the average farmer or rancher to work with, to treasure and to brag about when he takes the stock to market.