

shaved portion so most people never notice the “clean” feet.

Bottom line, keeping your Old English Sheepdog’s feet healthy is fairly simple. It just takes a good clipper, appropriate blades, and a little time. Of course it helps if you have conditioned your dog so that he doesn’t fuss when you work on his feet.

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Pembroke Welsh Corgis

Sharing Clipper

I had to let my oldest Pembroke go at the beginning of May. Clipper was just under 16 years old and had been successfully fighting liver disease for almost four years. His internal medicine specialist said what was wrong this time was neurological, and my heart knew there was nothing more to be done. I held him in my arms as he left me, breaking the heart that he has been mending since he arrived as an adorable 12-week old puppy.

I was overwhelmed at the sheer number of messages I received regarding Clipper’s passing. One friend called him a great ambassador for the breed. Another characterized him as a true Southern gentleman, and that he was: gracious, welcoming all, naturally very well-mannered. Yet another friend said thank you for sharing his life with us.

The “sharing” comment hit home and helped explain my tremendous grief. Clipper had joyously shared his life. He was a natural “people person,” and he was as gregarious as they come, without being effusive about it. He awoke each morning with a smile on his face and a song in his heart. He never had a bad day.

He shared this attitude wherever he went. He was a natural therapy dog. With no formal therapy train-

ing, he knew when to offer his services. We visited a friend with cancer several times; he knew when to sit with her and when to leave. He periodically went to school with me. The students loved him and he returned their affection. He told me when a student was having a bad day. He visited both my father and a friend in rehab centers. He would quietly sit with them as well as any roomies, until they had no more to share. He watched over my elderly father at home, and upon his passing turned his attentiveness to me.

He shared his love of life in Corgi fun days. He cheerfully bobbed for hot-dog slices after observing an older housemate grab the hot dogs without dunking his nose in the water. He comically and fittingly wore Peter Pan outfits as he truly was the little boy who never grew up. While he was always ready for a handout, he enjoyed being petted and admired. He had a passion for riding in golf carts. He spent part of his time at the last national specialty just enjoying catching up with his many friends.

Clipper shared his breed’s natural work ethic in obedience, agility, tracking, and herding. While not a high scorer in obedience, he was very reliable and yet had a manageable entertaining streak to him. His early days in agility were spent having attacks of “woofies” and “zoomies,” along with visits to the ring crews. Later he snuck peeks on the contact obstacles to see just how many people were watching him. He loved herding, and his gentle nature shone there. He found his tracklayer’s lost pencil on his way to earning his TDX. He tolerated having his feet cleaned for the breed ring. In his final foray into the ring at just under 15 years of age, he sported a spiffy black bowtie in honor of the occasion, exuding his personality.

Mostly, Clipper was just the best

friend any one could ever hope for. He never shredded toys or chewed thing he shouldn’t. He got along with all animals. It was so easy to take Mr. Perfect anywhere, as he always rose to the occasion.

While Clipper shared parts of his life with everyone, I am most grateful that he shared his whole life with me.

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Pulik

I asked Nancy Kelly (pickelly@aol.com) to join me as a coauthor this month, since she has trained and competed in obedience with several Pulik, starting in 1990. Nancy has served as the obedience statistician for the Puli Club of America (PCA) since 2003. We thank PCA historian Patty Anspach for her assistance with tracking down historic records, as well as Barb Edwards, who previously served as obedience statistician and helped us fill in information gaps.

Puli Participation in Obedience

The AKC began offering obedience competitions in the late 1930s (akc.org/events/obedience/history), around the same time that the AKC recognized the Puli as a breed. Dongo (Kurucz Legeny, CDX), owned and handled by Harriet K. Ewing in 1947, was the first Puli to earn a CD and CDX. As of around June 2015, 646 Pulik have earned a combined 995 titles in the regular obedience classes. (Note: The statistics for 2015 are incomplete.) Titles are awarded for each level of obedience in the Novice, Open, and Utility classes, with continued titles—UDX, OTCH, and OGM—requiring a sustained level of achievement for combinations in the Open and Utility level classes.

Pulik have earned 646 CD titles, 227 CDX titles, 93 UD titles, 14 UDX titles, 14 OTCH titles, and 1 OGM title. The number of Pulik earning titles drops sharply after the CD—only 35 percent of Pulik have earned titles past the CD.

In 1978, the first Puli to earn OTCH, the highest obedience title, was Buksi (Ch./OTCH Pulikcounty's Omar Khayaam), owned and handled by Julius Hidassy.

Following are the other 13 Pulik earning the OTCH title:

Effie (OTCH Pulikairn Effie Lou Plunket), owned and handled by Mary Jane Richert;

Huggy Bear (Ch./OTCH Prydain Edyrnion), owned and handled by Leslie Leland;

Hety (Ch./OTCH Prydain Hetyke, TD), owned and handled by Nancy Etchell;

Pumpkin (OTCH The Great Pumpkin), owned and handled by Robyn Brook;

Boo (Ch./OTCH Prydain Jocko), owned and handled by Nancy Patton;

Muffy (OTCH Kelseys Midnight Star), owned and handled by Elaine Brock;

Ozzie (OTCH Prydain Ozzie Plunket), owned and handled by Mary Jane Richert;

Pici (OTCH Windkist Bartok's Pici, UDX2), owned and handled by Nancy Kelly;

Mandi (OTCH Bartok's Miraculous Mandarin, UDX8) owned and handled by Nancy Kelly;

Pepper (Ch./OTCH Bartok's Magyar Csardas, UDX11, HSAs) owned and handled by Nancy Kelly;

Kicsi, owned and handled by Nancy Kelly;

Eb (OTCH Bartok's Little Black Note, UDX2 OM4, HSAs), owned and handled by Dottie Culpepper; and

Fizz (OTCH Meadow View Silver Fizz, UDX2, OM4, GO, VER,

RN, NA, NAJ), owned and handled by John D. Landis.

Interestingly, 64 percent (nine of 14) of OTCHs are female—so it seems that maybe the bitches are taking their obedience jobs much more seriously than the males!

What makes a good obedience prospect? A dog who: (1) is fit and athletic, with good physical structure; (2) has good energy and sustained interest in working with their human; (3) is intelligent and confident; (4) is biddable (willing to please and has a desire to learn); and (5) has the ability to stay focused.

Looking at dog breeds competing in the obedience ring, the Puli is seldom seen, compared to other breeds like the Golden Retriever. While Pulik are not as numerous as, say for example, Golden Retrievers, and correspondingly, there are also fewer Pulik successfully competing in obedience than there are Golden Retrievers—there is actually a higher percentage of individuals of the breed earning the OTCH in Pulik than in Golden Retrievers, relative to the total number of dogs registered in each breed. This interesting fact is something of which we Puli people can be really proud.

The Puli is particularly bright and must be kept challenged. The Puli quickly figures out that if the sequence is A then B then C then D, why shouldn't she simply go from A to D? The human part of the team must keep the Puli on her toes and engaged. The sport is about having fun and presenting new challenges to maintain the interest, while also providing precision. Neither the Puli nor the handler can think of herself as an individual, but as a part of a team.

An obedience dog can complete for many years. There are physical demands, and it is important to have regular health-checks done. Hips, elbows, eyes, heart, and patellas are important to have checked on your dog.

The coat of the Puli in obedience is not as important as it is in conformation. The coat can be any length and can be corded or brushed, and the hair can be tied back in a top-knot. Frequently, the coat is trimmed to a short length to preclude problems of the cords hitting a jump and causing a bar to fall or be interpreted by the judge as the dog "hitting" the jump instead of clearing it.

The PCA has always felt it is important to showcase all of the attributes of the breed including conformation, obedience, herding, and agility. The national specialty includes conformation, regular obedience, and rally each year, as well as herding and agility in most years. The list of High Scoring Puli in Trial may be found at the PCA website.

Since 1995, the AKC has held an annual National Obedience Invitational, which is now called the National Obedience Championship. The top OTCH or OTCH-pointed dogs from each breed are invited to compete. As a point to note, in spite of the relatively small numbers of Puli compared to other breeds (like the Golden Retriever), at least one Puli has been invited every year since the event began. This means there have been one or more Pulik who have earned OTCH points and could be invited; many breeds cannot say this.

The years 1965–1995 saw the largest number of Pulik competing in obedience classes. There has since been a decline in Puli participation in the regular obedience classes. Concurrent with this decline is the fact that the AKC has added many more dog sports and venues in which to participate, including rally, as well as a number of titling classes in obedience not considered in the three obedience classes of Novice, Open, and Utility statistics. However, obedience remains an

important foundation for many of these other venues.

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Pyrenean Shepherds Watch Out! Pyrenean Shepherds Can Be Addictive

Be prepared: If you open your heart to a Pyrenean Shepherd, you're apt to end up with more than one of these engaging, very bright herding dogs, especially if you're interested in dog sports.

Their busy, devoted natures, which lead them to enjoy hanging out with their humans and sticking their helpful noses into whatever's going on, often cause hapless owners to accumulate one little French herder after another.

They tend to be physically fearless and surefooted, thanks to their heritage of herding in rough, mountainous terrain, and they are extremely quick both physically and mentally. Those characteristics make them a natural choice for dog-sport enthusiasts.

Agility aficionados are particularly drawn to the breed, in large part because of the Pyrenean Shepherd's success in agility rings around the country and overseas. Kay Johnson, who lives in Shelton, Washington,

and has three Pyr Sheps, finds her dogs so intelligent that it can be scary. She said that their quickness to learn sometimes is accompanied by strong opinions that their way of accomplishing a task is better. They like to figure things out, and if they're not sure what to do next in training or performing, they'll quickly take what they think should be the next logical step, such as going over an off-course jump.

The breed's intelligence and problem-solving skills also appeal to Kelly Maier, who lives in Monroe, Washington, and concentrates on agility and conformation with her dogs. Maier, who competes in agility at the national level, also appreciates their athleticism and attentiveness.

Like many Pyr Shep owners who enjoy their dogs' responsiveness, Maier has found that some can be very sensitive to their environments. That trait, most likely a natural offshoot of the breed's long history of working with large flocks of sheep and just one shepherd in the Pyrenees Mountains of France, can include wariness or shyness with strangers. Puppies and young adults require thoughtful and ongoing socialization to help them be comfortable in complex environments.

Whatever their jobs may be, these speedy and serious little workers are

willing to put their hearts and souls into it. They excel at herding, tracking and obedience as well as agility. Puck and Valentine, who run agility and track with this columnist, both earned Tracking Dog Excellent titles at very young ages. Valentine was just six days past his first birthday when he completed the advanced AKC tracking title.

The breed's late obedience star, UDX8 Chica, who died in November 2010, enjoyed obedience so much that she took her owner and handler, Marilyn Abbett, to the AKC Obedience Invitational five times and qualified to go more often than that. As they continued to compete at the highest levels, Abbett expected Chica to start goofing off in the ring, but she never did. Instead, she just kept getting better.

And, of course, Abbett has a second Pyr Shep. Lucy joined her household while Chica was still alive, making Abbett yet another fancier who couldn't stop at just one.

Don't say you weren't warned ...

Columnist Kathleen Monje lives with three Pyrenean Shepherds in the Oregon countryside.

—Kathleen Monje,
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