

JUDGING THE PULI

By Irma S. Fertl



The Puli (Pulik is the plural in Hungarian), being a herding breed (i.e., functional breed), should be judged on the basis of being a “typey,” balanced, and sound worker. This is a moderate and medium-sized breed (those two adjectives are used 10 times in the standard), which has to be agile. The heavy coat (not that of an actual “worker”) – show coat – should not distract from that ability. Since the Puli is an approximate square, and coat can add inches in front and back, it is important that a judge gets his/her hands into the coat. And that is done on the table, as the Puli is a table-breed. Do not hesitate to ask an exhibitor to put the Puli back on the table should a question arise!

Once you have taken the armband number, have the Puli go around to give

you a first impression, and then examine him on the table. First, stand back and check if he looks fairly square. Then approach at a slight angle, towards the head and let him know you are there (i.e., show your hand to let him sniff, a friendly word to the exhibitor). Since the umbrella of cords on the head falls over the eyes, the Puli has to go by sound when standing still (and yes, he can see when he works, as the cords are flying!).

The ideal size for a male Puli is 17” and for bitches 16” – with 1” over or under acceptable. Check for head proportions of 2 parts skull to 1 part blunt muzzle with a good, strong under jaw, and on a head that is medium-broad. The muscular neck blends nicely into the withers. Ears are medium long and set at or slightly above eye level. Ears that are set too high would remind of the Pumi or Mudi. Eyes are to be dark-brown, almond-shaped and deep-

set. Nose and tight flews are black. Teeth are comparatively large and strong, with scissor bite, and full dentition.

Check for the breast bone, and having left hand on point of shoulder and right hand on buttocks should give you that “almost square” view and feel. Check for shortness of loin, as required for the job a Puli is expected to do: $\frac{2}{3}$ of length of back should be the egg-shaped chest. Be sure to go under the coat to check length of legs from elbows to ground, as ideally, leg length should be 55% of the height (45% for from withers to elbow; this is not a deep-chested breed).

The back is level and strong with a slight slope to the croup. A Puli’s tail is carried over the back, and the set on should be checked while on the table. (Note: a Puli will not always and at all times carry the tail over the back. As a judge, you might see it only for a short time come over the



back when moving, especially with an inexperienced and/or young Puli. But it does need to come up.)

Shoulders are well laid-back, and elbows are on rib cage. Hindquarters balance the front and are muscular and strong. Bone is medium, feet are round and with nicely cushioned pads. Black- or slate-blue-pigmented skin on body, depending on coat color.

In the US, and only in the US, the Puli may be shown brushed. One does not see many brushed coats in the show ring anymore, but the coat texture still needs to be correct, the one suitable for cording. It is a double-coated breed. Corded coats can

differ due to the shape of the cords. They may be wide or narrow, flat or ribbon-like, and all are correct. But an open or silky coat is incorrect. Do not penalize a young or working Puli for length or quantity of coat. You should expect a Puli to come clean and groomed into your ring; yes, a “clean mop.”

In white coats, oxidation can give the appearance of cream-color, but it should not have you think of any other color than white. Checking at the skin for new growth should give you the true color, as the coat of an adult Puli will always be weathered. A small spot of no more than 2" on the chest is permissible in the darker colors, and all colors are to be judged equally.

You have thoroughly examined the Puli on the table, and now it is time to see the action of his gait in the show ring. It will give you only part of the versatility range that he is capable of, as he is very agile, being able to change directions, and even in mid-air when doing for what he was bred. So let's concentrate on show ring movement: he is effortless and has a ground-covering trot. Not high-stepping in front or kicking up in the rear. When going away, you should see the pads of his hind feet, strong and pushing out straight. Coming towards you, the front feet should pull the ground from under them. There is no mincing or short-stepping. The back should be level and strong. He must show the sound movement required of an effective herding dog, working all day long. The way the coat moves on an adult has been described as “watching a hovercraft,” without excessive bounce of the coat. On an immature, moving Puli, the shorter and

thicker-corded coat may look as if it was rolling from side to side; just watch the feet and overall balance to decide if it is a structural fault.

Since he will be focused on the person he is devoted to, this will rarely include the judge. Exhibitors will appreciate consideration for young and inexperienced Pulis.

The five most important features that you must evaluate correctly in order to find the best Puli in the ring are:

1. Squareness
2. Movement
3. Topline and Tailset
4. Head
5. Coat and Color

Puli owners and handlers do NOT want Judges who:

- Bait the Puli
- Swoop down on the Puli from above or behind
- DO NOT examine the Puli under the coat
- Want to see the “Puli kick”

Note: you may have noticed that only the word PULI has been used, as the Hungarian shepherds NEVER classified their hard workers as a “dog”. ■

BIO

Irma Fertl started with Old English Sheepdogs until she deserved a Puli. She has been in Pulik since 1986, but also has 1 Kuvasz. She is still an owner-handler and has done conformation, obedience (also rally) and herding. Right now she is playing with tracking, whenever the hot South-Texas sun allows. An AKC judge, she has also judged abroad.

