Our grooming question this issue addresses the white corded coat. "Experts" have been asked to serve as our guest panelists. They are Nancy Hand Liebes, Larry Hart and Barbe Pessina.

A Komondor owner since 1972, Nancy Hand Liebes is the breeder/owner/handler of the top Best In Show Komondor to date, and top-winning bitch, CH. Nagyalma Apple of My Eye, CD. "Pooh," as she is known, has garnered 7 All Breed Bests in Show as well as 3 National Specialties, her last from the Veterans Class in 1987. (For those of you who knew her, Pooh is still alive, though very arthritic, and still trying to bite the UPS man.) Nancy has owned two other Specialty winners, one also home-bred, and has bred three National Specialty Sweepstakes winners. Under the kennel name "Nagyalma" she has bred 16 Komondor champions, 5 CD's, and has acquired more than 100 group placements on Komondors over the years. She also is the proud owner of [the Puli] CH. Wallbanger Gofont Gonzo, who finished his show career with 64 group placements, 11 of them Group 1's. Nancy is an AKC judge of 5 Working breeds and 3 Hound breeds.

Larry Hart is co-owner of CH. Chazer, CD, HC. With his co owner/handler, Earl Gebhardt, Chazer has multiple group placements and is the only white Puli ever to win Best Sr. Puppy in Sweepstakes and go on to be Best of Winners at a National Specialty.

Barbe Pessina, Chairman of the Judges Education Committee and owner of the #1 Puli for 1990, CH. Moonshadow's Puttin on the Ritz, is also owner of white Puli, Moonshadows Arctic Express, winner of the 12 - 18 month class at the 1990 Specialty.

Please advise me on the care, concerns, and challenges of a white corded coat from puppyhood on.

NHL: When people ask me, "How do you get your dogs so clean?," my stock answer is, "Never let them get dirty." Glib as that may sound, it's the first step in keeping a successful white corded coat. From puppyhood on, the best advice I can give you is to keep your dog as clean as possible. Now that doesn't mean you should keep him in a padded cell, on racks, or never let him see dirt, grass or daylight, but it does mean that when he goes out and makes mudpies, you have a responsibility to rinse him off (at least) before the dirt dries on the coat and stains it.

There are two kinds of dirt we deal with in a white corded coat: actual pieces of dirt or plant products, and the staining left behind by mud, urine or saliva. Staining can happen any time. The soft, fuzzy puppy coat can stain as easily as a cord. Actual dirt is mostly a problem in the corded coat, as the cords hold the dirt like a sponge holds water. In both cases there are ways to prevent the discoloration by means of prevention, and there are also ways to remove the stains or dirt.

The most important thing to remember is that while your puppy is cording, that is when the curls are beginning to mat and tighten, you should take special care to keep the coat meticulously clean. Every leaf bit and grain of sand which gets caught in a cord at that time will stay in the cord forever, and the more garbage which gets trapped in the coat, the darker the cord will look when fully formed. As it is, cords cast shadows and do not look as white as, say a brushed Samoyed coat, so the cleaner the cord, both inside and out, the better the adult coat will look.

Should you get sand or dirt in the cords, the best way to remove it is with a good spray of water. The better the water pressure, the more success you will have in removing the dirt. Rinsing is a cords best friend. Also remember that soap can leave a sticky film which attracts dirt, so a good rinse will not only remove the dirt itself, but also the ability of the cord to attract more. I actually have a garden hose spray at my dog tub so I can "power" the dirt out of cords. Just be careful not to frighten the dog by "powering" him out of the tub! I hold the cords in my left hand and direct the spray onto my hand instead of the dog.

Just because you have kept the dog immaculately clean doesn't guarantee that you still won't have residual stains —especially on the feet and legs, face and rear cords. My favorite shampooing products in the past have been Amway's LOC - High Suds (so you can tell when the coat is rinsed) with a laundry phosphorous whitner added. Unfortunately the phosphorous additives (i.e., Miracle White) are illegal in some states and might not be available. Of course, I would never suggest that when you are traveling you could buy a few and take them home. Although LOC is not marketed as a dog shampoo, it is completely safe, even on the skin, and is gentle on the coat. I have also found that Mycodex Flea Shampoo with Carbaryl is good on a white coat, as is Oster White Coat shampoo, and Mr. Groom Whitner Shampoo. Be careful
with flea dips as many will discolor the coat, but the actual reaction depends greatly on your local water supply and how it reacts with the products you are using.

I never, under any circumstances, use laundry bluing on my dogs. I have found that in the past the bluing gets into the cords turning them slightly grey. I can always tell a dog in the ring which has been "blued" as it looks greyish white to me. The correct color cast on a white corded coat should be creamy, not grey.

For really stubborn stains I resort to cream peroxide, which can be purchased in different strengths at beauty supply houses. I pour it directly on the dry cords, keeping it away from the skin, wait 20 minutes, then rinse and shampoo as normal. This works well on the urine stains and dingy legs and feet. The warning here is that this works well when not used too often. If you bleach a coat too much or with products too strong (like chlorine), you can damage the hairs themselves which will make them turn yellowish. Remember that on the adult cord, much of the hair is dead and already shed out which itself can look less than white. Add damage to those hairs and the resulting discolored coat can look as bad as a stained one. Also remember that sunlight can damage even a white coat. Just as it turns black coats red, it can turn white coats yellow, especially coats which have been bleached. I have also heard about a product on the market called Fresh Fur Gel which I have purchased but have not yet used. I understand that it works well on food-stained mouths.

The best preventative available can only happen after the cords have grown long enough to tie up. I firmly believe in tying cords up, both black and white, to prevent urine staining and facial staining. I use plain old rubberbands and have never had any breakage problem on my white coats. Fabric coated elastics work well on black costs, but the tiny metal piece which hold them together rusts and leaves stains on the white coats, so you cannot use them. The stretchy ponytail ties are cute but don't hold well enough for the smaller cord bunches, like on the face. Experiment with different drug store ties, but be careful to check for metal parts which will rust and cause orange spots on your white cords.

If all of this sound compulsive, well it is! In order to keep a successful white corded coat you need diligence, patience, stick-to-it-iveness and sheer determination. I have been seen with my dogs up on a table at shows, picking seemingly microscopic particles out of cords with tweezers while waiting for groups to begin. But for all my advice, each coat is different and each living situation creates new challenges.

LH: The decision to raise and show a white Puli is a big one; not only do you have the white coat to groom and KEEP WHITE, but you also become a rarity in the show ring. You should therefore consider these things seriously before making that decision.

To begin with, you're trying to pick the best prospect out of a litter of white puppies. You have a snow white puppy with no biscuit color, but she's not as good as the puppy with a little color on the ears and hocks. And then there's the cream colored puppy and he's the best in the litter. These factors play a major part in which one you'll decide to raise and show. Since our standard does not discern the various shades of white, you go with your gut feeling, as well as your knowledge of Pulis and decide to raise the cream colored puppy for the show ring.

The early grooming is the same as grooming a black or grey Puli, and it seems like the cream color is fading, or turning whiter. Buy you're pleased with the development and realize your decision to show this puppy is a good one.

By the time he's 6 months old, you have him trained in ring deportment and he's ready for his first real show. He is used to baths and regular brushing to keep his coat as white as possible. His master shampoos him with an nice bluing shampoo made by Nature's Choice. After rinsing out as much as possible of the shampoo, he's rinsed with baking soda. His coat is then covered with an nice re-moisturizer, also made by Nature's Choice. His short 6 month coat is easily rinsed out, towel dried and left to finish drying naturally.

Before ring time, his coat is brushed out and misted with water so it won't fly around so much. During the next few months, he's kept brushed until he's about one year old when the brushing stops, except to keep the ends from curling back. His coat is allowed to met, until it is split into cords. It is then just a matter of letting it grow and keeping it clean. He has the run of the house and his back yard is all grass, so he stays pretty clean on his own. Monthly and pre-show baths are a necessity however, as well as the grooming which is necessary for all Pulis, regardless of color.

As his coat gets longer, it is necessary to keep the cords tied up on his sides, since he'll chew off any cords with urine on them. (Under the lights in a show ring, any urine or dirt really shows). He is kept tied up to be exercised until the very last minute before ring time. After his coat is let down, you must be careful that he doesn't untie. (Naturally, this only applies to males). His coat is then misted with enough water to straighten out his cords. He's always carried to the ring since any dirt that the ends of his cords pick up will show in the ring. After he's finished in the
ring, his coat is immediately tied up, and of course, the tips of his cords are dirty. It's usually ok to just leave them until his next bath.

During this white Puli's show career, he's encountered judges that asked if white was allowed in the standard, as well as statements such as "I didn't know they came in white." (This statement has been heard from spectators as well as judges.) Many judges have stated that this was the first white Puli they'd ever seen and several inquired how we kept him so white.

But he's loved it all, in spite of all the baths and other ordeals to maintain his rare beauty. He's met lots of people who had a multitude of reactions to seeing a "white Puli." And maybe he's educated a few people about Pulis.

BP: The first portion of Barbe's response is taken from a letter which accompanied her answer to the grooming question.

"When Kimo was whelped I was subject to the same prejudices that I think many Puli people are. I always felt that if a white Puli wasn't PURE WHITE then it was somehow inferior; or perhaps a faco, or who knows what. I certainly never entertained the idea of owning a white Puli (heaven forbid) and always considered them somehow inferior to the blacks. I think Sue Maass' article that appeared in the AKC GAZETTE best describes these prejudices wherein she states "Dead undercoat (within the cords) will turn from white to off-white, but our standard does not allow for this..." I believed this concept as well as the next person.

Needless to say Kimo has been an educational process and I do think perhaps the breed as a whole needs this education. Reading the standards (AKC) as printed in PULI NEWS [see June, 1991 issue] for 1936, 1960 and 1983 I find no reference in more than 50 years wherein the word "PURE" was applied to the white Puli. One can only assume then that this need for "pure" is a subjective interpretation by various breeders. In fact, if you read the various standards that apply to white dogs you will find only the Maltese makes mention of the word "pure."

All of this bespeaks a lack of knowledge on our part as Puli breeders of the genetics of coat color (fodder for another article or series of articles). Think of what we ask in the white Puli - that he be white, that he has black pigment. Now pull out Little's book on the INHERITANCE OF COAT COLOR IN DOGS. I am as guilty as the next person in sharing these misconceptions on color, but I think perhaps it is time we joined the 20th century.

In the Breeder's Column in the last PN Art Sorkin made mention of the Fako and its acceptance in Hungary. I can well remember the arguments that took place when the standard was being revised the last time; and I also remember statements being made that this was a new color and just a trend. Allow me to quote from the book HUNGARIAN DOG BREEDS published in Hungary and written by Pal Sarkany and Imre Ocsag. This book was first published in 1977 and revised in 1986.

'Color of Hair. We have already mentioned that the Puli originally was a breed of many colors. The story of the Puli's color can be closely followed from earliest entries in the pedigree registration books.

When scientists and experts in breeding began to take an interest in Pulis at the beginning of the 1920's, the following colours were found: white, cream coloured, dove-grey, silver grey, olive grey, pale yellow, blue grey, slate, iron grey, steel blue, faded black, rusty black, black with intermixture of white, and sometimes even jet black. To breed exclusively black, was a trend which began only thirty years ago. Black, being a dominant colour, spread very easily. Black Pulis were favoured in breeding, if their black coat was homozygous even when mated to heterozygous Pulis, always giving black puppies in the first generation.

This explains the great speed with which black colour spread. Although later generations threw back to other colours, these were not used for breeding, because the breeders acted under the influence of the current fashion, and were ashamed to have puppies of other colours than black.

Due to this misguided policy, colour variations were rarely found by 1950. The standard description of 1960 describes the ideal colour as black.

This flow of black colour - which is an example of breeding based on wrong principles - was interrupted by the appearance of white Pulis in the early 1960s. Grey was more readily accepted by official opinion, as the black hair of most Pulis fades into grey as years go by.

A revision of the standard description in 1966 says: "Pulis are of different colours. Black, several shades of grey and white are bred at present." From then on puppies of whole colours were left alive, no matter what the colour was."

I know that Cheryl Prokopowich has some definite ideas on color and knows her genetics as well. Perhaps some educational articles on the genetics of coat color might serve this breed and this club well at this time."

Grooming the white Puli encompasses the same tasks and functions of grooming any other Puli. The job becomes more formidable and far more challenging however when faced with the task of keeping the white Puli clean to begin
with. Unlike the Komondor, the Puli is lower to the ground and therefore the underbelly and the legs are in closer contact with the very elements we try to protect them from; i.e., organic stains and dirt.

I will assume that most people reading this already know the fundamentals of basic corded coat care. One does the same thing to the white coat to cord it as they do to the black or grey coats. One generally assumes that after spending a significant amount of time bathing, rinsing and conditioning the corded coat that if it feels clean and smells clean - it is clean. Surmise folks - not necessarily so! This doesn't hold true for the white Puli...you spend all this time with the dog in the tub and washing, washing, washing and when you finally take the dog out expecting it to be clean you realize that while it feels clean, looks clean...the cords are still yellow from organic stain -- or in real terms -- urine. In order to get the white Puli as clean as possible, one has to make every attempt to keep the dog as clean as possible between baths. Every one you talk to that has had to deal with the white corded coat has a different solution or method of grooming. I've devised my own system through trial and error.

My dogs are all kept in indoor/outdoor covered runs during the day. The outdoor surface of the runs are gravel and we found out very early in the game with this dog that gravel just doesn't cut it with a white dog. We placed 2x2 squares of flagstone sloping toward the center (for fast drainage) over the gravel surface. This allowed any urine to drain quickly and for the most part worked really well until the dog hit the 2 year stage in length of coat. At this stage because of the length on the coat I started having a more difficult time with organic stains on the ends of the cords on the underbelly and insides of the legs.

The next step: After a lot of thought I decided to try a type of stall matting on top of the flagstone. This is a form of heavy rubber matting that is molded into a tight lattice pattern. This allows the dog good traction for his feet; but sits about 3/4" above the flagstone which means that there is even less splash back than when on the flagstone. This helps to cut down on the organic stains to some degree. The runs are washed daily and all of this helps when bath time comes, which is always once a week no matter what!

Bathing the white corded Puli is a time consuming task if ever there was one. About 3 hours before tub time I make a paste consisting of Ivory Snow powder; Borax and a whitening agent that is made by Crown Royale. I add a small amount of conditioner to this paste to form the consistency of pancake batter. This is brushed on the ends of each cord and left to dry for about 2-3 hours. Nails, ears and teeth are taken care of and checked during this time and any eye stains the dog may have are also tackled. The dog is allowed to sit in a crate biding his time.

The dog is then placed in a tub and the above described paste is rinsed thoroughly from the coat. It is at this stage that the real bathing process begins. The tub is filled with several inches of water to which shampoo (any) is added. The water is then sponged through the coat thoroughly. Unlike black dogs, at this stage I actually apply shampoo (generally a shampoo made especially for white coats) to handfuls of cords at this time and work it well through the coat over the entire body. The tub is drained and I work a second application of shampoo directly into the feet, legs and underbelly of the dog at this time. Special attention is also paid to the eye area and the muzzle to make sure any stains or food residue are thoroughly removed. I then rinse, rinse, rinse until I am sure all shampoo has been completely removed from the coat and skin. If there are no shows that weekend (and I might add that the white dog is always the last to be washed and as late as possible the night before the show) a very heavy conditioner is applied. (Note: The heavier the conditioner, the easier it is to get the dog clean, since dirt is more likely to adhere to the conditioner and not get trapped in the cords).

I can't say that I have pet manufacturer's products that I use since I generally try different products and experiment to see what gives me the best results.

If there are no shows scheduled I generally coat the area under the eye with vaseline as this helps to keep eye stains from forming, and the hair on the muzzle is kept brushed for easier cleaning (the cords on the head cover this anyway).

If we have a show coming up, the same steps are followed but the heavy conditioner is eliminated. It is virtually impossible to keep a white Puli as clean as when he first comes out from under the dryer when going to a show, so the problem of presenting them as well as possible takes on added dimensions. I do have "Beardie Booties" that I use and the dog is placed on a synthetic carpet in the x-pen to prevent his feet from getting soiled. I also have a specially made crate that has ionized bars all around (the aluminum from normal crates rubs off on the white dog and leaves them dingy looking) and a raised grill to lie on. All of this helps to keep the white dog clean but there is always the ever present "organic" stain.

About 2 hours before ring time, the ends of the cords that have become soiled are sprayed with "Summer's Eve feminine wash." This is a slightly oily liquid preparation. The ends of the cords are immediately powdered with cornstarch and the dog is then placed in his crate to dry. (Because the spray is oily the cornstarch will stick.) About 1/2 hours before ring time, the dog is allowed to shake and I run my hands through the coat to remove any left.
over cornstarch that hasn't already fallen off. This will usually remove any soiled areas with the cornstarch. Important note: if you do this you must be sure to remove all cornstarch from the coat before entering the ring - this is just a technique to help remove the stains - not make the dog white if he wasn't to begin with.

Lastly, whenever traveling to dog shows be sure to take your dryer with you - after all of the above, the white Puli usually only stays really white for about 24 hours - I think in their hearts they really want to be black.

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"Oh Richard," she sobbed, "it's so frustrating. I'm not perfect and I try to do my best on the newsletter, but when people send me copy material past the deadline, it makes me frazzled, costs the organization money in phone calls trying to track down material, and makes the newsletter go out late. (sob) What can I do?" Richard replied, "Print the deadline in a way no one can miss it. Add some subliminal messages. Perhaps that will help."

The deadline (editor mad as heck) for the October 1991 issue of PN is September 15, 1991. (be on time...be on time...) Items received after noon of this date will not be published unless so directed by the PCA Board. Late items will be held over (a fire) for the December, 1991 issue.