After many months of careful planning by our specialty coordinators, Steve and Nancy Donahue, the Holiday Inn in Eureka, MO was home base for the Puli Club of America with the corded Hungarians arriving as early as Tuesday, September 20th for the festivities. An unplanned, impromptu grooming session kicked off the week on Wednesday afternoon with seasoned breeders offering assistance and trimming to anyone that wandered thru the parking lot. The weather couldn’t have been more cooperative for the weekend, and the wonderful Fall temperatures and sunshine only added to the camaraderie and party atmosphere outside the hotel. Advice and experience were freely shared by all and proved to be a great ice-breaking start to the weekend, and offered a promise of a fully packed weekend with all things Puli.

Thursday morning Obedience enthusiasts were eager to take the ring at Purina Farms for an Independent Obedience and Rally Trial. Many of our dedicated conformation people turned out to offer support and enjoy the antics in the ring as we watched these dogs do what they do best – exactly what they want, when they want, but always with a comedic element that kept everyone laughing. High in Trial was CH. Moonshadows Hot Stuff with a score of 196 in Open B, owned by Eileen Haac Wilson.

Thursday was rounded out with our Annual Board Meeting followed by a delightful welcome party at the Hotel, which also featured a very informative and educational presentation by Liz Hansen from the University of MO on Degenerative Myelopathy. The room was filled with dedicated breeders and Puli enthusiasts who came prepared with great queries and an energetic question and answer session followed this presentation. Sadly, this hereditary condition has been encountered in the Puli breed and it was encouraging that so many of our longtime, dedicated breeders and Puli owners were present to learn more about it. The take away message is that knowledge is power, and the Puli board has voted to add DM testing to the required list of CHIC tests for the Puli breed. Hopefully by making sensible breeding decisions we will prevent this condition from becoming unmanageable within the breed.

Friday morning brought everyone back to Purina Farms for a designated specialty at the St. Louis Dog Breeders Association. Best in Junior Sweeps and Best in Sweeps was Zaydah The Circle of Life (bred in England by Jacki & Pete Evans) owned by Susi Szerymy and Richard Bell and Best Junior in Sweeps went to the Winners Bitch named below. Judge Tom Hale sorted thru his classes with efficiency finally settling on Open Dog, Moonshadows Lost in the Ivy CD owned by Nancy & Andy Guagenti for Winner’s Dog; Weatherby’s A Piece of Cake owned by Maggie Witwer and Carolyn Nusbickel took home Winner’s Bitch and Best of Winners from the 12-18 month class. GCH. Cordmaker Rumpus Bumpus owned & handled by Jackie Beaudoin was BOB with CH. Szed’s Little Miss Sunshine owned by Alece & Brian Brubaker garnering the BOS award. Select Dog was GCH Catsun Corinth, Patty Anspach & Ian Crowther; and Select Bitch was CH. Maydl’s Mazik Kechl, Leslie & Carol Hodes owners.

Judges Education followed shortly after the end of judging in the auditorium at the Visitor’s Center, with a healthy group of interested future Puli judges, who were also present ringside during the morning and the subsequent days for ringside mentoring. As with many clubs providing these
educational opportunities as become more and more difficult as our numbers drop and breeders balance showing their dogs with contributing to this endeavor. Our sincere thanks to all of our members that give their time during these weekends to help make this a possibility. It isn’t easy, it takes time and at the end of the weekend it’s exhausting, but the effort to give back to the breed never goes unnoticed.

Great Britain’s John Whitton stepped into the ring on Saturday morning at the Heartland Kennel Club to assess the youngsters and veterans in Sweepsstakes. Once again the 6-9 month puppy from England was Best Puppy, but this time Best in Sweeps went to the Junior Puppy, Weatherby’s A Piece of Cake. Best Veteran in Sweeps was GCH Samson of Woodmark III, HT, owned by Bette & Richard Tannen.

Judith Goodin presided over the National Specialty and was decisive and consistent as she worked thru her dogs, ultimately selecting a 12-18 month dog for WD and BOW, Bowmaker Red White & Blue owned by Glen Vanderhart & Les Stallings. RWB went to the Open Dog owned by Zach & Deb Stadelman and Barb Edwards, Prydain Yes Man. WB was the American Bred Bitch owned by Nancy & Andy Guajerillo, Moonshadow A League of Her Own. RWB was Bhaven’s Kicsi Kekito owned by Dr. Linda Meakin.

After a brief break the big guns entered the ring and Mrs. Goodin had some hard work ahead of her. Select Dog McConnell and Ian Crowther; Select Bitch, CH. Wyldmor Whisper of Moonshadow – shown in a brushed coat and owned by Patty Anspach and Susan McConnell [littermate to the select dog]. Awards of Merit were Ch. Moonshadow’s Mazed, GCH. Moonshadow’s Rongyos Kis Medve, Ch. Wallganger Fringe, Ch. Bokar Bilbo Baggins, GCH. Catsun Corinith.

Smiles were in abundance as everyone headed back to the hotel for the Annual Dinner, Meeting, Awards Banquet and Silent Auction. Dinner provided a festive and social occasion and gave everyone a chance to unwind, talk and get their second wind. Sunday provided the final jewel in the conformation crown at the Jefferson County Kennel Club with BOB again going to GCH Cordmaker Rumpus Bumpus, BOS GCH Piroskai Original Sin II CGC owned by Irma & Dagmar Fertl; WD/BOW was the RWD from the previous day – Prydain Yes Man and WB was Loakespark The Devil Wears Cords owned by Alex Davis & Carolyn Nusbickel.

Once the conformation portion of the weekend was complete many of the Puli contingency headed outside to enjoy the athletic ability of the breed as we watched them competing in an independent Agility Trial at Purina Farm. The weather couldn’t have been more cooperative with cool temperatures, but plenty of sunshine. Agility High In Trial was CH. MACH3 Loakespark Just Smart, RN OAP OJP OF, call name “Oliver” at the age of 10½ years. Oliver was a testament to the hardness and endurance of this wonderful, active breed.

Still not enough Puli for the weekend, the truly addicted in the breed headed back to Purina Farm for Monday morning herding instinct tests and trial. Watching these “mad” Hungarians work sheep can sometimes be the most fun of the weekend. No matter how much competition they endure over the weekend in conformation or obedience, they show up at herding with their game face on, and it’s a true joy to watch the enthusiasm and instinct that is retained in the breed.

Specialties are always endurance contests and it seems as the years pass they get just a little more difficult for all of us. I heard many people say this year that they wondered how many more specialties they had in them. The Puli breed, like so many, suffers from dwindling numbers and it is hard not to worry about what the future holds for the breed. Yet, each year as the Specialty draws closer we all start the planning process because ultimately, for those that breed or love the Puli, being there, seeing the dogs and the people, the changes that the breed experiences, and sharing the history of the breed is what it’s really all about. It’s not who wins or loses, but being a part of something bigger and hopefully safeguarding the breed for whatever future generations come along. The real breeders who cherish the essence of this breed came back year after year; win or lose. They don’t come to a specialty, show their dog and then leave. These are the people working quietly in the background. They carry what needs to be carried, move what needs to be moved, and do whatever job needs to be done. They don’t seek awards or acknowledgement for the jobs they do or the dogs they breed – they don’t take from the breed – they give back to it. All too often their labor and efforts go unnoticed and unappreciated. To all of these people who remain nameless goes a tremendous debt of gratitude. You are the backbone of the breed and we salute you!
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Best In Show
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Valley

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