

Thirteen years later.... This article shows the Pumi's progress during a time period of more than a decade from the early 1960's up to 1974. (The last article I translated and posted by Dr Imre Ocsag was published in 1961. This article was written by Dr Istvan Marki and published in 1974. Dr. Marki, a kynologist, started his career with Dr Raitsits, "the father of the Pumi breed" in 1927.)

The article gives a detailed record of the changes in the breed over thirteen years. By carefully reading the article, some intricate clues can be picked up that explains the complexities of dog breeding.

By 1974 Pumi breeding entered into a new phase. It was not about saving the breed from extinction anymore, but preserving, stabilizing, popularizing while further improving it.

Some specifics to pay attention to; the mentioning of working lines and show lines..., the size, and shape of the dog (off square to square, the new ratio of the head, the "stop," the new type and quality of the coat - for better or worse ...- the changing ears and the debate over the tail. Attempts to distance the breed from its terrier type, putting functionality (herding) back to focus and adaptability - the urbanization of the Pumi.

The article in some ways also a chronicle of the changes (economic, political, social and environmental) that mostly helped breeders in their work. It also suggests the generational change where the priorities of the old guard partially became obsolete and the new generation of breeders' focus widened. In addition to preserving the breed, they also focused on aesthetics and marketability (traveling abroad to dog shows, exporting dogs etc.) This progress was made possible in large part by the introduction of the major economic reforms dated to 1968 and the subsequent liberalization of politics and reemergence of civic/civil society from its dormancy after the repressive dictatorial period of the post-1956 era lasting until about 1963. Get to know your breed folks...

About the Pumi

by Dr. Istvan Marki published in "A Kutya" dog magazine 9th issue in 1974

When apex predatory wildlife threatened livestock, shepherds used, livestock guardian, dogs (Komondor and Kuvasz.) in the past. These days Shepherd need only herding dogs moving and keeping the livestock together, such as the Pumi and the Puli. They are smaller, alert, courageous and highly intelligent. (The post WWII era rapid industrialization had caused severe environmental damages in Hungary. One of its consequences was the decimation and virtual extinction of large predators. - translator's note)

A popular herding type among shepherd at Hortobagy is still the same Pumi type dog, which description was recorded back in the 1930s.

To my knowledge, the current internationally accepted FCI Standard No.56/1966, in essence is still the same. Therefore, the breed must be judged by these guidelines whether it is home or abroad.

The Goal Is The Preservation Of The Breed

To my surprise, experts have been talking about two different Pumis lately. This new direction, describes a traditional and a new type of Pumi. I am certain that this highly intelligent, never stopping, agile, alert dog that is always ready for action neither in Raitsits, nor in professor Anghi's plans was intended to end up in the terrier group heavily altered from its original function and therefore destined for extinction as a substandard terrier.

The Pumi is one of those Hungarian breeds that have been evolved by the impact of regional environmental factors over decades and centuries. Therefore, it is hard to imagine that any foreign terriers could have had such significant effect in the overall transformation of the breed. This supposition is further supported by the fact that most Pumi type dogs are concentrated in such geographical areas where other foreign breeds - fortunately - hardly ever can be found. The Pumi, even today, in the age of rapid transformations, have been able to preserve its unique authenticity while in the same time is capable to adapt easily to new working conditions. He is productively able to apply its herding ability from the corkscrew horned Racka sheep to the much larger imported Hereford beef cattle.

I hope to believe that the wide versatility of the breed will be preserved unless some drastic external intervention might cause irreversible detrimental damage to the breed's original function. This issue is especially relevant today, when the number of Hungarian breeds, pastoral as well as sporting dogs are shown in increased numbers abroad. Therefore it is especially important to carefully monitor that these dogs are judged according to their official breed standard by foreign judges. Disregarding the established standards in favor of new trends would create quite a distraction.

When discussing the Pumi, the goal should be preservation with the help of available kynological science as opposed to creating a new breed.

What are the specific concerns?

Structure and Conformation

Most importantly, the size. In addition to its simplicity, it is a strict requirement that the dog is not oversize. In the same time, he should be strong enough to control a swine that drifted away from its herd or a fighting ram. A swift 35-45cm (13.5-18 inches) Pumi with a correct bite should be ready to act at the shepherd's direction - or sometimes by its own intuition.

When looking at its conformation, the Pumi's head should have a stop, even though, it might be less pronounced than the fox, Jagd, Kerry Blue, or other terriers. Its muzzle is longer than the Puli's, however, its proportion is no more than 45% of the length of the head as opposed to terrier breeds where the muzzle's length is minimum 50% of the head.

The eyes are medium size and their color ranges from dark brown to amber. The lighter shades are acceptable for lighter haired dogs.

The alert and animated "V" shaped ears should slightly bend to the front in a shallow angle. They should be set high with ample hair cover shaped as an umbrella that further enhances the Pumi's unique expression. (The ears of most terriers with their flexible cartilage usually tip forward).

The Pumi's muscular neck is set higher than average.

The body forms a square. The length of the body is usually equal with the height of the dog at the withers. The romp area on the back is somewhat slanted, medium in width and well muscled. The chest is deep and reach down to the elbows. The rib cage is almost flat, however, a wide forechest is desirable. The abdominal area is tucked up. The front legs form two vertical columns and the toes are tight on the round paws. The shaft of the femur and tibia are longer than the large metatarsal bone of the hind limbs. The toes of the hind paws are tight too and the rear legs often have dewclaws that should be removed. The tail is set high and form a wide circle above the croup. It should not sit/rest on the back of the dog. We have also found Pumis with short tails, however, we couldn't determine whether that fault was caused by "happy tail syndrome" or they were naturally short.

It has been the subject of discussions that the Pumi should have either fox terrier tails or the tale should be docked. In my opinion, the tail is one of the major hallmarks of the Pumi and therefore, it should remain natural and intact.

The coat of the Pumi forms individual locks on the entire body that are bouncy to the touch. The skin is heavily pigmented. The color of the hair is either black, shades of grey or ivory white. There are also apricot or fawn Pumis. The length of the hair is 3-7cm (1 1/4-3 3/4") it is

longer on the back of the dog and if it's not cared for regularly, it tends to mat from the accumulated dead hair, dirt and vegetable matter.

The Urban Dweller

When comparing city dwellers Pumis to other, more "sophisticated breeds," I can say from personal experience that the Pumi is just as well qualified for city living. While he is naturally reserved with strangers, his fast adaptability makes him an easy breed to take care of in urban environments. When a year and a half old working Pumi stud was brought from a farm where he lived outdoors to the city for breeding, he adjusted to his new temporary environment without any complications. When he discovered the lemon tree plant inside the home and considered to mark it, he immediately stopped his attempt after hearing the well timed verbal command from his handler. But besides these type of anecdotes, pet Pumis are becoming more frequent in cities, several of them living in apartments now days.

There were some promising signs of support for Pumi breeders in the city of Miskolc, around the end of the 1960s. Unfortunately, the late Dr Imre Kalasi and a small group of Pumi aficionados' efforts have failed after all. Their breeding stock was brought in from Hortobagy and from the Village of Jozsa. The quality of the litters were naturally mixed. The substandard quality offsprings had to be culled, while the promising ones became show dogs with some of the puppies delivering great results. Several of these higher-quality dogs ended up in various other regions of the country, however some of them fell victims of car accidents etc due to superficial care.

I've been working with dogs for close to 40 years. By seeing the increased interest in the Pumi, as an experienced longtime advocate of Hungarian breeds, I feel that I need to remain vocal about the breed's future.

One option to preserve our pastoral breeds is to keep them as registered working dogs in a controlled environment such as Skansen, or national parks where they could guard or herd livestock typical to the region. Keeping these dogs in such a transparent environment would also provide a great exposure to foreign visitors getting acquainted with these breeds. I am certain that many experts working in the field of livestock management at cultural heritage sites would consider to take on the responsibility of managing the maintenance and breeding of these pastoral breeds while also overseeing their selection and registrations.