

HERDING GROUP

companion events club, and a performance events club. Our breed thrives on a variety of activities. Club memberships make it easy to explore those events and help you decide which ones to pursue.

Lastly, three colors: red, tricolor, and sable!
—Lynda McKee,
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Pulik

THE PULI EAR

All three parts of the canine (and human) ear (outer, middle, and inner) are involved in hearing, but only the inner ear is responsible for helping to maintain one's ability to retain good balance. When it comes to hearing low-frequency sounds, dogs and people are about evenly matched. However, dogs can hear high-frequency and high-pitched sounds much more effectively.

So how do you know a Puli hears something—even with all that hair? As with other breeds, you'll see the Puli tipping or cocking its head, and if you look carefully, you'll see movement of the ears—both of which indicate alertness to sound. Dog ears have at least 18 muscles that work to tilt, raise, and rotate the ears, which helps them to identify and capture sounds from all directions (that is,



directional hearing). As with humans, a Puli is capable of exercising selective hearing, so don't assume that they cannot hear you when in actuality they are choosing to ignore you.

Puppies are not able to hear at birth (since their ear canals are still closed), but are able to start hearing when they are a few weeks old. If the breeder or owner notices a pup not responding at all to any noise, it might be advisable to consider BAER (Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response) testing. The Puli is not a breed where BAER testing is part of the breeder health-checks as required by the Puli Club of America.

As dogs and humans age, a diminished response to noises or hearing loss might be noticed. The general consensus (from reviewing comments in an online Puli forum) is that it seems to begin around age 11, though for many Puli owners, it really doesn't become obvious until the dog is age 12 or older. It is of course possible that diminished hearing may occur earlier for a variety of reasons, including whether the dog was prone to ear infections during his or her life.

Cleaning

Internally, a dog's ears may look similar to that of a human. However, canine ear canals are actually L-shaped. It's important to know this, because cleaning a dog's ear is not the

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same as how you clean your own. The AKC website shares guidance on how to clean a dog's ears (<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/health/how-to-clean-dogs-ears/>), and the AKC Health Foundation provides information on ear inflammation and infection (<https://www.akcchf.org/canine-health/your-dogs-health/caring-for-your-dog/canine-ear-inflammation-and.html>).

As a breed with hanging ears, hygiene is particularly important to avoid ear infections. Some Puli owners report that after cleaning the ear with a liquid, they use a medicated powder to help grab hold of the hairs within the ear and remove ("pluck") them out. Most people use their fingers, while others use a hemostat. Care must be taken so the hemostat doesn't get too deep into the ear canal, or that you don't pinch the skin (especially if you have a Puli who is bored and wiggling around). Tweezers should not be used.

While researching ear health, I was very surprised to read that some vets do not recommend removing hair from inside the ears. Under vet advice, some Puli owners just trim the hair in the ears with blunt scissors, while others do not even do that, and a Puli might even grow a cord out of each ear (gasp!). Some vets are concerned that when you pluck, you open the hair follicles, which can be an avenue for infection, so there are some Puli owners who follow through with a prescription ear

ointment after plucking.

Whether you pluck or at least trim the hair within the ear, be sure the hair is at least thin enough for air to flow freely into the ear. A moist and warm environment in the ear may result in an overgrowth of yeast and bacteria, particularly if you leave in a humid climate.

Cording

When the young Puli starts forming cords, one of the first places is behind the ears. It is absolutely imperative to *not* neglect addressing this area. The ears are very sensitive, and clumps seem to form almost overnight. By careful observation daily you can keep the hair separated with the use of your fingers. If you find a clump has formed, you can separate it by carefully running a pair of scissors through it. It is best to start at the skin and work the scissors toward you. By doing it this way, you don't accidentally cut into the skin or earflap ("ear leather"). (Many Puli owners use a plastic letter-opener that has a razor blade embedded; using this protects both your fingers and the ear flaps, and it helps you more easily slice through the mat or cord. However, this can be a dangerous tool for a novice Puli owner, so only an experienced person should use this method.)

The cords on an adult Puli's ears are about three inches in length on the ears themselves, trimmed somewhat more at the bottom of the

ear to blend with the rest of the head coat. If the ear cords are allowed to grow too long, you end up with a Puli with spaniel-looking ears. The initial trimming involves pulling the ear cords forward and trimming evenly with the nose. A benefit of a properly groomed (that is, trimmed) head is helping to keep cords out of the food and water dish.

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Shetland Sheepdogs

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEAD TYPE

The dog's head should signify the breed. It is one of the hallmarks of a breed. Most people can identify most breeds by just a picture or even a silhouette of the head. People involved in purebred dogs have a higher rate of identification. If a member of the general public is shown just a silhouette of some breeds such as Akita, Shiba Inu, or say Finnish Spitz, they may be hard pressed to accurately name those breeds if all examples are of the same size.

Students and judges of Shetland Sheepdogs would find it easy to distinguish between Sheltie and Collie silhouettes of the same size. The differences are not extreme but are very marked to the practiced eye.

A beautiful Collie head is still not correct

for a Sheltie in many ways. Shelties require a "slight, but definite stop" at the inner corner of the eye. The Collie standard calls for a "very slight, but perceptible break or stop." As one becomes more involved you must become aware of the head virtues from our standard.

Reading the standard carefully, our breed is not extreme in any way. Long, heavy heads are not what is called for in our breed. We have a moderate body, and the head should fit the picture. The clean sides of the back-skull need to blend smoothly into the well-rounded muzzle, with parallel planes of the top skull and the top of the muzzle separated by that correctly placed stop right at the inner corner of the eye. It should not start an inch or more behind the eyes and slide between the eye to a point an inch or so in front of the eyes.

At a recent specialty weekend I was pleased to see the three non-breeder judges doing correct head exams plus finding and rewarding the best heads on the soundest, correct bodies. There were many entries that displayed receding back-skulls, sliding stops, and too much depth of the skulls from the side. However, to see those with virtues of equal, flat head-planes, correct stops, clean skulls from the top and sides, correct finish of under-jaw and correct set, color, and placement of eye being the ones making it to final consideration was refreshing.

We can only expect that a judge can find