

# Primitive and Aboriginal Dog Society

## **Dear members of the Russian Branch of Primitive Aboriginal Dogs Society!**

We are happy to offer you the second issue of the Newsletter of the Russian Branch of PADS. In this issue, we tried to publish materials most interesting to lovers and fanciers of primitive aboriginal dogs.

Article of a Uralian hunter and Allrussian expert in Laika breeds Grigory Nasyrov. For the first time, this article was presented at the International Theoretical and Applied Science Conference “Modern Problems of Hunting Dog Breeding”, May, 2004, in Kirow, Russia.

This article is describing contemporary state, past history, present state and forecasts about future of the breed. It attracted great interest of hunters, breeders and owners of West Siberian Laikas and many lovers of dogs of many other hunting breeds.

Therefore, we bring this article to your attention.

Sincerely yours,  
Editorial Board of Newsletter  
Of the Russian Branch of PADS

## LET US PRESERVE THE TRADITION OF HUNTING WITH LAIKA

By Grigory Nasyrov

(Translation by Vladimir Beregovoy)

**This article was written for Russian readers and is a direct translation from Russian text.**

When we speak of uniqueness of our Laika breeds, many of us do not quite well understand why these dogs are unique. We often repeat this word simply like a well memorized sound. In fact, there is no other dog breed or primitive group of breeds has a set of valuable working qualities as Laika has. Laika



is uniquely adapted to harsh life conditions and is suitable as a hunting partner in lonely life of taiga professional hunters. Since primeval time of origin, Laika did not change his practical application. He has been always a hunting dog. Moreover, during millennia of history, Laika was used to hunt the same species of mammals and birds. It is hard to tell about many other breeds of hunting dogs. Many of them have changed specialization or geographic distribution, but Laikas always

remained hunting dogs of the taiga zone of Eurasian continent. Evolutionary history of Laika can be divided into four periods.

First period: Since prehistory until late XIX Century, Laika was a dog of peoples of the taiga zone of Russian north.

Second period: From early XX Century to 1947; aboriginal Laika types attract attention of city hunters, who bring them in cities of Siberia, Ural and central parts of European Russia. At this time, different Laika breeds became purebreds and hunters put together rules for their hunting trials. Although Russian hunters of northern provinces of the country have been hunting with Laikas since very old times, now these dogs became particularly valuable to them, because Government's authorities relied on Laikas as a tool in obtaining precious fur. First Government run kennels appeared and surveys of aboriginal Laika populations "in their aboriginal habitats" were conducted. Dog shows attracted Laika owners from deep provinces and special prizes were awarded to owners of best dogs.

Third period: 1947 to 70th, when standards for on four Laika breeds registered in major cynological centers of the country were put together and officially approved. Population of Laikas rapidly grew and they spread in southern parts of the former Soviet Union and beyond. During this period, breeding stock Laikas were rated systematically and formerly aboriginal breed became a breed of sportsmen hunters.

Fourth period: In 70th , through "Perestroika" and until present Laika breeders lost connection with provincial regions of hunting; Hunting industry farm controlled by the Governemnt (Gospromkhoz) were dissolved and demand for Laikas hunting fur bearing animals declined. During "Perestroika" time, major attention of Laika owners shifted from hunting to contest trials with using captured or tame animals like bear, wild boar and badger.

Now, I will discuss in greater details how Laikas were used in each of these four periods.

Taiga peoples of Russian frontier country kept their own types of Laika. They lived off land and hunting was entirely consumptive. Laika was always near his master and leader, constantly ready to hunt. Life close to his human master and hunting in close cooperation with him were condition, which helped Laika to become an intelligent and finely attuned to his master's mood dog. To explain this, I will discuss the West Siberian Laika as an example. What Ugrian tribes,

such as Mansi and Hanty living in Ural and middle part of the Ob River Basin in West Siberia, could hunt with their dogs?

General game checklist includes mammals and birds, such as moose, reindeer, bear, wolverine, otter, sable, marten, Siberian weasel (kolonok), mink, squirrel, flying squirrel, ermine, weasel, capercaillye, hares, black grouse, hazel grouse, partridge, gees and ducks. For an aboriginal taiga hunter, fur was a major commodity and squirrel and sable yielded the most

to the income. There was a great demand for Siberian furs since ancient times and a stream of precious pelts ended in markets of Byzantium and European countries. Besides, hunting furbearing animals, Laikas helped to obtain meat of moose and capercaillye. Reindeer, hazel grouse, partridge and hare do not stay, when Laika is barking, but



it is likely that Laika helped catching molting ducks and gees. It seems unlikely that ancient native people of the north hunted brown bear with Laikas, because Ugrian People believe that people considered bear as their original ancestor; in their believes, bear has reasonable thinking and is worshiped. There are ethnographic descriptions telling us that when Mansi had to kill a bear, they performed special rituals of pacifying spirits for this misdeed. Holiday of pacifying spirits involved people of several communities and continued for several days. Reason for such a ritual occurred very rarely. Before contacts with Europeans, people of the north did not have firearms. They obtained it only recently and it was of low quality. Nevertheless, Laikas have been well familiar with bears for millennia in the past, when encounters with bears in taiga were a common fact of life. In hungry years, Laikas probably helped to protect master's home against hungry predators. During routine hunting for furbearers, if a bear was a threat, presence of Laikas was very handy. Bold and bear-aggressiveness was valuable quality of Laikas and certainly was maintained by selecting offspring out of bold and aggressive towards bear dogs.

Thus, before XX Century, value of Laikas, depending on the ability to hunt a certain kind of game, was as follows in descending order:

1. Sable
2. Moose
3. Squirrel
4. All kinds of small game.

Laikas barking indiscriminately at any kind of game has a lower average productivity and cannot achieve an outstanding result on any of the most economically important animals listed above.

In late XIX Century, in the Russian north, aboriginal kinds of Laikas were most common dogs of local people involved in the hunting. In early XX Century, city hunters became increasingly interested in Laikas and this was the beginning of the Second period of history of these dogs.

During this time, in central Russia and Siberia kennels appeared, which were specializing on breeding Laikas. Their owners preferred Laikas hunting moose. Those were kennels of Shirinsky-Shikhmatov, Naryshkin, Malama, Lyalin and Dmitrieva-Sulima. Moose hunting Laikas were in great demand. Moose hunting with Laika was very popular among Russians of Ural and there, moose hunting Laikas were very much valued. Russians living in northern parts of European Russia used Laikas for finding bear dens and Laikas good at finding bear dens were sold at a high price to rich hunters living in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg.

In early XX Century Laikas were very common in possession of hunters living in many cities of Ural and Siberia. In the fall, hunters living in cities, such as Ekaterinburg, organized in hunting parties and took off to northern regions riding in trains or carts pulled by horses. A major hunting object was squirrel, because sable and marten populations were very low during that time.

When Communists came to power in Russia, the Soviet Government recognized importance of breeding hunting Laikas, because it needed furs. Selling furs ("soft gold") at international auctions was important for the economy. Calls urging to preserve hunting Laikas, which were providers for people of the north, were frequent on pages of all publications about hunting. Because high demand and prices for furs at that time, Laikas were providers indeed. After Communist revolution, a good squirrel Laika was in a particularly high demand, because moose, sable and marten had been catastrophically decimated and their hunting was outlawed. Demand for best squirrel Laikas remained high until post WWII years.

After WWII, promkhozoes (communal farms uniting people hunting furbearing animals) grew up. Under conditions of strict regulations of hunting, populations of sable increased numerically and expanded geographically filling its original range. Moose populations also increased and it became common across entire forested territories again, from the forest-steppe zone in the south to the forest-tundra zone in the north. However, culture of the moose hunting with Laikas was nearly lost. Moose was hunted from stands near salt marshes, at feeders or from farm tractors. Plain hunters could not afford an individual hunting license and hunted moose in groups with beaters driving moose towards shooters. However, poachers and natives of the taiga forests continued moose hunting by using an old traditional classic style with Laikas.

During this time, Soviet Government did a good job for breeding of Laikas pure. In 1947, standards of Laika breeds based on geographic principle were approved. This was the beginning of the third period in history of hunting Laikas. Rules for field trials of hunting Laikas on all kinds of game were put together and applied. Initially, those were rules based on already existed rules for trials of bird dogs. Dogs were rated by their performance using a 100 points system. Thus, for trials of Laika on birds and squirrel, this system allowed to estimate their performance during one hour. However, rules for trials on moose were written unprofessionally, which I will not discuss here in details. After breed standards had been approved, population of purebred Laikas

grew rapidly, especially of the West Siberian Laika. Field trials and dog shows became frequent and number of all kinds of champion dogs grew like mushrooms after a good rain. Since this time, Laika breeding became like breeding of a typical sport dog. A major criterion for selecting best breeding dogs became points earned at shows for conformation and field trials, not actual number of squirrels, sables, moose, capercaillyes, etc. found by the dog.

All diplomas for so-called “wild” animals (except ducks) were equalized for evaluation of the dog performance. Differences were only in a degree of the awarded diploma. Thus, a diploma on squirrel earned by the dog during squirrel trials in a city park was considered equally important to a diploma earned for sable, and diploma awarded for capercaillye was equal to diploma awarded for moose hunting.

Now, let us look back in history and see how Laikas were valued in 40th of XX Century, depending on specialization to hunt different animal species. In 1940, G. I. Demidov, a worker of the Uralian Science Research Station, wrote an article titled “State of hunting industry dog breeding in Sverdlovsk, Molotov and Omsk Provinces and measures for its improvement”. He offered numbers describing an average productivity of one hunter with Laika of Tabor District per year as follows: 150 squirrels, 2 sables, 2 moose, 10 capercaillyes and one bear. Average number of hazel grouses per hunter per year was 200, which

were shot without assistance of Laikas. Demidov did not include in his article how many black grouses, earth hole dwelling animals and ducks were obtained per year. Based on available data, I can conclude that importance of Laika by his ability to hunt specific game in declining sequence would be as follows:

1. Squirrel
2. Moose
3. Sable and/or marten
4. Capercaillye

A price for one outstanding quality hunting Laika was equal to price of 2-3 caws. At that time, adult Laikas were sold very rarely. At that time, only a part of income of people living in Taborinsky District came from hunting. A considerable part of family budget came from keeping farm animals and vegetable gardening.



To compare hunted game priorities in the past, I will cite a noted Uralian Laika expert, F. F. Krestnikov. Krestnikov wrote in Magazine “Uralian Hunter” (1927): “A squirrel dog costs 15-50 rubles, but if it is going after marten, its price is 100 rubles; outstanding marten hunting Laika costs 300 rubles; moose hunting Laika costs 200-300 rubles and particularly good one costs 500-1000 rubles. At that time a two barrel shotgun was sold for 20—300 rubles; a gun of brand name master was 600-1,500 rubles and a Laika puppy in Union of Hunters was 10-20 rubles. Yu. A. Liverovsky periodically participated in expeditions studying hunting industry in the Upper Vychegda and Pechora Districts. He wrote in his book “Laikas and Hunting with Them” (1927-1931): “Objects of hunting of pechorians and vychegodians is squirrel. Other small animals are sable, marten, mink, otter and ermine and among big animals are northern lynx, wolverine, moose and bear, which are shot only if found. I mention only those animals, which are hunted with Laikas.” There are more data of interest in this book: “Average number of squirrels shot by a Pechorian hunter per day is two-three squirrels, a better is five squirrels and the best is eight squirrels per day.” ... “Ratio of number of squirrels obtained per day with an average to an outstanding dog under equal conditions is as 1:4”... “Actual cost of an outstanding squirrel Laika is approaching cost of a sable hunting Laika, which is in general the most expensive dog in the north”. Liverovsky mentions in his book that bear hunting with Laika is not attractive to an industrial hunter (promyshlennik) by economical reasons and because of absence of good bear Laikas in the region. There are many villagers, who hunt for profit during their entire life, but never saw a bear during the hunting.

Summarizing conclusions of three specialists about hunting with Laikas in pre WWII period cited above, I can tell that most valuable were Laikas specialized for hunting sable, marten, moose and squirrel and I would like to emphasize once more that this was true during time, when Laika remained an industrial hunting dog. During that time, Laika was a working dog of those, who hunted to make living for pelts and meat and dog’s value was determined entirely by his productivity on a specific kinds of game.

(to be continued)

## BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SAMOYED

### **Marina Kuzina**

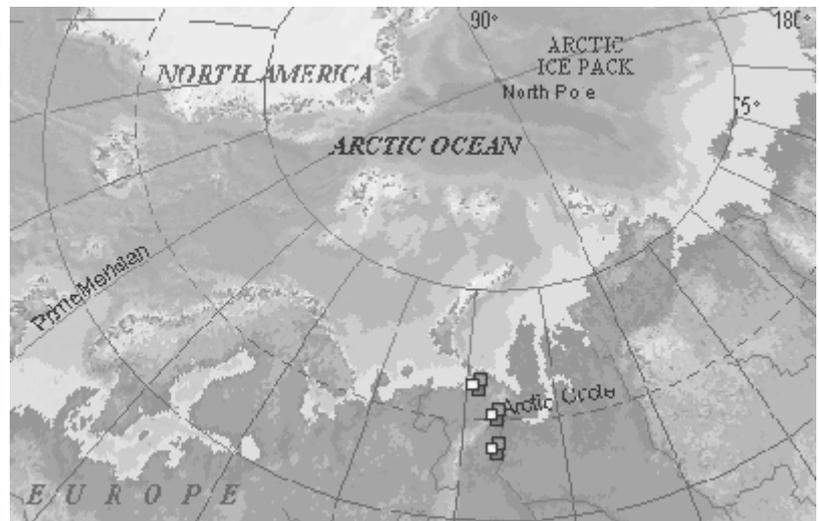
(Translation by Vladimir Beregovoy)

Dogs that came from the expeditions of Fritof Nansen are considered the progenitors of the Samoyed. It remains an enigma to many, where the dogs used for Nansen's expeditions were purchased. Greenland, Chukotka and even the Amur River basin are mentioned as possible sources...

I offer quotations from some documents, which may shed light on the origin of these dogs.

"In the late fall-early winter of 1892, Baron Toll was in Tyumen. At the request of Nansen, he was searching for a suitable man, who could buy and deliver by a certain time a sled dog team to Yugor Shar. Former Governor of Tobol recommended Mr. Trontheim as a man with experience and knowledge of the north. In line with this, Mr. Trontheim signed a contract with Baron Toll, according to which he should buy from the Sosva River region 30 best choice dogs suitable for work in harness. The dogs should be shipped across Ural Mountain Ridge in Yugor Shar not later than early July and wait at Khabarovo for arrival of Nansen's ship.

After signing the contract, Trontheim was in Berezovo on January 16 (the lower Sosva River), where at this



**"Route of Trontheim from Berezovo to Khabarovo in Yugorsky Shar"**

time there were great gathering of Ostyaks and Samoyeds. Using this opportunity, Trontheim bought 33 selected dogs that were trained for pulling sleds. For testing their endurance, they were harnessed to three sleds loaded with 160 kg plus one passenger each.

Trontheim successfully traveled from Berezovo to Muzhi riding in sleds pulled by these dogs. Here, he started getting ready for further travel. By the day the expedition started, Trontheim prepared 12,800 kg of food for the dogs, which consisted mainly of dry fish. He also hired a Zyryan with a herd of 450 head of reindeer, to deliver the traveler together with his dogs and belongings to

Yugor Shar. Some of his reindeer would be used to feed the dogs.

They started from Muzhi on April 4. Four dogs were harnessed to each sled. The expedition moved rather fast. During the day, they made two stops, one for lunch and one to camp at night. The Zyryan reindeer breeders were on their routine seasonal travel with their families, including wives and children. Therefore, in the evening, they set up their chums, started bonfires and cooked food for people and dogs. Then, the entire camp fell asleep leaving the guarding duty to small, reindeer herding dogs. In early morning, when it was still possible to distinguish

between end of night and beginning of the day, with help of the same dogs, the Zyryan gathered their reindeer, packed their chums and took off again.

Upon the arrival to Khabarovo, it appeared that Nansen and his ship, the “Fram” still had not arrived and it was necessary to wait for their arrival.



**Kaifas. The last dog of Fritiof Nansen.  
Drawing from book “Fram” in Polar Sea”.**

Trontheim chose his camp site with the dogs between the sea and the village. A Samoyede was hired to take care of the dogs. Trontheim bought 30 puds (480 kg) of meat and 15 puds (240 kg) of fish, which began to spoil, several puds of seal meat and flour, for which he paid 2 rubles 50 kopeks per pud (16 kg), from local Samoyede people and fishermen. While waiting for the “Fram”, they spent time hunting and taking care of the dogs, which were in excellent condition.

The long awaited “Fram” arrived on July 18. Trontheim left to meet the ship in a small Samoyede’s boat. Approaching the ship, he shouted in Russian so he would be taken on the deck. Here, an energetic man, not tall in stature met him. He wore an oily working jacket. Trontheim took him as an oil man or ship’s mate. It turned out he was the leader of the expedition, Nansen himself. He generously met Trontheim, asked about his trip and immediately headed to the shore to check the dogs.

for the good choice of dogs and their excellent condition. This is documented in the certificate given to Trontheim written in German.

“In January of this year, Baron E. von Toll ordered Alexander Ivanovich Trontheim to buy 30 selected sled dogs for my expedition to polar countries and deliver them here, in Khabarovo. He accomplished this task to my complete satisfaction. It was a pleasure to see that, while doing this job, he kept his accounts remarkably orderly and accurate, which is rarely seen. He left a very good impression and I can recommend him utmost well. Today, he received a Gold Medal awarded by his Highness Oscar II, King of Norway and



**The Sosva River mouth, a tributary of the Ob River. 1962.  
Photo by V. Beregovoy, USA.**

Sweden for his service to our expedition. Khabarovo, August 3, 1893. F. Nansen.”

Thus, “on the 29th, we arrived to Khabarovo; we took 33 dogs aboard. On August 2, we took water for engines and on August 3, we weighed anchor and took off” – a secretary of London newspaper Mr. Olly Christopherson wrote.

What was the further fate of these dogs? Nansen and Johansen took 28 dogs to the North Pole. However, these animals did not come back. The last of the dogs of the polar travelers were Kaifas and Sutgen (Giant).

On “Fram: drifting across polar sea, Otto Sverdrup was appointed as a Commander. In his account “About travel of “Fram” after March 14, 1895” there are some data about the remaining dogs.

“Nansen and Johansen left seven dogs: a bitch named Sussy and her six puppies, Kobben, Snadden, Bellya, Squint, Axel and Boris”. Evidently, remaining dogs taken aboard of “Fram” at Khabarovo, except 28 dogs left with Nansen, died by some reasons during two years. “On April 25, Sussy gave birth to another litter of 12 puppies. All puppies were big and pretty and majority of them was white. They would probably grow up “belki” as Nenets usually call all white dogs”. Three of these puppies died later on.

“On October 9, Squint gave birth to a litter. Squint was out of first litter of Sussy. Only one puppy was left with her. A week later Syssy gave birth to a litter of nine females and two males. Out of these puppies, both males and one female were left to live.”

Thus, it follows from the account of Otto Sverdrup that by the end of travel, on “Fram”, 20 closely related dogs remained. Their fate after the return to Norway is not mentioned in documents available to me.

According to fragmentary data from notes left by Nansen and Sverdrup, all these dogs were strong, tough and excellent at pulling sleds; they worked very well in hunting Polar Bears. Descriptions of those hunts describe that good sled work does not exclude hunting capability, bear aggressiveness and intelligence. Unfortunately, there were no photographs in any of these accounts. However, in the drawings, big shaggy and predominately white dogs are shown.

All the information described above is pertinent to dogs that contributed to the modern breed of Samoyed dog. What kind of dogs can be found in their home country? In 1962, photographs taken by Vladimir Beregovoy show quite typical Samoyeds. Unfortunately, contemporary condition of aboriginal dogs of that area remains unknown.

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## **HISTORY OF THE RUSSO-EUROPEAN LAIKA AND MYTH ABOUT ITS INTERBREEDING WITH THE UTCHAK DOG**

**Vladimir Beregovoy and Marina Kuzina**  
(Translation by Vladimir Beregovoy)

In many websites authored by non-Russian writers and even in well respected publications, a myth about origins of the Russo-European Laika circulates. We offer two samples picked out of different websites designed to inform visitors about the Russo-European Laika.

Sample one: “This is an awesome dog who hunts bear, moose, wolf and boar. Closely related to the Karelian Bear Laika, the Russo-European Laika was developed by Russian breeders who crossed the Karelian Bear Laika with the Utchak Sheepdog. The latter is an absolutely fearless animal that doesn't think twice when meeting up with any large like animal such as himself. This dog is certainly not a family pet. The Russo-European Laika inherited much of the Utchak's fearless nature and will not hesitate to attack a full-grown animal. If this trait could be focused properly, the breed would be a truly powerful guard dog”. In fact, the Russo-European Laika hunts all kinds of small and big game and great majority of dogs hunts squirrels, capercaillies and black grouse. It is true that the Russo-European Laika is a bold and aggressive hunting dog suitable to go after moose, wild boar and bear, but he is and affectionate and 100% loyal family dog. He would bark at unfamiliar people, but never quick to bite. It clearly said in the breed standard that aggressiveness to humans is not typical of the breed. How about “Utchak Dog”? Such a breed did not and does not exist in Russia. Russo-European Laikas originated from aboriginal dogs of NE part of European Russia and there were no need to cross them with any other imported breed.

We do not know who introduced this false statement about interbreeding with the Utchak Dog, but it was repeated by many, who wrote about the Karelian Bear Dog. Here is sample two: “Closely related to the Laika, the Karelian Bear Dog is descended from an old Finnish breed to which Russian breeders introduced Utchak Sheepdog blood.” Unfortunately Mark Derr also picked this up and included in his article about Karelian Bear Dogs published in Smithsonian.

We hope that lovers of Karelian Bear Dogs and Russo-European Laikas will be interested to read information about origin of the Russo-European Laika based on original documents.

Best aboriginal Laikas of Komi, Arkhangelsk Province and Perm Province served as original breeding material for creation of the Russo-European Laika as a purebred.

In 1947, research worker of the All-Union Institute of Hunting Industry, E. I. Shereshevsky offered a new classification of aboriginal Laikas. It was based on geographic principle instead of existed at that time ethnographic principle; Likas were named by names of nations of peoples, to whom they belonged. According to the new principle, formation of each Laika breed should be based on fusion of local aboriginal and similar to each other types of dogs (landrace breeds) into one breed of larger geographic area. Then, in 1947, based on this principle, All-Union Cynological Meeting accepted and ratified four hunting Laika breeds, one of which was the Russo-European Laika.

However, the breed still should be developed. Kennel of the All-Union Research Institute of Hunting Industry (VNIIOZ) played most important role in the process. E. I. Shereshevsky and V. E. Koon led the breeding work. They mated Champion Pootik 65/l with his sister Pomka 76/l. They both originated from black and white male Muzgar brought from Pomozda District, Komi Autonomous Republic and West Siberian Hanty type Laika female named Pityukh-II. As a result of this breeding, puppies were of rather uniform type, black and white and with good conformation and hunting ability. This type of dogs became a basis for the first written breed standard of the Russo-European Laika.



**Russo-European Laika. Adult male. Photo provided by M. Kuzina. Russia**

Further formation of the breed was relatively fast and completed by 1952, when Cynological Committee of the Headquarter of Hunting Industry of Russia (Glavokhota) approved the standard of the breed.

Line of Champion Pootik 65/l had high quality dogs constantly passing their conformation type, when mated with bitches of Zyryan type dogs. Champion Pootik and his offspring were good breeding dogs, but subsequent inbreeding inevitable in the beginning of the development of the breed had its negative effects. Some dogs with poor bone and nervous deviations appeared. Besides, restrictive breeding of only black and white dogs resulted in loss of good shape of head, snippiness and weakened cheeks. Therefore, it became necessary to add fresh blood dogs with good typical of the breed characteristics. For this purpose, in 1956, a new line of male named Bublik (owner's name is Gelobov) was added. Bublik's son named Druzhok 103/l was brought from Leningrad. Males of this line passed a strong bone, prominent cheeks and typical of the breed coat color and fresh blood into inbred line of Pootik 65/l.

Besides this, in 1960, male named Sharok b/n (owner's name is Borisov) was brought out of hunting regions of Komi Autonomous Republik and produced several typical representatives of the breed and in late 60th a group of males became a breed line with the female named Dymka 1008/l (owner's name is Leonov).

By 1964, there was a considerable number of similar type dogs meeting requirements of standard of the breed Russo-European Laika. Important pedigree lines and groups had been formed. Results of dog shows and field trials confirmed high quality of these dogs and the breed grew in popularity among hunters with Laikas.

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3. Dog Show and Rating Reports on Russo-European Laikas put together by experts at Moscow Dog Shows, No. 27-36, 44-55.
4. Reports on field trials and contests of Laikas in Moscow, 1962-2000.
5. These sources on the history of the Russo-European Laika are stored in private libraries of members of Moscow Society of Hunters and Fishermen and in public libraries.

One question remains. What kind of dog the Utchak Dog is? We would like other members of R-PADS and guests to help us to find answer to answer this question.

Editors of R-PADS invite submissions of materials for publication..

- ✓ Article, more 12-14 thousands of characters plus 4-5 photographs formatted JPG or TIFF, resolution 300 dpi.
- ✓ Review, 8-12 thousands of characters plus 2-3 black and white photographs, IPG or TIFF, resolution 300 dpi.
- ✓ Note, 3-8 thousands of characters without picture.

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All questions, suggestions and comments will be accepted with gratitude. E-mail them or send them as snail mail to:

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