

Primitive and Aboriginal Dog Society

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

We are gladly present the last in 2005 issue of R-PADS Newsletter.

We plan to introduce you to two aboriginal breeds, the Taigan and the Canaan Dog.

Tatyana Dubinina, who is a member of R-PADS, wrote for us an article about the aboriginal Kirghiz sighthound the Taigan. The Taigan, like many other aboriginal breeds in their home countries, is at the verge of extinction, but actions taken by cynologists of Kirghizstan to save the breed give us a hope that aboriginal pure type Taigans will be preserved in high mountain regions of the country. Mirna Shibolet is a specialist on the Canaan Dog; she is dedicated to preservation of this unique breed, which became a national breed of Israel. She is our guest and presents an article with original photographs. In conclusion, we add the continuation of the article with the description of the Olenegonbka (the Reindeer Herding Dog) and its standard put together by Boris Ivanovich Shiroky. B. I. Shiroky has many years experience with this breed in his own kennel "Kinos" and during his work with aboriginal dogs in Chukotka and Kamchatka Peninsula.

Sincerely yours,
secretary of the Russian Branch of PADS
Marina G. Kuzina

LIVING LEGEND OF TYAN-SHAN MOUNTAINS

Tatiana Dubinina

Stuff Cynologist of “Kyrghyzokhotrybolovsoyuz”

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Photographs donated by Taigan breeder

Kubanychbek Issmailov



Far away from towns and villages, in a small mountain country, there are still some places cut off from modern civilization, where on alpine meadows with rich and diverse vegetation cattle herds are grazing; mountain peaks retain there snow caps and crystal clear water in creeks is icy cold. Here, life is going at the same pace as it was for thousand of years in the past. Here, there is no electricity, running water or regular communication with the outside world. People live in small collapsible houses built out of thick felt called yurta. The only mean of transportation is horse. Only some contemporary household items remind us of present time and not in the remote past. These are exactly those conditions, under which the Kyrgyz sighthound Taigan had been formed. The Taigan is mentioned multiple times in Kyrgyz epos “Manas”. There some myths about origins of the Taigan. According to one of them, the Taigan originated from mountain vulture Kumai. One egg was stolen out of nest of this bird. A puppy hatched out of the egg. When the puppy grew up and became Taigan, he saved entire tribe from starvation by exterminating marauding pack of wolves. Origins of the name of the Kyrgyz sighthound Taigan remains a mystery. In Kyrgyz-Russian dictionary, this word is translated as sighthound. Som interpreted word Taigan as “catch up and kill”. Horse and Taigan breeders tie origins of word “Taigan” with horses, because Taigan and horse followed Kyrgyz people during their entire history. In Kyrgyz language “tai” means a year and a half colt, most restless and playful. “Gan” means blood. Thus the whole word means something like “romping blood”. Kyrgyz language has a word “taigak”, which means sliding or slippery. This meaning is close to Taigan. Taigan chasing game approaches at high speed, movement of his legs is not seen and the impression is that the dog moves like sliding towards standing quarry.

Taiga became a loyal satellite of nomad cattle keeper, sharing with him all hardships of nomad’s life, travel over long distances, short resting breaks, shortage of food and danger of wild predators. All this helped to shape up a low maintenance sigh hound, capable to work under any conditions and helping to obtain food for the master and for himself. Hunting independently, Taigan killed to feed himself marmots, ground squirrels and hares. Hunters killed with assistance of Taigans mountain goat (Capra ibex), roe deer, wolf, fox, jackal and badger. Kyrgyz traded pelts of hunted animals for household goods with other peoples.

Fearlessness and aggressiveness of the Taigan were very important in life of nomadic cattlemen. During hunting they successfully overpowered wolves helping to control population of this predator and protecting the cattle. To produce a more efficient wolf killing dog, nomads mated Taigans with Kyrgyz sheep guarding dog, named Dobot. The mixes were called Dologoy.

For centuries Taigans remained indispensable assistants of Kyrgyz people. Families having a Taigan have never been hungry or got into trouble. Therefore, Taigan was always a treasure. A bitch with puppies was kept in the left half of yurta, although Kyrgyz custom discourages to keep a dog inside. A puppy of well proven working Taigan was valued high and considered a generous gift. If such a puppy was transferred to a new home, then it was done only for exchange for a good purebred horse. An adult well working Taigan was not for sale. Since old times, in Kyrgyzstan, there is a tradition, according to which a good Taigan can be obtained only as a gift or it can be stolen.

During most of its history, this breed was reproduced without much control under conditions of geographic isolation, but this did not influence the population. When new settlers arrived and new dog breeds came with them. Other bred dogs became mating with Taigans, because Taigans traditionally lived being never confined or tethered. Most conscientious hunters tried to protect their dogs from accidental breeding, but they were a few.

With introduction of effective firearms, transportation, industrial development and mass influx of new people, the Taigan was losing his importance as a provider to the family.

During 70th, there was another reason threatening the Kyrgyz sighthound. Historically, Taigans always lived free near the yurta and ate whatever they could catch. This fact automatically made the Taigan a pest damaging reproduction of game animals. There were ordinance, which required extermination of all dogs living not confined. However, in Kyrgyz mentality Taigan should not live confined. Therefore, Taigans were shot along with any feral dogs and the Kyrgyz sighthound began disappearing as a breed.

Concurrently with this, in 70th-80th, cynologists alarmed the society about the disappearance of the Kyrgyz sighthound. There was survey, census and evaluation of quality of still remaining Taigans across Kyrgyzstan. Pure type Taigans were found only in most remote hard accessible high mountain regions of the country.

In late 80th, in Kyrgyzstan, a kennel for preservation of the Kyrgyz sighthound was created. However it existed only for two years, because of lack of funds. At the same time, two pairs of Taigans were brought to the Show of Achievements of Agricultural Industry. They became a founding stock of the Kyrgyz sighthound in



Russia. After cynologists concluded that the Taigan had extinct, many wanted to buy the last remaining specimens of disappearing sighthound. Mass exportation of dogs resembling the Taigan out of Kyrgyzstan began. Emigration of Russian-speaking hunters played an important role in the process. Moving out they left their dogs or sold them for pennies to dog businessmen.

Only a few real Taigan lovers understood the danger of this development. They made a considerable effort to save the breed, traveled across Kyrgyzstan, collected most typical dogs and placed them in reliable hands. Thanks to these enthusiasts, the Kyrgyz sighthound is now preserved in his home country as it

was millennia back in history. This is confirmed by hunting dog shows in population of purebred Taigans in Kyrgyzstan is growing by year. All puppies are examined in the Club of Hunters, tattooed and their owners receive certificates about origin of puppy. Now, popularity of the Taigan in his home country is as high as it was for centuries in the past.

The Taigan is an aboriginal, above average size sightjound; it is strong, elegant, with lean and sturdy body structure, with powerful jaws, well developed muscles and explosive energy. In everyday life the Taigan is a quiet dog, mistrustful with strangers and very devoted to his owners. Therefore, this is a good guard dog. The Taigan is a dignified dog, do not tolerate rough and forcible treatment. This is a result of the fact that the Taigan for centuries was considered as a friend and assistant of Kyrgyz; they usually did not called him a dog. Among Kyrgyz Taiga is Taigan and all other dog breeds are dogs.



During hunting, Taigan is very agile, tough and fast. He has a tremendous endurance, intelligent and is capable to take right decisions on his own. While rather flegmatic in everyday life, the Taigan explodes when seeing a wild game and reacts fast to changes in situation.

All physical features of the Taigan are caused by conditions of his life in high mountains with harsh climate, low atmospheric pressure and deficiency of oxygen. When hunting mountain goat (Capra ibex), Taigan should be physically active at the altitude up to 3,000-3,500 meters above sea level. Sparse air in high mountains helped to create a dog with a high erythrocyte density in blood capable to adapt to rapid changes in atmospheric pressure and deficiency of oxygen. Lean body with sturdy bone and well pronounced angulations at joints and broad muscles allow the Taigan to make sharp turns on steep slopes. Running fast, the Taigan can turn at angle of

180 degrees. Besides, under conditions of ragged terrain, where it is impossible to see the game animal, Taigan is using unique for a sighthound scent. Exactly this makes Taiga a universal hunting dog. Kyrgyz say: when Taigan runs, blood sprays out of his ears". This is why ears of Taigan are well protected from strikes with his hind legs with well developed burkas. A peculiar hair cover of the Taigan is important for keeping him warm on cold rocky ground and blowing wind, when he is resting or sleeps curling on snow. "Boots" on Taigan's feet protect him from injuries, when running on rocky ground. Coat color of Taigans varied depending on the habitat.

Oldtimers tell that in valleys Tigans had predominately light coat colors and in mountains their coats were darker colored. Perhaps this was associated with climatic differences. In high mountains, the climate is harsh, when strong cold winds blow it is hard to warm up, but darker coat colors help well utilize sun heat. Frequent coat colors of these dogs are black, black and gray, gray of various shades and with irregular black spots on basic gray background (chubaryi in Russian). In the valleys climate is milder, but summer temperature is rising up to 40 degrees C and local Taigans are white, buff or various shades of red. A dark colored dog can die of overheating here. The same explanation can be applied to local variations in hair density among dogs living in high mountains and in the valleys. Dogs obtained from high altitude regions have a well developed undercoat and need twice per year combing periods, otherwise their coat becomes matted and the dog is losing the pretty appearance. Valley Taigans retain characteristic of the breed pattern of hair distribution, but they are less heavily coated than mountain Taigans. Length of furnishing hairs is about 7 cm and with little density undercoat. In Kyrgyzstan, there are valleys Taigans, which obtain good furnishing coat only in winter time.

Keeping Taigans is complex enough. This aboriginal dog lived free for thousands of years. Dogs obtained food by hunting independently, endured long travels with their nomadic owners and the dogs lived in a state of constantly good physical shape. Besides this, the Taigans have never been trained in any way. Running free in and around the camp, dogs were free to make their own decisions. Under this conditions and importance of the



dogs for their owners, interactions between the dogs and the people were like among equal. Therefore, keeping a Taigan under modern conditions, one should remember that millennia of history of free life made a certain imprint on the dog's character. Taigan should be kept with free exercising, long walking trips and ravel in fields every week. Under conditions of insufficient freedom and exercising, the Taigan can become withdrawn, become irritable and even display aggression to the master. This may be explained by excessive amount of adrenaline in the dog's blood, which should be utilized during active walking trips, at play and better during hunting. It is better to teach Taigan only elementary necessary commands, which were used

by his native nomadic owners, such as come up when called, walking on the leash, the dog must know his place, prohibitive commands and also encouraging commands during hunting, such as "Search", "Look up", "Get it" and especial command asking the Taigan to jump on the horse back to better overview the surrounding. Other commands, such as "Seat", "Lay" are usually executed very slowly even by well trained Taigan, showing the owner that he does it only once and for respect to him as a friend. Taigan is never fawning to his owner. He acts like he knows his own value and accepts petting like making a favor to his owner and looking at him from under his long eyelashes with pride of eastern princess. Since puppy age, Taigan chooses a circle of people close to his master and he will recognize them. To the rest people he would react like a wild animal and not allow them to approach by trotting away from them in circles and growling. He would investigate the stranger and this result in an unpleasant impression, because it would be hard for him to guess, what would happen next. One, who experienced bite by Taigan's teeth at least once, would not want to try it another time. Grabbing and tearing Taigan cuts skin like by scissors tearing off large pieces of flesh and causing serious and sometime fatal injuries. Reaction of Taigan is lightning fast and if his foe is active and fights back, the dog would have enough time to retaliate. Therefore, dealing with Taigan, it is better not to aggravate



him and treat him politely. Taigan does not allow treating himself rough. At the same time, Taigan is a very loyal dedicated to the master dog. He loves his master and ready to do much for him. Old men say that Taigan would never abandon his master in trouble. There are many tales stories about faithfulness of Taigan based on real events. Inside home, Tiagan is very polite and restrained. He is well balanced and not aggressive during walking trips. However, like dogs of many other breeds, Taigans have different personalities. There are aggressive and independent dogs and there are very affectionate and social ones. However, they all retain basic qualities of character typical of the breed.

Dealing with other dogs, Taigans are indifferent and calm like strong adversary. This is associated with the fact that Taigan is a natural wolf killer. For many years of his history, Taigan was a hunting dog and he hunted to kill. Actually any Taigan can kill a young wolf. Only a rare descendant of mythical “bird-dog” would fight a mature wolf male. However, dealing with wolf Taiga is fearless. A mature wolf male is a serious enemy, because he survived since puppy age and lived through a few mating periods, during which wolves fought to death. Therefore, a mature wolf would kill an inexperienced Taigan. Experienced Taigans chasing wolf tear his tendons and runs aside. During this time the hunter shoots. If wolf is not shot, the Taigan resumes chasing and tears the other tendon and, if the wolf cannot run further, the hunter dispatches it. Only strongest and most experienced Taigans kill mature wolf. After tearing hind leg tendons, Taigan kill s wolf holding it by the throat. Therefore, being with other dogs, Taigan without growling and barking remains always a leader. His competitors feel strong spirit of this dog and do not attempt to challenge it.

Taigan loves freedom and hunting the most and this is what everyone having this dog should bear in mind. Kyrgyz follow a special system of preparation of Taigan to hunting. Feeding played an important role in this, although idea that Tiagan should not be fed, because he can feed himself persists. True hunters and fanciers of the breed know that poorly fed Taigan would never have the stamina. Therefore, between hunting seasons, Taigans are fed with baked ground grains cooked with bones (talkan). Prior to hunting season, dogs died includes increasing amounts of meat and three days before taking off to hunt, the dog is fed with high calorie fat meat only. Taigan must be well fed during hunting. Correctly fed Taigan runs twice faster then dogs fed with regular plain diet. Therefore, true hunters pay serious attention to feeding puppies. If it happened that in the family was a mother nursing a baby, she set aside some milk for Taigan puppy. Is not it a proof that Kyrgyz valued and respected this breed? Therefore, everyone, who had a chance to become familiar with this mysterious and noble dog breed, fell in love with it for the rest of his life. This is why it is important not to let this little known to the world breed of sighthound to disappear from face of Earth.

Luckily, there are still many people, who cannot imagine themselves without thrilling hunting with Taigan, love the breed and little by little contribute into preservation and history of this aboriginal sighthound. Today, we can tell with certainty that gift, which Kyrgyz got from the mythical bird Kumai, is preserved, loved and revered like it was for millennia in the past.

THE CANAAN DOG – BIBLICAL DOG IN MODERN TIMES

By Myrna Shibolet



The Canaan Dog holds a special and unique position in today’s cynological world. On the one hand, this breed is fully recognized by all of the world’s kennel clubs and is gaining more and more popularity as a pet and family dog in various parts of the world. On the other hand, in its land of origin, Israel, this breed also still exists as a wild or semi wild dog that must fight for its survival.

The Canaan Dog is one of the small group of rare and disappearing breeds that are considered to be primitive dogs, and are often referred to as “pariah dogs”. The pariahs, that include

ancient indigenous breeds found mostly in Asia and Africa, are of great interest for a number of reasons. They are in type the closest to the original dog, the dog that was the ancestor of all the modern breeds, and that may date back as much as 100,000 to 150,000 years. These are the breeds that have survived on their own, the only criteria for the breed's continuance being its ability to survive in very difficult conditions. On the other hand, pariahs, in their life style and relation to man, are very similar to the first dogs ever domesticated, willing to develop a partnership with man but able to live on their own if necessary.

To scientists and others with interest in the development of the dog, these breeds are described as a naturally occurring type of dog "breed" in which the dogs are similar in appearance and usually also in behavior. They were created by natural selection as suited for their local environments (example: double vs. single coats depending upon climate) and through only a small amount of direct artificial selection, which is nearly always post-breeding (culling of excess pups and elimination of undesirable individuals – those that, for instance, can not learn to stop bothering livestock/poultry). These are not "pure" breeds in the modern sense of having a narrow gene pool selected for some purpose, with no other breeds allowed to be crossed in. There is always the possibility of some minor mixing with other breeds that were brought to the living area of the primitive dogs, but only characteristics that would be favorable to survival would have persisted, and overall any "foreign" influence would quickly be diluted into the strong gene pool of the pariahs.



It is quite likely that the references to dogs in the Bible were to the same type of dog that is known to us today as the Israel Canaan Dog. The only breed that is native to the "Land of Canaan" or the present day State of Israel, the Canaan Dog is very much the same as he was thousands of years ago. Not changed, as were other breeds, by the planned breeding selections of man, the only criteria for his development were the necessities of survival in a harsh environment. There is a variety of archaeological proof of the existence of this type of dog in ancient Canaan, including the discoveries in Ashkelon and Beit Guvrin of dog cemeteries from the Philistine era, with skeletons of dogs of varied ages from puppy to adult and male and female, identified as of the same type or "breed"- so-called "Bedouin shepherd dogs".

The Canaan Dog is classified in FCI Group 5, where he is one of the subgroup of primitive dogs. He is probably very similar to the primitive ancestor of all of today's breeds of dog, which was believed to have developed in the Middle East in prehistoric times. The Canaan retains the basic characteristics of the wild dog – moderate size and bone, well-balanced and well proportioned body, thick and weather resistant coat, prick ears, functional skull shape, very well developed senses, natural trotting gait, and great strength and stamina. The Canaan is also one of the very few breeds known that has successfully adapted to a desert environment. Studies done at Tel Aviv University and Ben Gurion University of the Negev have shown an astonishing ability in this breed to adapt to extremes of temperature and lack of water. The breed has developed physiological adaptations to prevent waste of fluids and overheating.

The Canaan Dog has survived for thousands of years on its own, living by its wits, and surviving in the wild and on the fringes of civilization by hunting and scavenging. Often puppies were captured, raised and used, especially by the Bedouin tribesmen, as guardians of the flocks and the tents. Like other wild or feral residents of the area, only the strongest, healthiest, cleverest, and most fit survived to breed and pass on their characteristics.

In 1934, Professor Rudolphina Menzel, a noted cynologist with a considerable reputation in her native Austria in the field of



animal behavior, immigrated to what was then known as Palestine. The Haganah (the Jewish Defense Forces prior to the establishment of the State of Israel) requested her assistance in building up a service dog organization. She quickly discovered that the European breeds with which she was accustomed to working – German Shepherds, Boxers, Dobermans – suffered greatly from the severe climate and difficult terrain and had a hard time functioning effectively. She began to observe the local pariah dogs living on the outskirts of settlements and with the Bedouin in desert and wilderness areas, and decided that this was a true breed of dog that had adapted to the conditions. She began a program of “redomestication”, collecting puppies and adults from the pariah groups. She found them to be highly adaptable, amenable to domestication, and quick to learn.



Prof. Menzel called this breed “Canaan Dog” after the Biblical “Land of Canaan”, found them highly trainable and able to function without difficulty in the extreme conditions of the local environment. She began a breeding program as well as collecting dogs from natural sources, and found them to be very effective for patrol and guard duties, and for mine detection.

Prof. Menzel was responsible for gaining recognition for the breed; the breed standard prepared by her was accepted by the FCI in 1966. (The last revision was accepted in 1987). She exported the first Canaans, to the US in 1965 and to Germany shortly after. In 1970, Shaar Hagai Kennels near Jerusalem joined in the development and breeding of these dogs, carrying on after her death in 1973. Shaar Hagai has always attempted to breed to Prof. Menzel’s guidelines,

to preserve the true wild dog type and retain the characteristics, both physical and mental, that make this breed so unique in today's world. Attempts are made to include new desert and Bedouin bloodlines whenever possible to retain the natural characteristics of the breed, and refresh the gene pools. However, it is more and more difficult to find wild-born Canaans. One of the reasons for this is the strict rabies control program in Israel, which includes the destruction of roaming dog packs. Another reason is the spread of civilization that seriously limits the natural habitat of the Canaan, and greatly increases the possibility of mixing with other breeds. There are still pure Canaans in remote wilderness areas, and with the constantly dwindling number of Bedouin tribes living a traditional, isolated life, but they are become more and more scarce and it is expected that in the next decade or so, they will disappear entirely as a natural animal.

Today’s modern breeds are suffering more and more from degenerative, reproductive, and health problems, the result of a combination of a more and more limited gene pool in each specific breed, and selection for various breed specific characteristics that can be considered anti-survival. In almost all of the modern breeds, there is no outside gene pool that could serve to improve the health and well being of the breed.

The pariahs in general and the Canaan in particular hold great value to the canine world in the continuing presence of unregistered wild and feral stock that can be added to the gene pool. In this way, the characteristics that have enabled these breeds to survive for thousands of years can be strengthened and preserved. In addition, there is a great deal of interest in studying the behavior of these breeds in their natural habitat and unchanged way of life. This provides us with a wealth of information on the natural behavior of the dog, from the time he first became associated with man, his capabilities and methods of survival in various conditions, and the way his relationship with man develops.



The Canaan Dog is unique among these breeds in being specifically adapted to living in the difficult climate and terrain of Israel. Over the last several years we have been making very serious attempts to bring in as many Canaan Dogs from the “wild” as possible. In the next years, we can anticipate that the wild and Bedouin population will almost completely disappear. Their natural habitat is rapidly disappearing and therefore so are the dogs that can still be considered pure stock. What we don’t take advantage of now will later be lost forever.

There are several methods we have been using to bring in new bloodlines. The easiest method is to “capture” very small puppies and raise them in “civilization”. This means locating new litters and removing the puppies as soon as they are old enough to get along without their mother. A two to three month old puppy is already suspicious enough and fast and agile enough to evade being caught and to disappear into the wilderness areas where he will not be found. The puppies then have to be raised and examined when fully grown to determine if they really fit the breed type. We take puppies only from very remote areas where there is no evidence of dogs of other breeds, and try to identify the parents of the puppies. The mother is usually in the vicinity and can be identified, as she will try to protect her litter. The father, in many cases, is also in the vicinity and can be identified – the Canaans tend to be very devoted to one another, and often the same pair remain together for life if nothing interferes. The Bedouin are of great help in this, as they are usually aware of where litters may be found, and can often identify the dogs and tell us who the sire and dam of a litter is.



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Another method is to try to capture an adult. In most cases, the adults that are available are those that are attached to Bedouin camps. The Bedouin dogs are semi wild and can often not be approached by anyone but the children, who seem to build up a friendly relationship with the dogs. But the Bedouin are sometimes willing to try to capture such dogs, if they don’t feel a need for them as camp guards, and will tie them, and let us take them. In the last few years, there have been three adults brought in from various areas, and all of them have adjusted extremely well to “domestic” life.

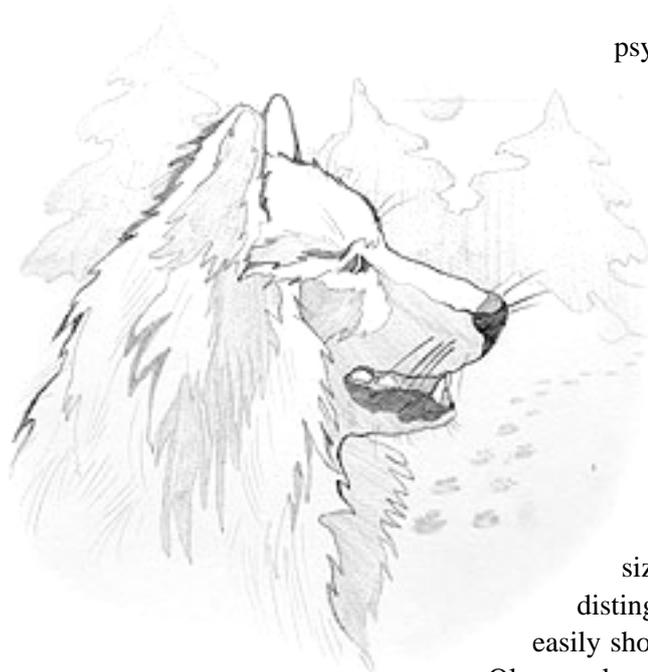
A final possibility is to bring a bitch in season to an area where there are excellent quality dogs, and to allow her to breed to a Bedouin or semi wild dog. This is also not easy, as the dogs are very suspicious, and it can take them a long time and a lot of hesitation to even approach a strange bitch in season. In some cases, despite our patience in waiting for something to happen, the suspicion was too strong and the dog was never willing to approach and breed the bitch, despite her games and seductive moves. But we have had one success in getting a litter this way, and it is a possibility.

Over the last few years, about 15 dogs have been brought in from the wild or the Bedouin. The procedure for entering them in the stud book is to first examine the dog as an adult to see if it fits the breed requirements, and then to do a trial breeding with a fully pedigreed and proven mate. Several dogs have proven themselves as a valuable addition to the gene pool, and there is a generation of their descendents that are now approaching breeding age themselves. Some of the desert stock has been discarded as potential breeding stock due to lack of correct type (things that have been considered incorrect are ears that don't stand, incorrect bites, or structural faults that might interfere with effective survival, not "show points") or faults which may indicate mixed blood. Some of the desert dogs are still young and developing and will be judged as to their potential as breeding stock in the future.

We are continuing to look for and try to bring in more dogs from the desert. This program is helping to preserve the very unique characteristics of the Canaan Dog.

DESCRIPTION OF OLENEGONKA

B. I. Shiroky and O. B. Shiroky



What kind of breed characteristics of the appearance, psyche and behavior of our breed and what distinguishes it from other Spitz-like dogs (Laikas), including its German and Scandinavian descendants and, from now popular youngest cousin, the Samoyed? As we know, all Laikas and Spitzes are weakly differentiated into different breeds and some of them are very similar to each other.

Official breed standard of the Olenegonka put together at the first recognition as the Reindeer Herding Spitz characterizes the breed as naturally harmonious and functional.

At a glance, the Olenegonka has an unmistakably “northern” appearance. To some people, it resembles a kind of wild animal, such as polar fox, just a fox, a bear cub or little known, wolf-like animal. White and larger size Olenegonkas, especially grown up puppies, are not distinguishable from the Samoyed. Gray Olenegonkas can be easily shown like Wolfspitzes. Brown, black, red, piebald and pinto Olenegonkas are very similar to the Lapphund and the German Spitz.

Reindeer Herding Spitz is not big, but medium to smaller than medium size dog. Height at the shoulder is slightly different from those offered by older writers about the Olenegonka. Our results obtained during survey of the most typical showed that males were from 41 to 52 cm, average 47; females were 37-48 cm, average 44 cm at the shoulder. Dogs were measured in a quiet and not tired state.

Professor N. A. Smirnov (1936) based on his own materials on Laikas found that males were 40-54 cm, average 47 cm at the shoulder. He added that optimal size in western regions of the north should be 42-45 cm and in the eastern regions, where snow cover is loose, it should be higher, from 45 to 50 cm.

The breed standard, for the purpose or preservation of the breed and involvement of maximal number of dogs in the breeding pool, offers rather wide range of variation of height: males 44-52 cm and females 40-48 cm at the shoulder with allowed deviations in either direction up to 2 cm.

Index of body proportions of the Olenegonka stipulated in the standard is in males 102-104 and in females 104-108, which makes the dog look very compact despite profuse coat. The body proportion index is measured as a ratio of body length measured from femur/scapula joint to pelvis to height at the shoulder. Males are particularly compactly built, more robust and taller on the front legs and with richer coat even during shedding time.

Coat color of Olenegonkas is mainly like in wild canids, but unlike in many cultured breeds, it is diverse. In the past, there was no selecting for a certain coat color, like it happened, for example in the Samoyed.

Coat color includes such pigments like black, red (yellow), and brown. Black and red are often combined, but the brown produces coat color independently. Henceforth, come the original set of coat colors of Olenegonkas as well of other primitive Spitz-like dogs (Laikas). Coat colors may be gray, red and mixed, such as gray-red, and brown. The intensity of coat color varies from white to almost black. All these coat colors are so-called zonary; each hair has differently pigmented zones and its distribution over the body also has zones. As a result, there are lighter colors on muzzle, lower parts of body and posterior sides of legs and lower side of the tail. This is particularly well visible on dogs pigmented well, but not too profusely. These lighter pigmented zones should be distinguished from spots, albinotic patches with well marked borders. Moderately pigmented dogs display lighter and darker pigmented zones along the back, margins of ears, upper tail, frontal side of legs and in upper parts of legs. Dark zones emphasize contour of dog's body.

Entirely light colored and nearly white dogs are not albinos. Theoretically, they are very light red, light red or light brown, which can be determined by color of their undercoat.

Noteworthy is the fact that light pigmented to white Olenegonkas occur most often. Most likely this is how it was still in early XIX Century. In one early description of characteristics of this breed, there is a statement: "Among purebred dogs of Samoyeds pure white with yellow shade are seen most often."

Coat colors of Olenegonka with only brown pigment deserve special consideration. Because of variation in the intensity of pigmentation, such dogs can vary from actually white to very dark brown, almost black, but they always have yellow eyes, brown nose, lips and eye lids, unlike dogs with black and yellow pigmentation. The latter eye colors varies from light brown to dark brown and nose, lips and eyelids are always black. This is true even in white dogs. It is true that their nose can become slightly paler, but this usually happens in winter, because of lack of vitamins and the food is deficient in "green" constituent. This should be not confused with cases of poor pigmentation.

Thus, Olenegonkas have entirely gray, red, gray-red and brown zonary coat colors of various intensity, from white to black and their by products, including piebald and spotty coats obtained in the process of domestication.



Contemporary standard does not permit only brindle coat color. This kind of Olenegonka never occurred. Brindle coat color is not a trait of our northern dogs. Therefore, we disqualified Kamchatka and Chukotka sled dogs with this kind of coat color.

One of the most important traits of the breed, which makes it unique among our other Laikas is their rich, thick coat. This serves as a good protection against both hot and cold weather. Dogs with such a coat live without a doghouse through the winter north of polar circle. At the same time, it is not threatened with overheating, when there is no place to hide from polar sun in the tundra or at the dog show in a southern city, where poorly coated

dogs sometimes cannot endure direct sun.

This universal protection is created by coarse, straight and stiff guard hairs combined with a profuse, thick and soft undercoat. This luxurious coat is retained through the summer, because it has other functions. In the tundra, a thick coat saves the dog from mosquitoes, blackflies and horseflies. In the south, it is a protection against ticks. When we inspected our dogs in Carpathian forests, we rarely saw attached ticks, except on eyebrows.

In water, Olenegonka is easily floating in a horizontal position; its back and curving tail remain on the surface, because the dogs' profuse coat retains air. When the dog returns on land, it shakes the water off and dries quickly. This cannot be said about washing Olenegonka by a human. After this, the dog dries almost for 24 hours.

When snow cover is not deep and the snow is loose giving in under the dog's feet to the ground, our dogs are slightly at a disadvantage, if compared with more long-legged dogs. However, they are winning running on snow crust or on deep snow. Light weight and fuzzy Olenegonka running on deep snow, does not sink much like swimming on loose snow. On the crusty snow, its advantage becomes particularly obvious. Stiff hairs abundant on the feet are sticking between toes and creates enlarged footprints. Professor N. A. Smirnov (1936) wrote: If to take into account enlarged area of feet equipped with fuzzy hairs supporting weight of the dog, it becomes understandable why the dog sinks in the snow less then any other breed." Just like on the snow, Olenegonka is sinking less, when running on swamp.

Still one more function of the coat of Olenegonka: it is protection against skirmishes with other dogs or wild animals during hunting. This is why this dog feels very confident in such situations. We had a chance to learn about it in our kennel in Kamchatka. Attendants of the kennel, by a mistake, placed in a cage with thick coated male named "Shurik," a gray German Shepherd Dog, instead of gray Kamchatka Sled Dog, with which Shurik had friendly relationships. Nobody heard or saw them fighting, but next early morning the attendants found Shurik well wallowed in dirt and a senseless German Shepherd Dog. A veterinarian recovered the German

Shepherd Dog and explained that this happened because of pain shock. Shurik managed to bite its base of ear. Shurik had many injuries and scratches, which were discovered, when his dirt crust was washed off. Long thick coat on the neck and especially on the withers saved Shurik's life not allowing German Shepherd Dog's teeth to go through.

Guard hairs are distributed on the body of Olenegonka just like on other Laikas and Spitzes. However, because they are longer, they look more impressive. Hairs are well developed inside ears and around ear bases hiding them sometimes almost to the tips.

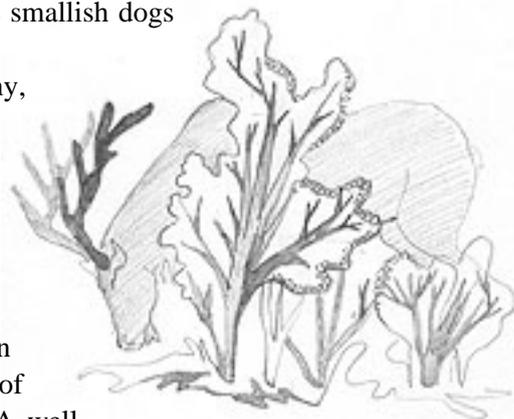
Characteristic long hairs on cheeks and neck are up to 15 cm long, forming a ruff, on lower parts of the body and on thighs forming britches, on posterior sides of legs and particularly on lower side of tail up to 25 cm long and longer are most developed in males. This serves not only as protection, but also makes the dog looking peculiar and beautiful.

The head of the Olenegonka is a typical head of northern dog. It is lean, moderately wedge-shaped, with relatively broad skull and not a long muzzle. Stop and transition from cheeks to muzzle are gradual, but distinct. This is accentuated by shorter thick and short dense hairs on the muzzle and around eyes. Small prick ears are set wide; they are very mobile and reflect mood and physical condition of the dog and its social status among other dogs.

Lively and expressive eyes are small, almond-shaped, moderately oblique set, brown or yellow. Despite modest size of Olenegonka, it has strong jaws and teeth, which are sufficient for eating any tough food, including bones, and to be aware of its own power. At dog shows, Laika experts who meet Olenegonka for the first time are usually surprised that teeth of these smallish dogs are as big as in purebred hunting Laikas.

All other body parts of Olenegonka are also in natural harmony, see the standard. We should mention that compared with other Laikas, Olenegonka has somewhat straightened angles of forequarters and hindquarters and their pasterns are relatively short.

We repeat once more emphasizing that the body structure of the Olenegonka is primitive like in a wild animal and it is highly functional. Its tail also retains its original function. In alert state is gaily carried over the back forming a fuzzy circle or semicircle. When the dog is worried, the tail is lowered and it covers muzzle and eyes of the dog, when it is resting, protecting against cold or mosquitoes. A well movable tail helps when the dog is running and it is used for social communication.



The Olenegonka is light and agile like our aboriginal sled dogs; when walking or trotting they are single tracking.

Temperament is balanced and flexible. The dogs are energetic, emotional, alert and curious; they are self confident and easily learn diverse habits without forcible teaching and are eager workers. Their intelligence and creative behavior are fascinating and they take the initiative to accomplish complex tasks. At the same time, the independent character of these dogs is combined with their ability to live happily with other dogs and for a strong attachment to the master and members of his "pack," which is not always typical of other Laikas. Perhaps, such qualities of this breed are a result of many centuries of intuitive selection for generally "useful" dog.

Thus, conformation, character and physiology of the Olenegonka make it fit for using under different conditions of climate and life for diverse kind of service.

REINDEER HERDING SPITZ **Breed Standard**

Reindeer Herding Spitz is an ancient aboriginal breed of Central Europe distributed northward to northeastern regions. It was used for development of several cultured Spitz breeds. Populations of these dogs, which escaped systematic artificial selection, were preserved in isolated regions with a traditional way of life in the tundra and forest-tundra zones of Eurasia, where they are used for herding domesticated reindeer and hunting being dogs of nomads. Reindeer Herding Spitz is characterized by naturally harmonious and functional

conformation, physiological resilience, adaptability, and balanced temperament. Such traits of these not-big dogs allow using them under conditions of different climates and for performing different kinds of service, where a well balanced and not too aggressive dog is needed, such as customs, criminology, search and rescue, hunting, travels, as a farm dog, a hunting dog, a companion dog, etc.

Appearance

This is a Spitz-like dog, below medium to medium size, with a compact and lean body structure. Differences between sexes are well developed. Males are more robust, taller in the anterior part of the body, nearly square, and retain a well developed coat through the summer.

Deficiencies or faults, depending on the degree, are coarseness or excessively slender body structure.

Size and body proportions

Height at the shoulder is 44-50 in males and 40-45 cm in females. Body proportions index is 102-104 in males and 104-108 in females.

Deficiencies: deviations in height more than 2 cm or small deviations from body proportions indicated above.

Coat color

Zonary gray, red, intermediate, or brown of various intensity, white and black; sable patterns, piebald and patchy coat colors are also allowed. Nose is black; in lighter pigmented dogs it can be brown. Dogs with a zonary brown coat color of different saturation have yellow eyes, brown nose, lips and eyelids.

Deficiencies include partially pigmented nose.

Faults include dense ticking on body and poorly pigmented nose. Brindle coat color is disqualified.

Coat quality

Straight, stiff and long guard hair combined with thick soft undercoat form luxurious coat of the dog. Hair cover is present inside ears covering their bases. Particularly long hairs grow on cheeks (ruff), neck, withers and shoulders, lower side of body, thighs (britches) and lower side of tail and form brushes between toes. On the muzzle, around eyes, on anterior side of legs, below elbows hair is dense, stiff and short. Length of hairs on the neck are up to 15 cm, on tail it is up to 25 cm and longer during time of maximal development.

Deficiencies: short, soft, slightly wavy guard hair or poor developed undercoat.

Faults: absence of typical longer furnishing hair, too wavy or curly guard hair. Short hair or absence of undercoat are disqualifying traits.

Skin and Muscle

Skin is tough, pliant, without loose underlying tissue and folds. Muscles are well developed, tough and not visible under profuse hair. Bone is light, strong and well developed.

Deficiencies and faults, depending on the degree: loose skin with folds, weak muscles, coarse bone and poor bone.

Head

Head is the shape of a moderately extended wedge, length of skull is equal to its width or slightly longer. Occipital process is present. Forehead is moderately convex. Muzzle is wedge-shaped, gradually narrowing to nose, with strong jaws and lean close lips. Length of muzzle is about 1-2 cm shorter than length of skull. Nose is of medium size.

Deficiencies or faults, depending on the degree, include disproportional coarse or too light head, too prominent cheeks or eyebrows, too broad or too narrow muzzle, excessively pointed or blunt muzzle, dish face, Roman nose, and too abrupt or poorly pronounced stop.

Ears

Ears are prick, small, close to equilateral triangle, set high and rather wide apart, very movable; tips of ears are directed straight up and slightly tilted forward.

Deficiencies include too wide apart, too large or too soft ears.

Faults are too big with rounded tips ears, too thick or too soft ears. Pendulous and partly pendulous ears are disqualifying traits.

Eyes

Eyes are small, moderately oblique, not deep and not bulging, brown or yellow. Eye expression is lively and intelligent.

Deficiencies: too big or too small eyes, and round and straight set eyes.

Faults: very big, too round with loose eyelids or different color eyes.

Teeth

Teeth are large enough, strong, white and well fit. Incisors are on one line at base. Complete set of teeth and a scissors bite is a must, but at the age older than four years straight bite is allowed.

Worn out teeth disproportional to the dog's age, yellow, too small or parse teeth, or missing one or two first premolars at birth are deficiencies.

Incorrect bite disproportional to age, absence of incisor, canine, second and further premolars or molars are faults.

Neck

Neck is lean, oval in cross section, set up at 45-50 degrees to the upper line of back .

Too short or too long, low set or too loose neck are deficiencies or faults, depending on the degree.

Withers

Withers are well developed, especially in males.

Back

Back is broad and short; in females it may be slightly longer, straight and muscular.

Deficiencies: Soft, narrow or slightly convex back.

Faults: sagging or arched back.

Loins

Loins are straight, slightly convex and muscular.

Deficiencies: weak loins.

Faults: too long, too convex or sagging loins.

Croup

Croup is broad, straight or slightly sloped and muscular.

Deficiencies: narrow or excessively sloped croup.

Faults: too long or abruptly sloped croup.

Chest

Chest is deep, lowered to elbows, moderately broad and oval in cross section.

Deficiencies: too shallow, too narrow or flat chest.

Faults: the same deviations, but at a greater extent; round chest in cross section.

Abdomen

Abdomen is tuck up, which is hidden by long hair.

Deficiencies: too low abdomen.

Forequarters

Forequarters are strong, well boned and with lean muscles. Angle at scapula/humerus joint is 100-110 degrees. Forearms are straight, parallel and sloped. Pasterns are short, springy, slightly tilted or vertical. Length of legs measured from elbows is equal or slightly greater than half height at the shoulder.

Deficiencies or faults, depending on the degree: curving forearms, elbows directed outward, east-west feet, feet directed inward, and weak or too much tilted pasterns.

Hindquarters

In posterior view, hind legs are straight, parallel and positioned wider than front legs. Angles at joints are slightly straight. Thighs are strong and muscular. Tarsi are strong, relatively short and vertical.

Deficiencies or faults, depending on the degree: too close legs, too straight or too bent at joints hindquarters, cowhocks or bowhocks and tilted tarsi.

Feet

Feet are oval, toes are slightly arched and with strong nails. Dewclaws are removed.

Deficiencies: splayed, too narrow or flat feet and presence of dewclaws.

Tail

Tail is reaching to hocks or slightly shorter. In a dog in an excited state, its tail is curving over the back forming a ring or semi ring; in a dog in a quiet state, tail is kept down or sickle-shaped.

Deficiencies: too high or too low set tail, too long or too short tail, tail not carried over the back or tightly curving never unfolding tail.

Faults: bobtail or abnormally short tail at birth.

Movement

Locomotion is light, quick and springy. Typical type of movement is galloping or fast trotting. When the dog is walking or trotting, it is single tracking.

Behavior and Temperament

Temperament is lively and balanced. This dog is energetic, emotional and alert; self confident, strongly attached to the master and interacting with him, affectionate, easily trainable to perform different tasks without using forcible methods, and eager to work.

Deficiencies: shyness, indifference and excessive excitability.

Faults: aggressiveness to humans and excessive aggressiveness to domesticated animals.

Traits disqualifying dogs

Brindle coat color, short hair, absence of undercoat, lops or semi pendulous ears, straight bite out of proportion to the age and monorchidism.

COMMENTS TO STANDARD OF REINDEER HERDING SPITZ

The Reindeer herding Spitz is the oldest and among most interesting aboriginal breeds of northern dogs, which does not have well deserved recognition of official cynologic organizations. It has been developed by peoples of Central Europe, using primitive intuitive selection and then spread to European north and since 30th of past Century to northeastern Asia, including Chukotka and Kamchatka (Vakhrushev and Volkov, 1945). In West Europe, similar looking derived from this aboriginal dog breeds are bred, such as the German Spitz, Finnish and Swedish Lapphunds, the Elkhound, the Buhund, the Norbotten Spitz, the Island Dog and other breeds. Popular in Europe breed the Samoyed has been developed by selective work with Reindeer Herding Laikas of Nenets people imported from Russia in early XX Century (Peretony-Vemyan, 1992).

In the Soviet Union, this breed did not interest cynologists. Specialists on hunting Laika breeds usually mentioned and described them only briefly (Pupyshev, 1936; Ryabov, 1939; Vakhrushev and Volkov, 1945; Shereshevsky, 1965 and a few others). A. P. Mazover (1954, 1960) offered a rather detailed description of typical traits of the Reindeer Herding Laika, including working dog breeds.

Only reindeer breeders never forgot about this dog. Thus, in Chukotka and Kamchatka, from 1962 to late 80th (Nosov and Bogoslovskaya, 1961), Reindeer Herding Laikas were bred mainly in reindeer herding teams.

Contemporary state of the aboriginal population is critical, despite the revival of private reindeer breeding and high value of these dogs as reindeer herding assistants replacing two-three human herders. Organization of pedigree breeding in the north is very problematic. Therefore, well based on science breeding program in kennels and clubs is necessary.

Cynological research kennel "Kinos" created for purpose of reestablishing of northern dogs conducts survey of still remaining pockets of typical Reindeer Herding Dogs and organizes their pedigree breeding. Besides considerable funds, this project requires to have an official standard of the breed as a basic tool for the work.

The proposed breed standard was put together by workers of "Kinos" B. I. Shiroky and O. B. Shiroly. It is based on compilation from old literature, some unpublished materials, and results of work of "Kinos" related to the breeding and using dogs under modern conditions.

We also used kindly provided to us by the author project of the standard of the Nenets Reindeer Herding Laika written by V. G. Gusev.

Basic statements of the breed standard were discussed with cynologists and biologists as follows: V. A. Belenky, L. S. Bogoslovskaya, V. A. Gusev, E. N. Mychko, N. A. Nosov, G. M. Pasechnikova and N. A. Tarynbekova and reindeer breeders and herders.

Name of the breed. In the literature there are names like Nenets Reindeer Herding Laika, Nenets Herder's Laika, Olenegonka and Russian Samoyed Laika (see "Minor Atlas of Dog Breeds by Andrew De Prisco and James B. Johns, 1992. Since 1994, the breed is known mainly as Reindeer Herding Spitz.

Distinguishing traits of the Reindeer Herding Spitz are undisputable. On one hand, this is a smallish light built dog undemanding to life conditions, feeding and shipping. On the other hand, it is tough enough, with great physiological potential, adaptable and with well balanced temperament dog. Among cultured breeds of dogs, it has a vacant place for using.

According to a specialist in search and rescue dogs M. I. Usov (1988), such dogs as the Olenegonka are most tireless capable in high mountain areas dogs; they do not have any drawbacks, when used for search and rescue work in any region; in the endurance, agility and the ability to go through avalanched areas they are superior over other dogs.

Because of their peculiar qualities, Reindeer Herding Laikas and their mixes are used in criminology for recognition of individual smells of humans ("Droog", No. 2, 1991, in Russian).

Certainly, Reindeer Herding Spitzes can become best assistance in custom service, where spaniels are used at present time. Spaniels are not as good because they are less adaptable to conditions of life in the kennel, food requirements and balanced temperament as Reindeer Herding Dogs.

These dogs are very good at hunting, companions for nature lovers, house dogs, etc.

Reindeer Heding Spitz is a primitive breed in positive sense of this word; it means it is closer to primitive ancestor, despite being people oriented and its strong attachment to the master. The breed has been developed under harsh conditions of the environment and selection for qualities for versatile work. Hundreds years of intuitive selection did not touch the dog's appearance. This dog does not have excessive traits of the appearance and retains natural harmony and functionality. It is an advantage of our breed as compared with diverse other man-made breeds of dogs.

The breed standard includes rather wide range of traits of the breed. It does not pursue goals of "improvement" and uniformity of the breed. Quite opposite, the standard should help preservation and restoration of geographic phenotypes (and genotypes) of large population scattered among many small pocket, in some of which these traits are lost or almost disappeared. Truthfulness of the standard is particularly important in the incipient stage of formation of the breed as purebred, because this would not allow narrowing of the genetic diversity and involve many various type dogs from fragmented range of the breed.

Breed expert should not give preference to any of the designated in standard traits of the dog, such as sturdy or lean body structure, greater or smaller size or a particular coat color. In all cases of judging at show and subsequently in breeding program he should not compare dog's head, eyes or ears regardless of general body complexion, legs, etc. Thus, in sturdy built dogs, one should expect a more massive head with a shorter and not too pointed muzzle, shorter and wider set ears and less oblique set and more round eyes. Legs may be longer and closer to each other in leaner built dogs. They may also have stronger developed angulations of forequarters and hindquarters. Longer guard hairs may be not as coarse as shorter hair in sturdy built dogs, etc.

Knowledge of the breed and common sense of expert and breeder would allow to preserve valuable qualities of the aboriginal Reindeer Herding Spitz

All questions, suggestions and comments will be accepted with gratitude. E-mail them or send them as snail mail to: Marina G. Kuzina mail box 12, Moscow, 115407 RUSSIA

R-PADS, 2004

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