

Csaba Örkény Interview
By Celeste R. Pongrácz, May 2005

When I asked Csaba to write an article about his extensive Mudi breed experience, I also asked him for an interview. Csaba is a gym teacher in a school for handicapped children.

CP: Your oldest Mudi was?

CÖ: Gobe was 18 when he died in October 2004.

CP: How long have you owned Mudi's?

CÖ: 20 years now, first I had a bitch. I had 2 litters with even brown pups born, from Csikomajori Tatika and Puszta Emleke Gogos "Gobe".

(Side note: Csaba's kennel name is Csendháborító, which means silence violator. His only 2 litters were born in 1990 and contained black, brown and ash pups.)

CP: How many Mudi's do you own now?

CÖ: I now own 2 bitches, I have owned 6 Mudi's total. With these two bitches I do conformation.

CP: What have you done with your Mudi's? (Breeding, herding, etc.?)

CÖ: I bred them, I did herding, Schutzhund, there was no agility when I first worked with Mudi's. Also IPO competition which is a combination of obedience and Schutzhund.

CP: Why the Mudi breed?

CÖ: Originally I had Kuvasz. I went to some dog programs and my Mudi breeder friend spoke well of the Mudi. I like the more rare breeds and also the Hungarian breeds, and I don't want the same breed as everyone else has, so when I found out the Mudi was the rarest of the small Hungarian herding breeds, and it was still a wonderful working dog, I bought my first Mudi, a black bitch.

CP: What do you like most about the Mudi?

CÖ: It is still an existing genuine breed and has original working ability and willingness to work. I like the human centeredness and natural subordinate desire to serve and always be with you. I like the energy in the breed, that it is strong, quick and athletic.

A few thoughts about the future of the Mudi breeding in Hungary

Written by: Csaba Örkény

In the last two decades I kept my eyes on the fate of the Mudi breed in Hungary, as an addition to my many decades spent with breeding of Kuvasz dogs, and various dog sports, and working dog activities.

I am very thankful for the fate also that I had the opportunity to make useful comparisons between the results of the outlook-oriented show selection and the results of the working ability based selection of the professional shepherds.

I will give a short resume in the following part of my experiences and ideas, which I collected and formed about the results and problems of breeding of the Mudi.

The Mudi breed in the close past

During the last 20 years I met with approximately 600 Mudis, of course, my relationship with these varied in a huge extent of depth and quality. Among these I met with working shepherd dogs and home pets as well as sportsdogs and watchdogs, too.

There was a large variability among these dogs, regarding their outer appearance (mudi-likeness), the circumstances of their keeping, and the level of their socialization.

I used a character test which was very similar to the one that we use today in the MEOE Magyar Mudi Klub. For my biggest surprise, the large number of very differently kept, socialized, used Mudis reacted quite similarly to the stimuli in the old character test. An interesting note could be that these Mudis in the not so far past, whom I met mostly, they were usually the close descendants of some actively herding dogs.

I collected even deeper experiences from those herding Mudis, which I borrowed for a few days from their owners (cattle or sheep herder shepherds), when we had some performances with our Hungarian Herding Dog Exhibition Group. One of the most active Mudi breeders of the 80's 90's, Dr. Gábor Magyar started this custom, when he borrowed professional herding dogs from the shepherds to support the dogs in his kennel.

It was amazingly impressive, as these borrowed dogs could learn the tricks of the Exhibition Group within a few hours, or at least one-two days. Among these tasks were tracking tricks (finding particular targets or persons by sniffing); otherwise training-dependent crawling, obstacle-jumping, fire-jump tests, and various schutzhund situations. Even today I remember with a moved heart those worn-coated, but shining intelligent eyed working dogs.

These shepherd dogs learned the new tricks amazingly fast, and we should keep it in mind that these tasks were totally new for them, they were put into a new environment, trained by strangers. However, these Mudis did their job with endless willingness to work, sometimes with a brilliantly creative mind.

When you read these rows, perhaps you have doubts to believe all these things, because it seems to be unlikely that a small herding dog could perform so well in such a variety of tasks, like tracking and schutzhund activity.

We should remember always what those shepherds told to me when I asked them about the Mudis, and this could be the quintessence of their opinion: „The good Mudi is an all-purpose dog”. The Mudi is the right hand of the shepherd, it sees and hears for him, and it does several people’s jobs. The Mudi constantly listens, watches its master, waits the commands, the signs, which tells what to do next. Mudis obeyed for the slightest movement or the first word to come from the shepherd. The Mudi learned easily the actual rules of herding at the particular area, particular livestock and shepherd. Afterwards he signified with behaviour, barking, body postures if he noticed any deviations from the normal course of the flock’s activity. It means also that the Mudi is an independent worker, and acts by its own if he decides it was necessary and it was not forbidden to him. Good Mudis searched the lost lambs, calves, piglets, they found and retrieved the shepherd’s lost objects, as a pipe, knife or bag of tobacco. Herding Mudis helped to their masters to drive the livestock to drink, to feed, or to be milked. They were used as helpers who drove the animals up to trucks, or railcars. Mudis had to stop and regulate aggressive livestock, they had to signal suspicious strangers, even protect their masters in a time of need from various attacks.

As the saying tells: “Without a Mudi the shepherd is not a shepherd”.

Supporting the above listed things, I cite the “confession” of a well-known dog expert, Dr. Zsolt Kovács. He died painfully young, before his death he was the vice commander of the Hungarian police dog training center at Dunakeszi. Once he told to me that as an expert of dog training he always believed that the German Shepherds are valuable dogs because they can be trained to be good police dogs. But when he was in Germany and saw how the actively herding German Shepherd dogs perform, he realized that he was wrong in his opinion earlier. After this he revised his theory and started to say that the GS dog can be trained to be a good police dog, because it is basically an excellent herding dog.

I hope that with this example of the GS dog I did not make any confusion, but I could show a parallel to the Mudi, how important is the multi-sidedness for a good working dog breed.

The Mudi in our days

It is without doubt that today the Mudi population shows a much more appealing and more homogenous outlook. Based upon spontaneous observations and performance tests we can say that the modern Mudis still have generally good qualities, but sadly we can find the first signs of the wrong tendencies. There are Mudis who have already lost their herding instinct, or the herding instinct can be elicited only weakly. In other cases we cannot find the very characteristic, constant attachment and attention towards the owner. These dogs lack the willingness or ability for the quick and appropriate task solving, which can be the consequence of the loss of the necessary and unconditioned subordination to the owner.

I have already met with several shy, passive, unable for self-protection Mudis as well as pronouncedly hard-headed, aggressive, biting specimens.

I would like to emphasize that the majority of the Mudi population which I could observe or test belongs to the “good” Mudi type of behaviour, but we should not give any more place for the decline.

Tasks and goals for the present and the future

By my opinion the main goal is to protect the real herding dog characteristics of the Mudi, to save its rich repertoire of working abilities. For this we should keep the breeds COI on a wisely reduced level, and we should cut back the importance of the solely appearance-centered show breeding. We should stop the process of the deliberated “refinement” of the breed, the degenerative tendencies, the general deterioration of the health (for example the dysplasia) which reduces the dogs working capabilities. We should fight against any further weakening of important instincts and abilities, which can lead to the complete loss of these.

At the same time we have to test, record and analyse the Mudi population’s performance, capabilities, any measurements which can be related to the breed’s herding ability.

The devised requirements should be included into the breeding examination, at first (for 1-2 years) only as a recommendation, after it as a mandatory necessity.

For the future we should form a well edited, completed examination system of performance judgement, which represents the entirety of the herding characteristics. This system of competition and examination should be the base of the future’s Mudi breeding.

I think the aims and goals are clear! I wish the Mudi would never be one of the grey mass of numerous pet dog breeds. I rather wish that the Mudi would keep its great intelligence, its well deserved place in the Hungarian culture of domestic animals, which is honouring but dutiful at the same time, too.