

# BREED COLUMNS

## HERDING GROUP

CAT to our club events and are planning our first set of agility trials. We held our second set of independent specialties, and we are moving on to the next set. Some members no longer breed or show, moving on to other activities, but continue to support the club and its endeavors. Clubs evolve just as we do.

Pembroke fanciers will be moving on to the annual national specialty, to be held September 21–28. The specialty will begin September 21, with two days of herding in Rockfield, Kentucky. Agility will take place Monday, September 23, in Watertown, Tennessee. Obedience and rally will follow on the 24th at the Holiday Inn University Plaza in Bowling Green, Kentucky—the primary site for the specialty. Sweepstakes and regular classes will follow the remainder of the week. Best of Breed competition and the banquet will conclude the specialty week on the 28th. There will be other

events as well as the annual membership meeting. For complete, updated information, check out <http://www.pwccanational.com/> from time to time, and get a move on!

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### Pulik

#### AIR PULI!

Looking for something exciting to do with your Puli? While we most often see other breeds (like Border Collies) moving and twisting spectacularly in pursuit of a flying disc, did you know that some Pulik also enjoy this activity?

Disc Dog (also known as “Frisbee Dog”) came to attention at the same time there was rising popularity in Frisbee sports in the early 1970s. Interest was fueled in August 1974, when college student Alex Stein smuggled his Whippet (“Ashley Whippet”) into a nationally broadcast baseball game

and captivated many people with a rogue demonstration. The game was interrupted for eight minutes while the dog repeatedly sprinted and leapt up in the air to catch a flying disc—before Alex was escorted off the field by police (and arrested). The next year, Alex went on to create the Frisbee Dog World Championship along with two other enthusiasts.

Disc Dog competitions are now held both nationally and internationally. For an interesting read on the history of Disc Dog, see <https://hyperflite.com/canine-disc-history/>.

So why is this sport referred to as “Disc Dog”? “Frisbee” is a trademark held by Wham-O for their brand of flying discs.

Exhibitors in this canine sport do not use just any disc. Canine competition discs (Hyperflite and Hero Disc are the leaders in dog-safe discs) incorporate improvements to stand up to high-stress from tooth punctures yet are softer on the mouth than many discs

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*Not every dog will be interested in playing disc—but when they love it, they can really fly. Learning often begins on the ground and not in the air, with dogs initially taught to track and chase a “roller” —a rolling disc.*

manufactured for human use. Hyperflite designed grip surfaces in such a way that they don't retain grit and dirt, which can act like revolving sandpaper on canine teeth. The toys that cause the most significant tooth wear in canines are

fabric discs and tennis balls. These toys retain dirt and grit in their fibers, and when canines chew on them, they can wear down their teeth dramatically. And, it should probably go without saying, a disc should never be used as a chew toy.

COURTESY BUIHA ORSOLYA / EGERER ANNA / DAGMAR FERTL / TRUE COLORS PHOTOGRAPHY MELISSA SHEEHAN

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The bond between handler and dog is celebrated in this sport, emphasizing teamwork and coordination. In Disc Dog competitions, teams of one person and one dog participate in events involving distance and the dynamic freestyle, where handlers choreograph routines set to music using multiple discs. Griggs (2009) wrote: “If carried out well, a disc dog performance emanates ‘coolness’...”

There are many popular Disc Dog organizations out there, and even AKC offers Disc Dog titles (I probably should not have been surprised to find this out). UpDog has taken the basic game of fetch with a flying disc and expanded it into a whole bunch of fun games (<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/sports/disc-dog-101-whats-updog-challenge/>). Dogs get points in every game, and cumulative points earn UpDog Achievements (called “UPs”). Once a medal UP is earned in at least three games, you can apply for the AKC Disc

Dog titles (<https://www.akc.org/sports/title-recognition-program/disc-dog/>). To date, no Puli has these titles. This year’s AKC Disc Dog Challenge, hosted in collaboration with the UpDog Challenge, is slated for June 2 in Asheville, North Carolina.

A dog flying into the air and making acrobatic moves is truly amazing to watch. Yet an accident is always one wrong move away, as with any performance sport. The torque of twisting and the force exerted on the body by jumping (i.e., kinetics) are substantial. Be sure to be aware of the signs that your dog might have an injury. There is not much published information pertaining to injuries obtained during Disc Dog, but other high-impact dog sports (e.g., agility and lure coursing) suggest that soft-tissue injuries are common. Strains, sprains, and contusions to the shoulder, back, phalanges (toe bones), and neck could be encountered, in addition to stress fractures

in the feet (carpal, metacarpal, tarsal, and metatarsal bones). Degenerative joint disease also is a consideration. Massage, chiropractic care, and acupuncture are utilized to help relieve pain, improve joint motion, and aid in recovery in performance dogs.

Teaching your Puli to catch a flying disc is relatively easy to do. (Honestly, one of the most difficult things during disc training was for *me* to learn the technique of throwing a disc correctly.) However, please realize that not every dog will be interested in playing disc, even if they really like fetching balls. With some individuals, however, it may just be a matter of building interest in the activity. There are good sources at the end of this column on how to teach your Puli to play disc.

Learning begins on the ground and not in the air, with dogs initially taught to track and chase a “roller” (i.e., a rolling disc). They then work their way ultimately to catching the disc



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in the air. I have only had two Pulik who were very excited about playing disc, and for them it was “on-the-job-training” by watching a Border Collie I owned, and I didn’t actually do any training. Those two Pulik honestly always were of the mindset “anything that the Border Collie can do, we can do better.”

Gerald Griggs recalls a statement made by a famous disc player: “When a ball dreams, it dreams it’s a Frisbee” (*Sport in Society*, 12:1317-1326, 2012). Does that mean when a ball-chasing dog dreams, it dreams of being a Disc Dog?

Thanks to Buha Orsolya for sharing her photographs of her maskos fako Puli, who has Disc Dog titles in Hungary. (Maskos fako is fawn coloring with a black mask—a coloration included in the breed’s FCI standard, but not in its AKC standard, though not a disqualification.) The black Puli photos were taken by Melissa Sheehan (True Colors Photography) and are the

property of Dagmar Fertl.

*For more information:*

Bloeme, P., and J. Perry. 2008. *Disc Dogs! The Complete Guide*, Hyperflite, Inc.

Bloeme, P., and J. Perry. 2010. *Disc Dogs Rock! An Introduction to the Coolest Canine Sport in the World!* <https://hyperflite.com/>

*Disc Dogs! Training DVD* <https://hyperflite.com/>

Skyhoundz: <https://skyhoundz.com/>

Zink, M.C. 1997. *Peak Performance: Conditioning the Canine Athlete*, second edition, Canine Sports Productions.

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[Puli Club of America](#)

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## Shetland Sheepdogs

### SHELTIE NATION

Sheltie Nation gathered at Purina Farms on April 12–20 for a celebration of our breed in herding, obedience, rally, agility, and conformation competition. The first three days saw Shelties demonstrating their

skills in the performance events. Purina Farms provides the capability for all the events to be hosted on the same property.

After attending 43 nationals in the last 47 years, I had to miss this year’s due to a conflict of obligations and dates of the month. Fortunately, I was able to livestream the breed judging each day, and I was amazed at how clearly I could watch each Sheltie move and be examined. I missed being able to visit with friends and attend all the other activities at the national, but the ability to view each dog from the same view as the videographer was amazing. It was the next-best thing to being the judge. The close-up of each dog on the table allowed us to see what the judge was seeing while she performed her hands-on exam. If you knew what it meant when her hands outlined a part of the dog, you could see the virtues.

The dog’s stacked silhouette on the table was apparent and could be