

BREED COLUMNS

HERDING GROUP

—Lynda McKee,
TifflynLDM@aol.com
 Pembroke Welsh Corgi
 Club of America

Pulik

PULIK: NOW A RAMP OPTIONAL BREED

Effective January 31, 2024, by request of the Puli Club of America (PCA), AKC lists the Puli as a Ramp Optional Breed (https://images.akc.org/pdf/judges/table_breeds.pdf).

Rumblings from some of the PCA membership to consider use of the ramp harken back at least a decade. This latest effort gained traction and was formally brought forth to the PCA membership via the October 27, 2022, Board meeting held in association with PCA’s national specialty. Discussions were held, including a Zoom call where membership had a chance to voice their opinions and concerns and to openly talk with members who were on either side of this topic, including use of



The judge examines Archie the Puli on the ramp.

an independent moderator.

During late 2023, PCA membership voted on providing the option to judges to also use a ramp to judge our breed. The motion passed by less than a handful of votes.

Those in favor of the ramp:

(1) Wanted the Puli to be easier (i.e., more user

friendly) for judges to examine. For some judges of shorter stature or with health-related issues it would be easier and more comfortable to physically examine the Puli while exhibited on a ramp. Per AKC rules, a judge’s personal fitness necessitates that they have flexibility to examine all parts of a dog’s anatomy

COURTESY CATHY PRONZINI

HERDING GROUP

where each breed is typically presented. A judge's safety also may be an issue if the person is short relative to the height of the dog being examined.

(2) Argued that it would be easier for some exhibitors to show the Puli on a ramp as compared to the table, whether it be physically or to possibly be more competitive in the Group/BIS ring. The PCA recognizes that the current demographic of the club is biased towards older members who might have physical challenges, making it difficult to lift a Puli (especially a large or heavily corded one—remember that a Puli coat that has grown to the floor is about three to five pounds of extra weight) off the ground and onto the table more challenging. Some members with Group-winning and BIS-winning Pulik remarked that it takes them longer to properly present their Puli when they must lift a fully corded Puli onto the table and then quickly put any tousled

CORDS back into an orderly fashion while the judge waits for the dog to be presented for examination. [Making things easier for yourself personally to show a dog is not appropriate reasoning, since the AKC has set forth policy in their rules to accommodate disabled handlers (i.e., allowing another person to come into the ring to lift the dog).]

Those opposed:

(1) Commented that the table is the best location (i.e., proper height for angle of view) for the judge to evaluate the proportions of a Puli. Visual assessment of proportions of a Puli is most likely only possible on a very young Puli, before coat goes through the clumping stage or the dog has cords. Judges are reminded that the only way to truly assess Puli proportions is to *dig through the coat* and get your hands on the actual structure (and that is particularly important for Pulik in a clumpy coat stage). Nothing is more annoying to an exhib-

itor than a judge who “air touches” a Puli and does not actually assess structure with their hands.

(2) Questioned whether the ramp would show both younger and older Pulik in an equitable way.

(3) Expressed concern that since the ramp is lower than a table, a judge might be leaning over the dog and unintentionally startle/scare/intimidate the Puli.

As per AKC regulations, *the judge* makes the decision regarding use of the table or the ramp at each show, *not the exhibitor*. We need to remember that what is *best for a judge* to be able to evaluate the proportions of the breed is what dictates the choice. A shorter-stature judge might be more likely to choose the ramp, while a taller-stature judge would be expected to prefer to use the table.

The decision of table vs ramp is not a reflection of what an exhibitor would personally like, but for the judge to determine what is the best method for them-

HERDING GROUP

self. Exhibitors should not be directing this decision, even so much as informing the ring steward that a ramp needs to be put out in the ring; an exhibitor should only ask if the judge will be using the table or the ramp. This also means judges should not be asking the exhibitor(s) what they would like to do.

That said, when a judge on a particular day needs to evaluate a large number of dogs in a certain period of time, they do not think ahead of time about a ramp or table, and that it becomes likely that if an exhibitor requests a certain means from the steward, then that is the way it goes, which is also not correct.

No matter if a judge chooses to examine the Puli on the table or the ramp, judges are reminded that if they wish to go over a dog again, the handler should be asked to put the Puli back on the table/ramp and *not examine the dog while it is on the ground*.

In Hungary, the country

of origin for the Puli, judges examine the breed while the dogs are on the ground, while everywhere else in the world, Pulik are on the table. (In Australia, effective January 1, 2024, the Puli is also Ramp Optional. There is no Puli organization in Australia, and the decision was made by Dogs Australia, the new face of the Australian National Kennel Council.)

In the U.S., the Puli was examined while on the ground until the 1990s. Longtime Puli breeder-owner-handler Ann Bowley shared that beginning in the 1970s, an exhibitor might occasionally be asked by a judge (for example, where the judge had a bad back) to place the dog on the table for examination. I had a few Puli people tell me that their Pulik had been examined on the table in the 1980s, and they had show photographs confirming this. Many Puli handlers found the table preferable to the ground for a variety of reasons, including that for a

shy Puli, it was less stressful and less intimidating for the dog to be higher off the ground and not with the judge bending over them in what would be construed as a domineering position. At the PCA's annual meeting at the national specialty held in September 1990, members voted to request that AKC send a letter to all licensed judges "requesting tabling of all Pulik" (*Puli News*, December 1990, p. 31).

A special thanks to the Puli people who helped me track down obscure bits of information for inclusion in this article.

To practice use of the ramp, you could find a handling class that has one or even build your own. AKC judging ramp specifications may be found on the AKC website (https://images.akc.org/pdf/judges/judging_ramp_specifications.pdf). For those wanting to build a practice ramp, the following page has good information to build your own (<https://www.norwegianbuhundpuppies.com/blog/building-an-akc-spec>

BREED COLUMNS

HERDING GROUP

folding-practice-ramp). And incidentally, you don't have to necessarily walk your dog up the ramp; you can lift your Puli onto the ramp.

—Dagmar Fertl,
dfertl@gmail.com
 Puli Club of America

Shetland Sheepdogs

DO NO HARM!

There have recently been questions proposed as to whether AKC and breed disqualifications are important and should be retained in the breed standards. I personally was surprised that it was even a topic of discussion. Fortunately, the resounding response was a positive *yes*. The comments supported the need to allow the parent clubs to establish the areas in their standard where breeders must draw the line in breeding practices.

There are two types of DQs, (disqualifications). The DQs that the AKC requires are:

1. Two normal testicles in the scrotum



Shetland Sheepdog

2. No change in appearance by artificial means except as specified in the breed standard

3. Blind

4. Deaf

5. castrated or spayed, except in single-entry non-regular class like Veterans.

The DQs in our breed standard are:

1. Over 16 inches

2. Under 13 inches

3. Brindle

This looks very straight-

forward when you first look at these DQs. The brindle color and the two normal testicles should be fairly easy to discern. However, over the years I have seen all the other DQs apparent in the ring and/or the whelping box. Are we doing what's best for our breed?

I remember going to the shows in the 1960s with a clean dog whose ears, whiskers, and feet were trimmed, and our tack box or bag had

HOTDOG PHOTOGRAPHY