

Questions from the Cynological Club for Sleddog Breeds Hungary

1. *We can see that dogs' coat is trimmed at dogshows several times for the sake of overall picture. What's your opinion about it? Can it be ignored if the dog's quality is excellent otherwise?*

Personally, I would like to see a statement in our standard that says trimming of the coat, other than around the foot, is to be severely penalized. When we polled the AMCA membership a couple of years ago, the majority wanted this statement also. Only 68 replied, but 58 wanted trimming to be severely penalized or ribbons withheld. If trimming is ignored, it will only get worse. Plus, a skilled groomer can sculpt a long-coat into a perfect outline. And with today's grooming products the texture of the coat can be altered, making it difficult for a judge to recognize it as a long-coated dog. It is only when you closely examine the ends of the hair, you tell if it has been trimmed.

2. *Epecially in case of Malamutes, the difference between sexes is conspicuous. Do you take it into consideration during judging?*

Yes, you want a male to appear masculine and a female to be femine.

3. *We often can see overweight dogs at dogshows. Do you think that a showdog's weight can be a bit more?*

Our standard states, "no excess weight." However, unless you have experienced dogs in really good muscle from being worked, most judges are not going to know what that means for a sled dog. In fact, I feel our breed has lost much of its inherited muscle mass.

4. *Do you still keep Malamutes?*

Yes, presently I have 7 Malamutes, all Champions with Working titles, and 3 Alaskan Huskys.

5. *Is there a dog of yours of whom you are the proudest?*

There have actually been many and for different reasons. From winning awards to saving their owners lives in a fire and a tornado to being an epilepsy alert dog.

6. *Have your dogs ever taken part in sleddog races?*

I did freight races in the 1980's. My dogs were run in the Iditarod by professional musher Jamie Nelson in 1994 and after that I ran them in a few mid distance races.

7. *What is your opinion on red Malamutes? Is this color caused by the same recessive gene as in the Siberian Husky? When did it first appear in Alaskan Malamutes?*

The red color is a dilute color in both breeds. I do not know when it first appeared in either breed. In all my research of Eskimo life and reading of Arctic explorations in order to find out more about the Alaskan Malamute, the color red was never mentioned. However, color was seldom mentioned when writing about the dogs. A book of Eskimo Legends stated that the "Man in the Moon had a big red dog that pulled his sled." Would that be an indication that occasionally a red dog was seen? It is the only reference I have found to that color in books written before the registration of the breeds.

8. *Do you think excellent coat condition is as important at a club specialty show as at a regular dog show?*

I would expect that breeder judges and judges that come from double-coated dogs would be more forgiving of a dog that has shed its coat. If the coat is not shed out, but is in poor condition, that would be a consideration, as it could not give the proper protection in the Arctic environment.

9. *What are your "likes" and "dislikes" in the Siberian Husky? What faults can you tolerate and what are those you can't?*

This is a sled dog as well, so I would consider faulty movement as most serious. The moderation in everything is very important in a Siberian Husky as he must not be so heavy as to remind you of a Malamute or so racy that he looks like an Alaskan Husky. Although the standard calls for the muzzle and skull length to be equal, I see many that are not, and if the head is still pleasing, I can overlook that.

10. *What was your overall opinion on the dogs presented to you at our special show?*

I thought that many of the dogs would be competitive in the U.S.

11. *Comparing them to the American stock what differences did you notice?*

I found the same strengths and weakness as I do in the U.S.

12. *Did you see any major structural faults that need immediate improvement?*

These are the faults I am seeing in the breed world-wide: Smaller bone and less substance, particularly muscle mass. Cat feet instead of large snowshoe feet. Over angulated rears. Too high earsets, too tight tails, too much stop and small teeth.

13. *We see more definite rear angulations and more flashy side movement these days. What do you think, is it a good trend or fronts can go bad because of more angulated rears?*

Our standard calls for moderate angulation. That leaves it up to the individual to interpret what angle is moderate. However, it has been proven that straighter angulation, both front and rear, are an advantage in pulling heavy loads. But owners of show dogs want to win, and lots of reach and drive in the ring is usually rewarded. If the dog is not balanced it will not have endurance regardless of the angles.

14. *If you have two dogs with similar structure in the ring, would you choose the taller one? How important is height for you?*

Height is not important. Our standard states it should only be taken into consideration when you have 2 dogs that are otherwise equal in all qualities, then the dog nearest the desirable freighting size should be chosen. Too many judges and owners worry about size and this has been true since the Malamute became a registered breed. I asked Bob Zoller, who wrote much of the 1964 standard. He said the 25" for a male and 23" for a female was a compromise between the Kotzebue dogs and the M'Loot/Hinman dogs. It had nothing to do with being the "ideal" size for the breed. For that matter, why would a 25" female not be as good a sled dog as a 25" male? If a 23" female can be a good sled dog, then why not a 23" male? I am sure there is a limitation on both ends of the size scale, as to being efficient workers in Arctic conditions, but I do not know of any scientific studies done to determine that.

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