

America's Newest Dog Breed – Intelligent, Whimsical and Very Fluffy

Welcomed by the AKC in June 2016, this spunky athletic breed exudes confidence and has a good work ethic. Definitely not a lap dog, but if you want to stay active and fit, it could be perfect for you. They're pretty healthy, too. But forget it if you also house these pets.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- The newly recognized Pumi dog breed has a background of herding, which may become evident around kids and other dogs
- Patient training at 10 to 12 weeks of age is recommended to help this breed adopt the habits he needs to be a happy member of your family
- Habits the Pumi (plural Pumik) may need to overcome include herding, barking and digging, all issues that training will be able to improve
- Socialization is also extremely important for Pumi puppies, not just with humans in his own adopted family, but with other people, dogs and cats
- As with all pets, it's important to feed your Pumi the healthiest food and in proportionate amounts to ensure he or she doesn't fall victim to that most prevalent of maladies: obesity

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Perhaps it's the high, half-cocked and hair-covered ears that give the recently recognized Pumi dog breed its whimsical persona, but then again, it could be its adorable tuft-like coat, described as wavy/curly and shorter on his face to reveal dark, intelligent eyes and cute nose.

Originally emerging from Hungary (and named, alternately, the Hungarian herding terrier) the Pumi has a long history of that ability. This breed's plural designation is "Pumik."

Pumik history is thought to have begun around 300 years ago when the Puli breed (dubbed "Rasta," with a "mop" of long, corded hair) was crossed with herding canines from France and Germany.

As a general overview, Pumiks have wedge-shaped heads and corkscrew-type fur, which, according to the Pumi Club,¹ looks and performs best when soaked and left to dry, with minimal shedding.

Not necessarily a "lap dog," the Pumi loves having the time and space to play and run free. Exercise on a regular basis is a prerequisite for this breed, which gives you a chance to not only bond and interact, but reinforce the training he will need from an early age.

One of the ways this dog's work ethic evidences itself is in the focused obedience they have when interacting with their "shepherd" — or more correctly, the humans who adopt them (who may or may not be shepherds).

The Pumi was recognized by the American Kennel Club (AKC)² in June of 2016, the 190th bona fide canine, with notable qualities that include "energetic, lively and ready to work."

The Pumi's Personality Is a Plus

A National Public Radio (NPR)³ article settled on two more adjectives to describe this adorable dog: "intelligent" and "whimsical." Other qualities often mentioned include "smart," "playful" and "easy to train," all desirable assets.

Some Pumi owners say their dogs are somewhat standoffish and cautious with strangers, but affectionate with family members.

Like many other astute individuals, the Pumi tends to gravitate toward the people they spend the most time with, and those humans are typically the ones who get the privilege of this dog's best cuddles. Others simply like being near their favorite humans, and settle in comfortably for close companionship.

Socialization is extremely important for Pumi puppies, not just with humans in his own adopted family, but with other people, dogs and cats. Pumi generally have a congenial relationship with other animals if they're friendly toward him; however, pay attention whenever your Pumi interacts with felines.

Cautiously introducing them to as many new people, places and settings can't be stressed enough, as this background will help both you and your dog feel more confident in unexpected situations.

What you'll likely find is that the raw personality that shines through is sunny and cheerful, but they like to "get after it," too. That includes hunting down moles and mice, so digging can be a problem when they're outside.

Consequently, the recommendation is that the Pumi not be included in a house where there's "pocket pets" like hamsters, guinea pigs and yes, pet mice or rats.

You may also find early on that along with their herding instincts, some Pumi, probably as a herding side note, are inclined to speak their mind — they bark. Vet Street notes, though, that:

"Barking is a common trait of herding dogs ... it's natural for them to express their opinion through barking.

*The Pumi tends to be highly trainable, though, and can learn when it's appropriate to bark and when it's not. If you provide him with plenty of exercise and attention, you'll probably find that he won't bark unless there's an important reason behind it."*⁴

Training Your Pumi

As with most other breeds, it's best to train this one right out of the gate; Vet Street recommends beginning at 10 to 12 weeks of age, because if you wait until they're 6 months old, they will already have begun the process of training you!

With their intelligence comes a tendency to be quite headstrong, so gentle, consistent encouragement and positive instruction is key. They pick up training quickly, but the fun factor needs to be there, as well. As Vet Street reiterates:

"Most Pumi like to learn and will work hard to do what you want, but bear in mind that they aren't fans of boring, repetitious exercises. Keep training entertaining if you want to hold their attention. This breed responds better to reward-based methods than harsh verbal or physical treatment.

*If you are new to training dogs, it will be helpful to find training facilities near you that offer classes for puppy socialization and basic obedience training, as well as canine sports training."*⁵

The Pumi's forebears were trained to be alert and vigilant. Some of the most desirable attributes you want to see in people in the workplace, this dog demonstrates as a matter of course. The focus he's capable of comes in handy in training, because his seeming ability to "read minds" has been cited more than once.

Pumi rank high on the charts as a watchdog, and could be described as having "global vision" in that they observe everything that's going on. That comes in handy when they're in the backyard with the kids, but this dog's herding instinct is strong, so don't be surprised if your Pumi tries herding them!

One of the traits your Pumi pup might display, especially with children, but adults and other dogs, as well, is a penchant for nipping at heels and latching their teeth into pants' bottoms, an obvious throwback to their inbred herding instinct. However, the right training early on will help nip this in the bud.

Health Tendencies of the Pumi Pup

While some may contend there's some time and cost involved cost for Pumi fur upkeep, it may be pleasantly offset by the breed's general health, deemed to be excellent, according to Petful:

*"Pumi are extremely health dogs with only a few recurring problems. Hip dysplasia is the most common but still low in frequency. Other conditions include degenerative myelopathy (spinal cord disease) and primary lens luxation (eye lens dislocation). Other than common canine issues, the Pumi is one healthy dog!"*⁶

Elbow dysplasia may be another issue, which also can be evaluated by your veterinarian. Vet Street estimates the Pumi's lifespan at 13 to 15 years.

As with all pets, it's important to feed your Pumi the healthiest food and in proportionate amounts to ensure he or she doesn't fall victim to that most prevalent of maladies: obesity. That way, they'll have the best chance to live out their lives to the fullest, happy, healthy and loved.

Sources and References

¹ [Hungarian Pumi Club of America, The Pumi Coat and Its Grooming](#)

² [American Kennel Club, June 22, 2016 \(Archived\)](#)

^{3,5} [NPR, June 22, 2016](#)

⁴ [VetStreet, May 4, 2016](#)

⁶ [Petful, January 13, 2013](#)