

The Intelligence and Temperament of a PON

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Over the years I have read a number of articles about PONs. Not many of them, however were dedicated to intelligence and temperament. This applies to the other breeds as well. For quite some time breeding has been directed toward appearance, and if any consideration has been given to temperament it's mostly toward psychological stability. The effect of this approach is a stable but dull PON. This type of dog is convenient for people who want to have one or more dogs but do not intend to spend much time with them. However, a dog like this will not satisfy true lovers of smart animals. Fortunately this particular problem has pertained to PONs only to a minimal degree, although it has been more prevalent lately.

In the very recent past the only criterion in breeding of the herding dogs was their ability to perform a job. Their exterior was a secondary feature as long as it did not conflict with their work.

The Polish Lowland Sheepdog, for generations, was used to perform various tasks: herding, guarding and hunting. To be capable of performing these tasks PONs had to be versatile, intelligent, and able to make independent decisions.

Today's PON is still intelligent and independent. PONs learn easily and remember lessons well. However, the execution of learned skills sometimes represents a problem. Frequently, PONs get good marks at the obedience course, but after coming home suffer from...amnesia. All depends on the ability of the owner to deal with their dog.

Among many breeds, including PONs, there are individual dogs that significantly stand out from the rest (in various categories). Occasionally one can find a dog of exceptional intelligence and personality. Such a dog is able to establish a particular bond. This allows the dog to function almost at the partner level, and influence the life of the family. This kind of dog invents new rules, activities, and duties for members of the family. An intelligent dog is able to perceive interesting sounds and words. It is also able to communicate its needs to the owner. Very often, this type of dog is a teacher to his owner (if the latter is equally bright). PONs like this, demand much more attention and time, but are much more satisfying companions.

Do not expect, however, PONs of this caliber to be blindly obedient since they are intelligent creatures. Intelligent PONs will eagerly execute commands, as long as they make sense to them. Conversely they will object to nonsense tasks. For instance, my first PON girl would run enthusiastically in the show ring during the first round. In the second round she used to give me an astonished look. When it came to the third, she decisively lingered behind, clearly not seeing much sense in running around in circles. Obviously this type of behavior could be controlled, but it has to be done very smartly to avoid creating "thoughtless robots".



No doubt, a lot of future dog owners wonder how to recognize such an individual among the puppies. It appears to be a reasonably simple task. One should look for a puppy that is the most curious, nosy, and eagerly explores its surroundings. This little know-it-all sleeps less than the rest of its littermates, since there is always so much more to do. It holds its own against stronger puppies simply by outsmarting them. In most cases it will avoid fighting for dominance. No doubt, an intelligent PON will be more mischievous (like smart kids). Fortunately PON puppies do not cause much damage. They spend most of their energy on running, jumping, and barking rather than chewing on furniture.

For more information on the subject of dog intelligence, please refer to Stanley Coren's "The Intelligence of Dogs".

