

## The Psyche of a PON...

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The Polish Lowland Sheepdog is a dog with a strong temperament and individuality. The PON is lively, curious of its surroundings, possesses a certain degree of aloofness and a strong territorial instinct. The above characteristics often lead to conflicts between the new owner and their PON.

PON puppies are very active, rather noisy and invasive. They protest vigorously against restrictions particularly if they have tasted the pleasure of running freely all over the house or the apartment already.

PONs establish quickly a pack hierarchy. They have to have close contact with their caretaker from early days. PONs mature quickly and become independent and eagerly look for establishing communication with humans.

In the new home, a little PON has to find a loving but firm family. The huge energy of a youngster often finds a way to burst out in quite a sophisticated play. The puppy needs to be occupied and have an opportunity to run as well as to learn through play. Rigid "teaching programs", combined with restricted movement and exploration of surroundings, often cause PONs to become stubborn or feign complete ineptitude.

The defiant youngster tries to get his way at all costs. The owner's anger and use of force will result in quite opposite outcomes. The puppy may become obstinate. He will follow your command (but only to get rid of you)! However, when the opportunity comes he will not cooperate with you (for example; in the show ring).

Establishing friendship with PONs is not that difficult, but has to be done smartly. The PON will return as much love and respect as he receives from the master.

Even a small puppy will figure out quickly how much it can push the owner and what he can get by squealing. If we do not show enough patience, or a strong enough will in executing commands, the PON will quickly take advantage becoming a home tyrant or a clever beggar pretending to be a fool.

In particular, a psychologically strong male can be a nuisance to the inconsistent owner. Most commonly it will be seen as independence during a walk, or a disregard of commands.

It has to be remembered that PONs from the past have nothing to do with salon dogs. The PON was a typical village-guarding dog used for drawing sheep, cattle and pigs. The PON used to work while barking! He worked fast, loud and not necessarily gently. He barked furiously at intruders, often trying to bite them. Two PONs could easily hold in place a cow as well as an intruder if he happened to enter "their" territory.

The PON is born to guard and does it very well. The PON patrols his territory willingly and diligently. Nothing escapes his attention. He is strong psychologically so while working he does not get frustrated easily. He remains active and eagerly cooperative

The tendency to treat a PON as a salon dog, or a toy dog, presents frequent problems. Restricting this working dog to sleeping, eating and decorative functions are frequent errors committed by a new owner. If a PON gets bored he finds play on his own, which often results in demolition of the house, digging holes in the garden or the flowerbeds. He may bark for hours and start scratching.

A frustrated owner punishes the dog by locking him up, which intensifies the stress and all of its symptoms. The other scenarios are frequent visits to vets looking for the justification of scratching in skin problems.

Boredom, lack of physical activity, and a rich diet are the most common elements leading to a psychological deviant.

A PON is not a dog for everyone, unfortunately. This exceptionally sincere, intelligent dog requires a smart and strict human-partner. A PON is not a submissive suck-up or a mindless follower, but an energetic and happy companion (a loyal buddy!). The owner who values an active lifestyle, and finds the time for grooming, bathing, walking, shows, agility, and training consequently will find not only a friendly dog, but a true friend. That's right, a FRIEND!