

This Rare but Smart Canine Companion Makes a Good Protector

They almost completely disappeared during World War II and are still rare but are making a comeback. If you can find one, this smart dog will bring you joy, devotion, and protection. Here's what this breed needs in order to thrive. Be sure you have it before adopting one.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Mudis are a rare herding dog breed from Hungary who excel at agility training, flyball and search-and-rescue
- These loyal and affectionate working dogs make excellent watch dogs and devoted family companions
- Early socialization and training, and adequate daily exercise and stimulation, will keep Mudis happy and out of trouble
- Mudis are also quite rare, especially in the U.S., with only an estimated few thousand worldwide (mostly in Hungary and Finland)
- While most Mudis are black, their coats also come in a variety of other colors, including white, brown, gray, yellow and merle

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published February 16, 2017.

The Mudi is a herding dog breed from Hungary, where it is still a popular companion to Hungarian shepherds needing to keep tabs on their flocks of sheep. So it goes without saying that Mudis are working dogs who love being given "jobs" of all kinds.

If you're looking for a dog to engage in agility training, flyball, nose work or virtually any other type of training, a Mudi may be the dog for you.

Many people are initially taken in by the Mudi's wavy, medium-length coat, perky ears (which are actually floppy when they're born) and fox-like head, but are won over by this breed's intelligence and lively temperament.

Mudis are loyal and close companions to their owners (they'll follow at your heels everywhere and anywhere you let them) yet may also get along well with other pets and older well-behaved children, provided they're properly trained.

A Brief Mudi History

The Mudi breed is said to have been discovered by Dr. Dezso Fenyves in Hungary in 1936, the namesake for the breed's Latin name: *Canis ovilis Fényesi*.¹

At the time the breed was known as the "Driver Dog," but references suggest it may have actually originated much earlier, as far back as the 15th to 18th centuries. VetStreet reported:²

*"It's suggested that Mudis may descend from crosses of Spitz-type dogs with herding dogs. It is likely that the Mudi is somehow related to Hungary's other herding breeds, the Puli and the **Pumi**.*

Mudis nearly disappeared soon after their recognition because many were killed during World War II. From a few survivors, the breed was rebuilt."

Active, Intelligent and Excellent Watch Dogs

The traits that make Mudis (pronounced "moody") excellent herders are the same that make them excellent watch dogs. While they're not typically aggressive, they're usually very alert and in-tune with their surroundings.

If a stranger approaches, you can count on your Mudi barking in alarm. You can also expect Mudis to bark at passersby.

Mudis love to be active, so expect to go on daily walks or jogs together. A securely fenced-in backyard that provides large open spaces for running and playing a game of frisbee would also be beneficial. Many Mudis also enjoy swimming and make skilled search-and-rescue dogs.

Remember that this medium-sized breed still has a strong herding instinct, and thus thrives when allowed to carry out this natural behavior. They also adore human interactions (such as those required for active dog sports) and do not do well when left alone for long periods.

Be aware that without proper exercise, Mudis can be mischievous. According to the Mudi Club of America, "A well-exercised Mudi is a Mudi who tends not to find trouble elsewhere either by jumping over, or digging under, any fences keeping him from the greener other side."³

Early but Gentle Training Is Important

All dogs benefit from early socialization and training, but for an intelligent and strong-willed dog like the Mudi, it's essential. VetStreet explained:⁴

"The Mudi is smart and learns quickly. Start training him the day you bring him home or before you know it, he will have you trained. He is capable of soaking up everything you can teach him. Don't wait until he is 6 months old to begin training or you will have a more headstrong dog to deal with."

A puppy should begin formal training at 8 weeks, and if you adopt an adult dog that has received no obedience training, you should enroll her in a class right away. If your pup is too young to go to class, then enroll in a puppy playgroup.

It's also a good idea to take your dog through a refresher obedience course every few years, or when you need help with the inevitable behavioral hiccup that crops up as she ages. Positive reinforcement behavior training, not punishment-based training, is recommended for all dogs, and this is especially true for Mudi.

"The Mudi has what's called a soft temperament," VetStreet noted. "Show him what you want and reward or praise him when he does what you like and he'll be yours for life. He doesn't respond well to harsh verbal or physical corrections — no dog does."

The Mudi Club of America noted similarly, "As with all herding breeds, the Mudi is sensitive to strong-arm corrections and will learn far more quickly if he is trusting of his trainer and they work together as a team."⁵

A Rare and Healthy Breed

Mudis are generally healthy dogs with a lifespan of 12 to 14 years. However, there have been some reports of epilepsy, hip dysplasia, congenital cataracts or color dilution alopecia ("blue dog syndrome"), which may be inherited health issues.⁶

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While most Mudis are black, their coats also come in a variety of other colors, including white, brown, gray, yellow and merle. They're light-to-average shedders and a weekly brushing is generally enough to keep their fur adequately groomed.

Overall, Mudis are playful, affectionate and easygoing, especially once you've earned their trust. They make great family dogs, particularly for people interested in an active breed who would enjoy training and dog sport activities.

Given their rarity, you may not find many Mudis in U.S. shelters, but breed-specific rescues do exist and should be pursued first if you fall in love with this breed.

Sources and References

¹[American Kennel Club, Mudi](#)
^{2,4}[VetStreet, June 23, 2016](#)
^{3,5,6}[Mudi Club of America, FAQs \(Archived\)](#)
