

AZURICOYOTES  
Hollandse Herders  
2011–2021

In English

# 1 FOREWORD

I have always thought that a breeder's responsibility is to the breed: when we choose to raise and sell puppies of a specific breed, we are required to put aside some of our personal desires. What I mean by this is that every litter should be born from a careful consideration of what that combination can do for the breed, positive or negative. The question should never be what that combination can do for you as a breeder.

To celebrate 10 years of breeding, and to fully commit to my role as one of the caretakers of the breed I have created this document. The purpose of it is to comprehensively display all the data from my breeding program, and also to show a little bit of how I see the world of dogs.

I think we should not be scared to examine, test and document. Putting less than perfect news of our dogs out there is difficult, but it is always good for the breed. If we can let go of the expectation of perfection and navigate breeding in a realistic world, we are immediately on the way to something better.

Sanna Varis Jørgensen

## 2 HISTORY

### Meeting the breed

I first discovered the Dutch Shepherd as a teenager of 14 years. The dream of some day owning a brindle Great Dane like my family had back in the day was instantly transformed when I saw a photo and a short description of the breed in a dog magazine. Because information on the breed online was still scarce at the time, during the next year I contacted pretty much every breeder in Finland to inquire about owning and training a Dutch Shepherd.

I landed with one the most dedicated, knowledgeable breeders out there, Liisa Kukkanen (Lissunmustan) who at the time was active in longhairs. She was happy to share endless amounts of information with a one-track mind teenager, and the very first time we met she took me all the way to Norway to see dogs. This was the beginning of a beautiful apprenticeship of a sort, one that led to many more trips abroad and an intense learning experience about everything to do with breeding and the breed. I am eternally thankful to Lissu for what she did for me, I would have done none of the things I have without her teaching.

My first Dutch Shepherd Fraai I finally got home after I had just turned 16. She was a longhair from what was called “F-line”, meaning she had Tervueren cross project ancestry. I had dreamed of training her to obedience championship and who knows to what else already before she was born. Unfortunately Fraai had problems with fear aggression, so we never became the killer pair in competitions I had planned us to be. Later two other longhairs joined the pack, Masi and Hyy. They were both low, or lower drive than Fraai, and even harder to train. Similar dogs were everywhere in the breed.

During those years of owning these wonderful companion dogs I did see one dog that especially piqued my interest: Lissu acquired a beautiful French import Topaze, whose father Pacha

was born from shorthair parents. At the time dogs like this were pretty much not heard of. One time I was allowed to take Topaze into training, and this small event sparked something in me. She was not just naturally more willing to work with me, but had a totally different air around her. I now recognize it as vitality. I knew this was the direction I wanted to pursue in the future.

In 2007 I took the leap to importing the first dog for myself: Suri from Switzerland joined us. Her dam was Polka, sister to Pacha, and her sire was a shorthaired patrol dog from the Vastenow bloodline. She was a cool little dog ready to finally fulfil my dream of a competitive sports dog. I did not get to enjoy her for long. When she was 7 months old she was hit by a car and died instantly.

### Becoming a breeder

At that time I had still been considering breeding Fraai. She had her health tests done and she had passed the Finnish character test, which meant that on paper she checked all the boxes for a breeding dog in Finland. Even if she was not my ideal, I had a successful son from Polka booked as the sire of her future litter and I was hoping it would be enough for decent puppies for the following year. All I needed was a kennel name to apply for.

No matter how terrible the sudden loss of Suri was, it gave me clarity. I realized she had been the type of dog that I wanted more of, and that I should not settle for anything less. I would not feel good about Fraai' s puppies, and who knows how many generations I would have to attempt to fix that one poor choice. This was not how I wanted to become a breeder, and I consider myself lucky I realized that in time. I decided to write down all my future breeding principles there and then, before I had a potential breeding dog again that could cause me to become biased and compromise. The kennel name came to me in the shower - a - suri - coyotes!

Another thing that happened quickly after Suri' s death was an attempt to salvage something of what I had lost. I scoured the earth for Polka offspring and 3 months later my friend and I interrailed across Europe to bring back two new females: Malta (5 months, Polka granddaughter) from France and Jadi (2 years, Polka daughter) from Switzerland. This took me up to 5 dogs in an apartment and a life situation that was not ideal, but in the end the sacrifices were worth it since these two ended up being the most worthy imports I have done so far (five dogs imported after them, none used for breeding) and eventually, the foundation dams for my breeding. Both girls were social, balanced, high-tempered and loved to work with their handler. Obviously they were still not what you would call a high-end working dog, with something lacking in durability of drive and toughness. But they were like night and day compared to the longhairs at the time, and I am forever proud to have been able to start up from such a rare and special foundation.

Over 10 years passed since discovering the Dutch Shepherd. Everything was finally ready: Jadi was already 5 and a half years old and after living in Denmark for a while we had just moved to a more permanent residence in Finland. It was time.

## 2011–2021

Our first litter was scheduled for a French male with some very good sport results and a hint of shorthair blood. Just as Jadi was about to come into heat, terrible news arrived: there had been an incident and the intended sire was dead. I put my everything into finding a replacement, and finally I landed on a very young male from Sweden I had considered to sire some other litter a bit later. He came from a more traditional pedigree, but had the health results I wanted and his MH result was one of the best ever seen in the breed. Even if the pedigree was still 1/4 shorthair through Jadi, this is still my highest inbred litter to date.

Nitro x Jadi litter was born in August 2011, 5 + 3

Two of these puppies went abroad, a female to Sweden and a male to USA.

These dogs grew up nice, soft and happy. Only one of them showed similar qualities in play and prey as the parents, and several had poor appetites. In time, most of them developed sound sensitivity. Their health was not what I was hoping for, with excellent results from official scoring but various problems in everyday life. Several also had poor structures that prevented them from succeeding as sports dogs. At the end of 2021, only two dogs remain alive.

I had kept a male at home and two females with breeding terms, but decided against using any of them. Two dogs were used for three litters by others, with first generation offspring in USA, Germany and Finland (Dutch Master' s, Ut de Kamp, Tialan), and second generation offspring in Finland (Spacetime).

By the time of my first litter Malta was already of age as well, and I knew what I wanted to do with her: an inter-variety cross. As a 1/4 shorthair herself, she still possessed many of the good qualities crosses can bring, and I wanted to double down on that to have a higher chance of passing these qualities forward in the next generation. The owner of my number one male choice felt positively about the cross, something that has encouraged me to dream big ever after. He was a working dog with a promising career that later made him a legendary multichampion in IPO, as well as a gentle visitor dog in his everyday life. A perfect mix of vitality, working ability and solid temperament to improve all of those aspects in the longhair.

After a long and hard road my application was accepted in the Finnish kennel club, and this became the first time ever a working line shorthair was combined with a longhair.

Glen x Malta litter was born in August 2012, 3 + 5

All of these puppies were shorthaired carriers of longhair.

This litter is maybe my favourite overall, and as successful as a litter can expect to be. Their temperaments were on the higher side but not too prominently, and all of them showed excellent qualities for sport. Their best side has been their health, strong as iron deep into middle age for most, and beyond for many. They did not possess flashy looks, but they were sufficiently well built dogs with healthy structures and no exaggerations.

I initially kept two females with breeding terms, and one at home. For the next generation I used two females for a total of two litters myself, and one male was used twice by others (Tarita's, Sentähden). Only one of these litters ended up being a backcross into longhair, since inter-variety pairings were not possible in Finland for a while and the breeding age of my females fell into that window.

When it started becoming clear that Jadi's first litter was not a success, I began considering a retry. For months I went back and forth on my decision, and finally decided I would regret not trying to continue her worth forward. A couple of years earlier a shorthaired litter from a working pedigree I really liked had been born in France with some longhair puppies, and I was given the chance to get a male puppy from that litter. Back then I was not able to, but I knew that if I ever had the opportunity, I would take it and bring that bloodline into my breeding. Luckily he was sold to a home that was willing to work with me.

Geb x Jadi litter was born in February 2014, 3 + 5

Two puppies went abroad, a male to USA and a female to the Netherlands.

From this combination I got exactly what I had hoped for the first time around with Jadi, and much much more. When I started, I would not have believed the quality of working ability I could produce only 3 years later. These dogs were strong in character, with some balanced-calm temperaments as well as high ones, and a lot of fight. Some variation especially in social confidence. Health-wise there were some imperfections on the

skeletal side, but in all other ways that mattered this was a healthy litter. They had especially strong structures, usually on a little heavier and larger side.

I kept two females with breeding terms again, and decided to use one of them for one litter. I also leased another female for one litter. Additionally, one female was used for two litters in the Netherlands (Meerhuisje) and already has two litters of second generation offspring there (Meerhuisje, Älde Gea).

After three litters and two of them such big successes I realized everything was not going according to plan. I had expected to work on improving drive little by little for several generations. Having made the choices I had, I had been given a shortcut: the drive was now there, and these dogs were highly trainable. I could either keep taking steps to increase drive even further, or maintain it while focusing on stability. I chose to focus on stability, and have become surer and surer of this choice as the sources of working blood have slowly increased in the breed.

Now it was time for the second generation, and first in line was my breeding terms bitch Brimi from Glen x Malta litter. I wanted to support her balanced temperament and her working ability with a solid shorthair male from an unrelated working line. I chose one with a stellar competition career in Ringsport and who came heavily recommended by my French friend.

Dakota x Brimi litter was born in February 2016, 0 + 1

This singleton puppy was showing amazing qualities in the puppy box, but unfortunately experienced some health problems during her too-short life. She was missing a back vertebra and eventually fell ill of a serious autoimmune disease that ended her life at only 4 years old.

Before the discovery of the health problems we tried to use the same male again with Brimi through artificial insemination, but with no result. We also tried the semen on her sister Pants, but again with no result. I considered trying Brimi with another

male again for a better result but that at that point, 4 years later her back x-ray was not as clean as I wanted it to be anymore. I decided to give up on getting offspring from her. Even if it was difficult to face failure over and over again, there was definitely a blessing or two in disguise somewhere in there.

After the semen from Dakota did not work with Pants, and a third combination had also failed with a different pair of dogs, I decided to try a natural mating for Pants who was already nearly 6 years old at the time. I again looked for a male that could give longhaired puppies with her. There is something I want to be very clear about: I do not condone the pairing of any two dogs just because they are carriers of longhair and can give longhair puppies. The breeding decision always has to come from the actual quality of the dogs and how well they fit each other. This is why I have never requested to test any of the shorthair males I have used for breeding, and have often picked a more fitting dog over a sure carrier. The male for Pants ended up being a young double grandson of the famous Deeper, a KNPV pedigreed male I knew to carry the longhair gene. He matched Pants perfectly in every other aspect except elevated temperament: both individuals were dogs with high temperaments, maybe even too high for my ideal.

Messi x Pants litter was born in September 2018, 2 + 3

Two of these puppies, a male and a female developed a long coat and were later moved to longhair registry. One shorthaired female moved to Germany at 1,5 years of age.

This litter is a litter with large characters. High temperaments, high drives, physically hard and a lot to work with. True working dogs. More challenging dogs for novice handlers than in our previous litters meant that two dogs had to be rehomed at a young age. Health-wise excellent, with structures that are functional but nothing flashy or special. A litter with extremely high genetic diversity, but surprisingly uniform in all aspects.

I kept the longhaired female with breeding terms and co-own the longhaired male. Neither have been used for breeding yet but their results are promising.

Right as Messi x Pants puppies left the house, it was time to retry another unsuccessful combination from earlier. After years of searching I had managed to find a KNPV pedigreed longhair male in USA, with an unexaggerated character, the possibility of FCI papers without trickery and health testing already done. I imported frozen semen from him and agreed to lease Sindi, an even-tempered strong female from Geb x Jadi to pair with him. The first try did not result into puppies, but the second try a year later did. This extreme outcross became the first time in longhair history a KNPV male sired FCI registered puppies.

Riddick x Sindi litter was born in January 2019, 0 + 2

After all of our efforts it was a shame we got just two puppies. I kept one for myself and Sindi's owner kept the other.

Both of these dogs grew up extremely large for females, with working characters but some variation in drive and confidence. Unfortunately genetic cartilage weakness is present in the litter, as one of the females was diagnosed with OCD as a puppy and also never had her ears stand up. Later, at nearly 7 years of age their dam was also diagnosed with OC after showing some symptoms. To complete the set, the other female was also discovered to have OC changes in her x-rays a bit later. Due to these events I had to scrap this project entirely.

Finally, it was the time for the last daughter of Jadi, named Ruusa. For years I had only had one suitable male option for her, but there had been difficulties with getting in contact with the owner and time had just kept flying. He was a male from a pedigree I knew well: his sire was an uncle to the sire of my first litter, and his dam was both a half-sister to Jadi and an aunt of Malta. In my mind this combination was both a sort of a reroll for what I had hoped for in my first litter, but also a way

to cement the good qualities I appreciated in my dam line. For high-tempered Ruusa a calmer male still with an impressive string of sport titles was ideal.

Cosmo x Ruusa litter was born in September 2019, 4 + 2

Two puppies went abroad, a male to Switzerland and a female to Czechia. I kept one female with breeding terms.

Even if the litter was “less working line” than many of our previous litters, I was delighted to see them develop better than expected. The two that went abroad were especially good in sport qualities, and all of them seem to have many of the character elements I wanted. Health testing has so far only given us top results. Structures are overall excellent and the dogs are otherwise beautiful like little candies. It is a litter with a lot of potential, one I hope to see in breeding one day.

Many litters fail and many succeed. In late 2021 we did a pairing that was the dream recipe for me: a proven KNPV line male from the US with a shorthaired female from Messi x Pants litter. I have never been prouder of any combination of two dogs, and wanted to shift my focus heavily on this line for the future. The insemination worked and we were expecting a large litter. Losing both the litter and the dam during the last weeks of pregnancy is the greatest tragedy I have faced as a breeder. I hope one day to be able to create another combination I believe in as much as this one.

What I have learned is that a successful breeding program is balancing between culling as much as possible to nurture quality, but always keeping a plan B, C and D at hand in case of setbacks. Sometimes it is the combination you put most hope in that causes you the most sorrow. And sometimes the combination you thought was not one of your best will surprise you the most. Breeding long-term is just trying to stay honest to yourself while dodging blows from mother nature.

## The future

When I started in Dutch Shepherds I was looking for a dog that would happily join me in my quest to conquer my dog sport dreams of all sizes. I never thought it needed to mean that this dog could not also be a wonderful family member at the same time. My breeding will always be looking for that sweet spot where the dog is balanced, laid back and social without compromising an inch of drive and working ability. If that dog has a long coat on top of everything else, well that' s just perfect. However, I love both shorthairs and longhairs equally, and hope to see them as one breed some day.

Over the years other aspects of dogs have become more important for me than competing, but my dream dog has not changed: this is my breed because my ideal dog and the ideal Dutch Shepherd dog is the same dog.

### 3 HEALTH

#### Reproductive organs

Out of 17 male puppies 15 had fully descended testicles at 8 weeks old. The two that did not, had their testicles descend shortly after. One other puppy was later diagnosed as cryptorchid i.e. they retained a testicle after leaving home.

One female never fully developed normal hormonal activity or heat cycles. At least 12 dogs were spayed or neutered with the following health-related reasons: mammary tumors (2), pyometra (1), prostate problem (1) and cryptorchidism (1).

#### Reproduction

Four litters were born through natural mating, three were born through artificial insemination: 1 frozen semen, 1 chilled semen, 1 fresh semen.

Every litter was born naturally with no significant complications. One birth was assisted by a vet (removal of stuck puppy & administering oxytocin).

Average litter size was 5,4. Puppy mortality was 7% with a total of 3 puppies lost in two litters. Two were stillborn, one died from injuries acquired during assisted birth. No cleft palates or other deformities.

Three different females remained empty after mating: 1 frozen semen insemination and 2 chilled semen inseminations.

Currently the average breeding age of our females is high with 5,5 years. The average breeding age of the males we utilized is above 5 years as well. Three males have been younger than 3 years old at the time of their litter, but these young males have always been combined with older females (5 years 10 months and up).

No female ever had more than 2 litters with us and no male was used more than once.

At the moment I consider there to be no significant concerns in reproduction. Artificial insemination has been extremely unlucky for us - out of 7 artificial inseminations with various males, methods & vets used we have only had 3 litters born, whereas all natural matings have born fruit.

Our average litter size is currently about 2 puppies lower than the breed average for Dutch Shepherds (1600 litters born between 2011–2021 personal log), and is especially lowered by two small litters of 1 and 2 puppies.

Long generations are something I carefully aim for, and will keep planning combinations with this in mind. Naturally, breeding older animals can result in smaller litters, so striking a balance between maturity, extensiveness of family data (which only comes with age) and fertility is always a challenge.

### Hips, elbows and shoulders

35 official hip and elbow scores on 31 individuals evaluated in 7 different countries (Finland, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, Czechia, Switzerland, USA). This means that currently 82% of our puppies are hip and elbow scored.

Three individuals were evaluated twice, 1,5 to 6 years after the first evaluation. Twice the evaluation was better the second time (B/B → A/A and C/B → B/B), once it remained the same (B/B → B/B). One dog was evaluated in two different countries with similar scores (OFA Good → A2 in Germany). Elbow scores always remained the same.

The share of healthy scores (HD A or B and ED 0) was 98% in hips and 100% in elbows. 1 dog had C/B hips.

Finnish Kennel Club has started scoring shoulders only at the beginning of 2021. 5 dogs in 2 countries (Finland, Czechia) have obtained an official scoring on shoulders since then.

2 dogs, a mother and daughter were scored as OC affected. 3 other scores of less related dogs were unaffected. Before the

official scoring system 2 other dogs (direct littermates of the affected ones) were OCD operated between 6-11 months of age.

Our hip and elbow scores are stellar on any scale. Compared to the averages of Dutch Shepherds in Finland (sh & lh born 2011–2019 source KoiraNet), the percentage of dysplastic scores was 9 times lower in our puppies than other DS. In addition to this our puppies were also examined significantly better, with a 28% higher share in hip and elbow scored dogs.

On the other hand I am extremely worried about shoulder osteochondrosis. I was unlucky enough to breed a female with asymptomatic OC at the time of her litter, only to discover the problem with her and both of her puppies much later. Because I consider this illness to be one of the most devastating joint problems out there, screening for OC and tracing lines that carry it will play a big role going forward, as well as strict culling of close relatives of affected dogs.

I manage joint health by minimizing genetic risk with the help of my own EBV project, and minimizing environmental risk by optimizing nutrition & movement of my puppies during their time at home.

## Backs

27 official evaluations for congenital lumbar transitional vertebra LTV from four different countries (Finland, Germany, Czechia, Switzerland). This means that 71% of our puppies are currently scored on LTV.

81% of these scores were completely free of all anomalies (LTV 0), and 96% were free of significant anomalies (LTV 0 or 1). 4 dogs were scored LTV 1: 2 of them with divided median crest and 2 with a narrow gap between S-Cd1. 1 dog was scored LTV 4 with 6 lumbar vertebrae.

29 official spondylosis scores on 24 individuals. 77% of our puppies living in Finland have been scored for spondylosis at least once.

The share of healthy (SP 0) scores was 92%. 2 dogs were scored SP 1 and one dog was scored SP 2.

Even if spondylosis is a degenerative disease with a common onset at middle age, spondylosis is mainly scored from very young dogs: in Finland 80% of all spondylosis scored dogs were younger than 48 months (4 years). In dogs this young the disease is only found in 6% of dogs, but in dogs evaluated 4 years and older already a quarter is affected.

After being scored once for spondylosis at a younger age, five dogs from my kennel were re-examined between 5 to 7,5 years of age. Four evaluations stayed the same (SP 0 → SP 0) and one was found to have developed mild changes since their first evaluation (SP 0 → SP 1).

Our back situations seems to be similar to the breed average (sh & lh born 2011–2019 source KoiraNet). In congenital changes of lumbar vertebrae, we had 45% more of our dogs scored than the general population. Our share of significant changes (LTV 2–4) was slightly less (3%) than other DS.

We have used 1 dog for breeding with LTV 1 type S–Cd1 anomaly. I consider this to be the most cosmetic of all LTV changes and with my current knowledge will not be ruling dogs out of breeding because of it in the future either. To avoid problems that could affect the lives our dogs, I will keep selecting males with either an official LTV evaluation or at least x-rays visible from families not known to suffer from more significant cases.

Our puppies are extremely well scored on spondylosis: they are 83% more scored than other DS. The share of affected and healthy dogs is similar to the whole breed. The two cases of spondylosis in our puppies where old age could not be a factor were limited to 1 litter.

As a breeder I do not think that x-raying once at 2–3 years old and then never again is sufficient to battle this genetic illness. I am proud of having my puppy owners re-evaluate their dog's backs even at an older age. Our dogs are examined on average 5

months older than other DS, and 60% more of our dogs are examined after they turn 4 than the in the breed generally. To support back health I will keep selecting for older x-rayed dogs and healthy families.

## Eyes

21 performed ECVO eye examinations on 18 different individuals. This means currently 47% of all of our puppies have an ECVO score.

Five individuals have been diagnosed with the following genetic eye diseases during their exams:

- 3 Plasmoma
- 2 Other insignificant cataract
- 1 Cortical cataract
- 1 Pannus/keratitis
- 1 Atresia of lacrimal punctum

Significant eye diseases normally have a late, middle age onset, but eye exams are mainly done on very young Dutch Shepherds: in Finland only 16% of eye checks (sh & lh born 2011-2019 source KoiraNet) were done on dogs that were 48 months (4 years) or older. In dogs this young changes are only found in 15% of dogs, but in dogs evaluated 4 years and older already a third, and 6 years and older half are affected by one or more eye diseases.

71% of all of our eye examinations were healthy. The ones with notable diseases (autoimmune eye diseases & cataracts are the most common significant ones in the breed) were on average 5,4 years old when the changes were found.

Our puppies are again significantly better examined than Dutch Shepherds in general (sh & lh born 2011–2019 source KoiraNet): they had 88% more eye examined dogs than the general population.

With such active owners examining their dogs, our puppies have about 10 percentage points more eye diseases discovered. They are however generally examined a little later in life than other DS: our

puppies were on average 7 months older during their exam than the breed average, and 35% of them were older than 4 years at the time of examination.

I am not worried about all eye changes - insignificant cataracts are mainly cosmetic changes that were only classified as a hereditary illness after I started breeding. Other random findings are usually not a cause for worry either.

Pannus/keratitis and plasmoma however are illnesses that I take very seriously for three reasons: they require medication (i.e. they affect the everyday life of both owner and dog), they are autoimmune diseases, and they exist in both of my dam lines. The average age of diagnosis for Dutch Shepherds is 6,5 years, and the illness is not always obvious to the owner which can make discovery even more difficult.

Currently my plan as a breeder is to keep examining and encouraging my puppy owners to examine. My aim is to control these illnesses, but also to get more information on if these lines are in a significantly higher risk or if the current differences are due to breadth of examinations, age variations and coincidence. To effectively combat this class of autoimmune diseases a lot more focus on eye examinations is needed in the breed.

## Genetic testing

Five dogs have been tested for degenerative myelopathy (DM) and spongy degeneration with cerebellar ataxia (SDCA type 1 and 2): all results were normal. Many sires we utilized had one or both of these results as normal, but one was later revealed as DM carrier.

Ten dogs have the MyDogDNA test panel done through Genoscooper. The measured genetic diversity for every dog has been above the average of both short and longhaired Dutch Shepherds, and our puppies have generally been recorded as some of the genetically most diverse individuals in the breed (9/10 dogs <42% GD).

Genetic testing remains a low priority in my breeding. At this moment I do not think rare illnesses like DM & SDCA are a threat, so to eliminate the chance for affected puppies we will concentrate on having at least one parent tested normal whenever possible. If carriers are found in our puppies, the plan might change.

I use detailed pedigree analysis to ensure high genetic diversity in every litter. Improving GD has been one of the main pillars of my breeding since the beginning. For me its effects on health and vitality are undeniable.

### Health summary

Dogs from my breeding are always more thoroughly examined than dogs in the breed on average. This can be attributed to active, knowledgeable owners I have been blessed with for my puppies. I especially appreciate that dogs are examined for genetic illnesses at an age when there is a higher likelihood to find them, not when finding something is still very unlikely. This makes all clean results that much more valuable.

Hips and elbows are not a problem, instead they are a source of pride. We have had some nasty surprises with shoulders, but hopefully the situation is now effectively controlled. There are no major back problems present. DM & SDCA are currently not proven to exist in our dogs.

Eyes are something to … keep an eye on. Due to lack of data managing eyes is even more difficult than many other illnesses, so for now we concentrate on collecting data.

Some other significant and not age-related health problems encountered in my puppies are: allergies or itching, digestive issues, pancreatitis, undefined back pains or weakness and unknown autoimmune illness.

Largely these problems are concentrated on the first litter which clearly has lower resistance than my other, more genetically diverse litters that have mainly experienced skeletal

system wear when getting older. This is one reason why our pedigrees will remain wide and open in the future as well.

Causes of death to share for our dogs:

- 2 Accident or wildlife damage
- 2 Undiagnosed pains or aches
- 1 Passed away for unknown reason
- 1 Unnamed autoimmune illness
- 1 Spinal cord mass
- 1 Spleen tumour

Health is one of my favorite areas. With so many possible things to discover and so many problems to encounter it can be daunting. Not every health problem can be managed with the same tactics, and finding the ones that are most effective without harming genetic diversity is important.

My main goal is to breed dogs that can live a normal, active life. A diagnosis means very little if it only shows on paper. That is why my focus is always on the health problems that have the biggest impact on the quality of life of the dog and the owner.

## 4 CHARACTER

### MH mental description

22 dogs have been evaluated in MH. This means that currently 58% of all of our puppies, and 71% of all of our puppies living in Finland have a mental description.

Because the bloodlines and purpose of each litter varies greatly, averages do not necessarily give the best image of what each litter is like. For lack of a better way to display these results, here the averages of the first 5 litters in different sections:

Shooting	3.0
Sociability	3.3
Courage	3.6
Playfulness	3.6
Chase	2.3
Aggression	1.6
Activity level	3.3

100% of these tests were completed with no discontinued tests.

When compared to Dutch Shepherds in Finland (sh & lh born 2011–2019 source KoiraNet), our puppies are tested over four times more often than other Dutch Shepherds. Actually, our puppies represent 20% of all tested dogs in the breed. Our two youngest litters have not attended yet, but every other litter has nearly every dog tested.

Using MH as a way to track and compare behavioural tendencies in my litters with unbiased methods was my intention from the start. We are the first kennel in Finland to use it in a systemic way. I am intending to continue this going forward.

Short and longhaired Dutch Shepherds have very different MH profiles especially in shooting, play, chase and courage. Our puppies resemble Finnish shorthairs in better courage and play, and longhairs in a little higher sensitivity to shooting and less interest in chase. Their activity level is a little higher than longhairs, and a little lower or equal to shorthairs. In

sociability and aggression and they are equal to both long and shorthairs.

These features (and the ones presented under Finnish character test) clearly show that improving working qualities in the longhaired variety has been in the center of my breeding, and that progress has also been made.

### **Finnish character test**

13 dogs were evaluated in the Finnish character test. This is 34% of all of our puppies, and 42% of our puppies living in Finland.

The average points our dogs were awarded was 162. It is not directly possible to take averages from all the different sections without having to explain how the data was transformed, but here are the labels for corresponding values:

Function under pressure	Moderate
Mental sharpness	Moderate
Desire to defend	Moderate
Fighting spirit	High moderate
Nerve structure	Normal
Temperament	Moderate
Mental hardness	Low moderate
Accessibility	High
Security to shooting	High moderate

92% of these tests were approved. 1 dog was disqualified due to sound sensitivity. None of the tests were discontinued.

When compared to Dutch Shepherds in Finland (sh & lh born 2011–2019 source KoiraNet), our puppies are tested 20% more often. Since MH has been my tool of choice for recording unbiased character data, not nearly as much emphasis has been put on the character test. Even so, my puppy owners have often been willing to do both tests on their dog.

The average end points for our puppies is 8 points higher than the combined average for short and longhairs, and 36 points higher than just longhairs.

Our dogs have gotten a disqualifying result more than 2,5 times less often than other Dutch Shepherds.

The two varieties display large differences in the character test as well. Our puppies resemble shorthairs with higher function under pressure, mental sharpness, desire to defend, fighting spirit, temperament and security to shooting. Mental hardness also sits with the average of the shorthair, which describes a little harder dog than the longhair. Their nerve structure is ever so slightly above the average of both varieties, and their accessibility is similar to the rest of the population.

Please note that there are so many fewer character test results still done on our dogs, that one good or bad result can move the averages greatly. For this reason these comparisons should be taken with a grain of salt.

### **Working and sport results**

Our puppies have competed in agility, obedience, rally-obedience, Nordic working trials (forest search, forest tracking), Swiss working dog trials, field tracking, nosework and herding. 9 have passed BH and 2 have passed AD.

At least one dog in every litter since the start has trialed in one sport or another. 40% of all dogs have at least one approved result. Up to half of every litter has competed, some to the highest classes of their sport with their handler.

History was made when one of our puppies was the first longhaired Dutch Shepherd in Finland to reach the highest level of Nordic working dog trials. The same dog was given the first - and so far the only - longhair Hero Dog title from the Finnish Kennel Club in 2018, for her role in saving a life.

The breeding quality of a dog can be evaluated outside of competitions, but sharing their gifts with the world - no matter in which sport - is even sweeter. My main goal is to make good matches with puppies and owners, so that we could see our dogs competing out there in the future as well.

Our puppies reach competition about as often as the shorthaired Dutch Shepherd in Finland (sh & lh born 2011–2019 source Koiranet) with both around 40% of dogs with a sport result. When compared to longhairs, our dogs compete four times more often.

### Character summary

Our dogs are very well represented in trials, tests and competitions. Currently 74% of all of our puppies have an approved working or sport result, mental description, or character test. Nearly a quarter have all three.

6 out of 7 of our litters have at least one parent with working results - our first litter was from parents with “just” character testing results. Most of our litters are direct descendants of well-known shorthair working lines in Europe, by now for several generations. This is why my biggest focus has shifted from careful introduction of more drive onto maintaining and improving stability in dogs that have come with drive and strong characters. Even if the real Dutch Shepherd for me is undeniably a working dog, it is not an extreme dog.

Sometimes I also produce dogs with a little less drive, to make sure these dogs can be safely paired with the more traditional stock of longhairs to improve their genetic diversity. I feel that if we create lines with qualities that are too different from each other, it is going to hurt the breed instead of help it.

Even if our dogs have proven their working qualities, I have always been very careful not to assume. This is a personal choice to make sure that people can always trust my assessment of my puppies and that I could avoid giving the wrong puppy to the wrong home. I feel that I have been fairly successful at this, since very few of our puppies have ever had to be rehomed.

## 5 APPEARANCE

### Cosmetic faults

35 with normal bites. 1 underbite, 1 overbite and 1 level bite. These faults have been minor.

37 with full dentition. 1 dog is known to miss 2x P1 teeth.

Every puppy was born with a normal tail. One sire had a congenital kink tail, but it did not get passed on to offspring. One dog has an acquired kink tail (x-rays show a fracture from puppyhood).

10 dogs (26%) in 4 litters were born with one or two-sided dewclaws. These ranged from skin flaps barely attached to the back leg to extra toes with fully developed bone structures.

### Exhibitions

22 or 58% of our puppies have been shown in one or more exhibitions.

Breakdown of their assessed quality based on the best result obtained by each dog:

6 Very good ( 27%)

3 RCAC or RCACIB ( 14%)

8 CAC or CACIB ( 36%)

5 National or International Champion ( 23%)

### Appearance summary

Currently there are no big problems in appearance. The most common cosmetic fault is dewclaws, a trait that is controlled by one gene pair and easy to select away from if desired. Personally as a breeder I do not find them a problem though and will not put intentional selection pressure on it.

Our dogs have varied looks, but often do well in dog shows. Some individuals are large, but size is not yet an issue. Focus remains on healthy structure above anything else.

## 6 FIN.

Thank you for reading this monster of a document. I hope it gave you interesting data and things to think about. I have chosen to compare my dogs to the Finnish population, because most of our dogs are in Finland and our kennel club gives us all official data publicly: there are no hidden results. If I sound smug at times in the text it is because even if being critical comes naturally for me, I am actually very proud of my dogs!

If you ever have anything you want to ask, just talk about dogs, bloodlines, health or character, I am always happy to do so. You can reach me at [azuricoyotes@gmail.com](mailto:azuricoyotes@gmail.com)

... at least for the next 10 years until the next installation of this series comes out. 😊