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JOURNAL



***of the International Society for
Preservation of Primitive
Aboriginal Dogs***

To preserve through education.....

From the Curator...

***Dear members of PADS and
readers of our Journal,***

In this issue we publish an article by Sergei Bogatov about commercial squirrel hunting with Laikas. This article gives a glimpse of the strict hunting requirements for a working aboriginal Laika in the country of its origin.

We also publish an article by Ms. Jutta

Rúbesam about multiple importations of aboriginal Afghan Hounds into Germany and other European countries. Strangely enough, even Afghan Hounds obtained from the kennels of the King of Afghanistan were not "blue blooded" enough to be accepted by the German Kennel Club. The pictures offered in this article demonstrate how much Afghan Hounds have been changed by breeders for show purposes.

Sincerely yours,

Vladímír Beregovoy

Curator of PADS, International

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In This Issue...

AFGHAN TAZIS FROM OR IN AFGHANISTAN AND THEIR OFFSPRING	4
COMMERCIAL SQUIRREL HUNTING WITH LAIKAS.....	54

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Afghan Tazis from or in Afghanistan and their offspring

by Jutta Rübesam

Vladimir, who had seen lots of my collected pictures of native or close to native bred Afghan Hounds, asked me to write an article about these dogs. He thought it might be interesting to save and share all those pictures and stories before they are forgotten one day.

My name is Jutta Rübesam; I was born in 1956 and I was a vet. I live in the middle of Germany, a very crowded country. My first sighthound came into my life about 30 years ago.

The beginning of my article is the story of my own dogs and how I came to be interested in oriental sighthounds:

The story of my sighthounds

When I was a student in the late 1970s I moved to a big farm. There I met "Linka" for the first time. I was impressed by the dog's beauty and when I asked her owner what breed she was, I was told: "an Afghan Hound". I wondered about that answer, because she was not really heavy coated like the Afghan Hounds I knew from pictures in books. Linka's owner explained to me that her mother "Fritzi" had come from Kabul and that the "Afghan Hounds" in Afghanistan did not have that heavy coat like our show dogs. He also told me the story of Fritzi:

The later owners of Fritzi had been travelling (in the year 1973) through Afghanistan towards India and saw a child with the puppy in a market in Kabul. They

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bought the puppy for about 200 Afghanis from the hands of the child. While several months in India, Fritzzi grew to a beautiful youngster and the Indians told the travellers that their dog was an Afghan Tazi and that it was forbidden to take such a dog out of Afghanistan. But they were lucky. On the way back through Afghanistan to Iran, the people somehow managed to get her out of the country and home to Germany, where Fritzzi some years later had a litter (not registered), sired by the German bred show type Afghan Hound "Quassar von der Irmisul". In this litter "Linka" was born.

Again some years later (at the time I met her), Linka, Fritzzi's daughter, also had a litter (not registered) sired by a German bred Afghan Hound called "Boris". Her puppies were just old enough for their new homes when I had moved to the farm. Excited I went to have a look and immediately I fell in love with one of the puppies, called Saika. I took her home on the same day. There she grew up together with our Weimaraner bitch "Jule".

I began to read now a lot about Afghan Hounds: I learned that the breed was called "Tazi" in Afghanistan, found pictures of the early ones that had been imported to England, got to know the story of the Ghaznis and Bell Murray Afghan Hounds and how the standard was created. The old pictures had shown me that some of the early Afghan Hounds had looked like my little bitch more than like the show dogs of today.....and, as a result, I became interested in native or COO sighthounds.



Fritzzi, pictures taken by G. Brückl



Linka

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Saika and our Weimaraner bitch Jule



Saika and her father Boris

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Saika, 9 years old, spayed

Saika developed to a beautiful bitch with a big prey drive. But in our country it is not allowed to hunt with sighthounds. But I needed lots of time to learn about the existence of race tracks and to give her what she needed....a kind of hunting, but without the danger of being shot by a gun-hunter or killed by a car. So only years later, when Saika was already 5 years old, I came in contact with a racing club and she could participate in races as a registered Afghan Hound (special class for Afghans without pedigree). At that time she was very fast and also a good lure- coursing dog. But that was long after her litter and too late to get any registered puppies out of her. Even if I had known all that earlier, it might not have been possible to have her litter registered because of her own lack of pedigree and coat.

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As a poor student, I couldn't keep one of these puppies for my own but hoped for some offspring later. So I was happy when I heard that some kind of accident had taken place. The owner of Schiwa had bought a show Afghan male (Dallah's Mijan) and Schiwa one day (all of a sudden☺))) was pregnant by that male and the line went on. This litter was again not registered.



Shamal

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Shamal

From this litter I chose Azadi for myself, but I never bred her, because it was too difficult to find homes for sighthounds without pedigrees. So sadly this line died out.

My own bitch Azadi was registered in a club and she has been a good racing and lure-coursing dog like her grandmother Saika.

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Ambra



Jasha

To preserve through education.....



Schahrak



Schiwa

To preserve through education.....



Tazi



Radjai

To preserve through education.....



Ronja 1



Schiwa, Dallah's Mijan and puppies

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Dallah's Mijan



Asil

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Azad



Azadi

To preserve through education.....



Ronja 2



King

To preserve through education.....



Lady



Dojan

To preserve through education.....



Jaghi



Dina, Saika`s sister



Rani, Saika`s brother

To preserve through education.....



Roni, Saika`s brother

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another Saika's brother

Kamal Registan, Kalagh Tazi or desert type Afghan Hound

When Saika died at the age of 13, I looked for a new sighthound with COO origin and was offered the Kalagh Tazi bitch "Kamal" of the "Registan" kennel in Switzerland. In this kennel desert type Afghans were bred close to the original type. So Kamal's father was a hunting Afghan from Russia whose grandparents came from Afghanistan.

This desert type of Afghan Hound is not accepted as a breed by the FCI but a provisional standard exists and "Kalagh Tazis" can be shown and raced in Switzerland as a special registered sighthound breed. In Germany that is not possible. So Kamal was run only for fun on the track and at lure coursing.

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Kamal was my "long living dog". She became 17 years and 9 month old!!!



Kamal, 8 month old



Kamal, 2 years old

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Kamal, 2 years old



Kamal and Azadi

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Kamal, 15 years old, spayed

Saluki

When Azadi died at the age of 14 1/2, I got my first Saluki bitch " Nhubia", whose grandmother was from Egypt. She has no pedigree but is registered in a club and run at lure-coursing.



Nhubia

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Nhubia

Some month ago Taalai, a Taigan bitch from Russia, joined our family:



Taalai

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Taalai

But these two have their own story!
All pictures taken by Jutta Rübesam

"Schiba" a bitch from Ghazni

All pictures of Schiba taken by Richard Linde

Richard Linde, the owner of Schamal, the father of Saika's puppies, told me the story of his first Afghan Hound bitch Schiba, that he brought himself from Afghanistan. Here it is:

It was in the beginning of the 1970s when people liked to travel to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, to all those fascinating oriental countries.

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In 1971, he and some friends were on their way to India. They went by car and in Afghanistan, just beyond the town of Bamian, on the top of the Schibar pass their car broke down. They had to ask some people for help with bringing the car to Kabul, where it could be fixed. There they heard that they had to get a special spare part from Germany. That would take weeks! So the young men decided to go by train for the rest of their journey.

On the way home they came back to Kabul to pick up their car.

And they had an idea in their head: to find a typical Afghan sighthound, a "Tazi" as Afghan Hounds are called in Afghanistan, and bring it home. So they kept on asking people and one day they were told that near Ghazni these dogs were bred for the King.

They went to a pharmacy in Ghazni and the owner brought them into contact with the breeders.

Together Richard, one of his friends and the pharmacist climbed up the hills to a little village. It was in the middle of the day and very hot when they arrived in the village. The leader told the two Germans to stay and wait at a certain place and then he vanished between the mud brick houses.

The two friends became a little bit afraid standing there alone, but all of a sudden two Tazi puppies walked towards them and these two were followed by a pack of about twenty adult Tazis!!!!

Richard described this Tazis as coloured from sand to red, with and without black masks and said that some were heavily, others only slightly feathered or coated. Pity that he didn't take pictures there!

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The two friends were allowed to choose two dogs, one for each person. It wasn't easy but at last Richard decided to take a bitch about one-year-old, sand coloured without mask. He named her "Schiba" to remember the pass road where their car had broken down.

In these pictures you see that Schiba had red spots on her chest, red feet and also her ears were dyed with henna.

After Richard's friend had also chosen a dog, they climbed down the hills happily, but now the real difficulties began!

Local people had told them that it was not permitted to take a Tazi out of the country! The attempt would be punished by death! But they didn't want to give up and took the risk.

In Herat they went to the veterinary station and asked for vaccinations. They were told to wait until noon. But Richard and his friend were afraid of being betrayed to the officials and so they continued their journey to the border without vaccination and the necessary papers.

To go through the border station between Afghanistan and Persia they had given the dogs medicine to make them sleep but again the car broke down.

They could fix the car themselves but it took until evening to reach the border. The dogs had woken up and wanted to move and to bark. Very nervous they had to wait until morning to cross the border. At sunrise they again made the dogs sleep and hid them under some carpets that they had bought in India.

So they passed the Afghan side of the border.

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Schiba in Afghanistan:



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But in front of the border to Persia they again had to stop and wait. The officials wanted one of the friends to go to the office for some health test. Again Richard became nervous.

Because they had no vaccination papers it would become difficult if the customs officers saw the dogs.

But they were lucky. Richard found some other German travellers who drove their car close to the one with the dogs and they put the sleeping animals into the other car.

Later they met the Germans at the first gas station and took their Tazis back.

From here on everything began to become legal. The dogs got their vaccinations and travelling papers in Tehran and some days later Schiba arrived in the hometown of her owner in Germany.

She soon adapted to the colder climate and better food and grew a bit more coat, but never as much as the European show Afghan Hounds. The red henna colour vanished from her ears and the chest.

Some years later she had an unofficial litter but I don't know who the sire was and what happened to the puppies.

After this, nothing is known about more offspring.

Schiba died at the age of 8 years of an infection (Norcardiosis/streptotrichosis) that was treated wrongly.

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Schiba in Germany

"Asmah" from Kabul

In autumn 1973 Detlef Schmid was travelling through Afghanistan. In the valley of Bamian he saw a hunt with Afghan Tazis and came in contact with the hunters. He asked where he could get such a dog and the answer was: "from the kennel of the King". Detlef was talking to one of the men who took care of the sighthounds of the deposed King Mohammed Zahir Shah. This guy said that there were puppies still left from the last litter and also promised to give one of the puppies to him, when they were back in Kabul. Some days later they met several times at "Siggis restaurant" in Kabul and finally Detlef got his Afghan Tazi, a little bitch called "Asmah". With help from a government employee he managed to get Asmah out of Afghanistan.

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Asmah (by Detlef Schmidt)

"Thasis"

"Asil", one brother of my bitch Azadi, was placed with people who had owned an Afghan Hound called "Thasis" before. His both parents had been from Afghanistan. They found him, when they saw an announcement in their local newspaper: "Native-Afghans to sell". The breeders were some kind of Hippies, who told them, that in Afghanistan this breed was called Tazi. They choiced a little male puppy and named him "Thasis". He was a beloved member of the family and became 14 years old.

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Thasis, all pictures courtesy Dr. H.Diedrich

A Tazi named "Wutz"

All pictures of Wutz taken by the Henseleit family in the years 1972/1974

In 1972 the Henseleit family moved to Afghanistan. From a lady, who was returning to Germany, they adopted a 4 month old Tazi puppy named "Wutz". When he matured, he liked to hunt everything that moved and he often escaped over the 2 1/2 meter gate of the walled garden. Because he liked to chase cyclists the Henseleits decided to find a new home and gave him to a hunter in the valley of Wardak, when he was about two years old. There he could live the life for which he was born.

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The bitch "Machmal"

Picture and story courtesy Ortrud Römer-Horn

In this very old picture (taken in the year 1938) you see on the right side Goetz Bayer as young boy, standing beside his black Tazi bitch called "Machmal" and on the left side his brother with a black masked, red male owned by the adjutant of Goetz Beyer's father. Both dogs had been found with nomads and after some discussion could be bought by the Europeans. "Machmal" liked to escape even over nearly 3 meter high fences and was not easy to trace and catch. She loved hunting and her freedom!

In 1939 when the war broke out, Goetz Beyer lost track of his wonderful bitch.

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The Mohahazy Afghan Hounds

In 1983 I met Christina Nemeth, the founder of the Mohahazy kennel of Hungary, at a race track in Bad Homburg. She began a bloodline of the racing type of Afghan Hound by mating "Haradin Ben Ghazir" from Austria to a bitch out of Oranje Manege bloodlines, "Jainou Wazouti van het Martinihain", Netherlands. The sire of Haradin ben Ghazir was an Import from Afghanistan.

Here are some of the Mohahazy offspring:

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Mohahazy Bandar e Baluchi Haradin Ben Ghazir x Jainou Wazouti van het Martinihain), Bad Homburg 1983 taken by Jutta Rübesam



Mohahazy Elam Esmeralda (Lorcah Turabaz van het Martinihain x Mohahazy Bandar e Baba), Jutta Rübesam

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Mohahazy Haradin Hakim, Jutta Rübesam

"Assi" from Kabul

Pictures courtesy Jutta Rübesam

Lots of people knew and still know that I am always looking for information about native Tazis from Afghanistan. So one day, about 20 years ago, somebody told me of a young man who had once imported a bitch from Afghanistan. I met this man and he gave me a short story and some pictures of his bitch. In 1977 he travelled through Afghanistan together with some friends. In their hotel in Kabul they asked around for somebody who might have Tazis. One day a man with a puppy showed up and he sold it to them for about 30 dollars. The bitch later was named "Assi". I don't know how he managed to get her out of Afghanistan but he did. Assi was never registered nor had offspring. She would not accept any

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male. She died at the age of 10 and a half because of a tumour in her brain.



Sherry, Pascha and Candy from Afghanistan and their offspring in Germany

This story of some interesting Afghan Hounds or Tazis as they are called in Afghanistan began in the late 1960s when three European couples lived and worked in Afghanistan and some years later brought native bred Afghan Hounds home.

One of these couples was Mr. and Mrs. Vendolsky. They lived in Afghanistan from 1968 to 1973. Five long years! During their time in Kabul they had the opportunity to visit the kennel where the sighthounds for the King and his family were bred. Luckily these people told me their story and gave me their pictures! Thank you so much! Also my thanks to Mrs. Schramm, who gave the pictures of her breeding to me, and to Valerie Stokes for some more pictures of the King's kennel.

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The King's kennel was part of a big farm close to Kabul. It was called "as Karesimir" because this area was full of water channels (karese).

The King used to take his sighthounds from there for hunting or for presenting them to friends or statesmen.

In the 1970s the Ambassador of Switzerland, Mr. Vollmeier, got a Tazi bitch as a present from the Chancellor of the Exchequer of Afghanistan. This bitch was called Gipsy and came from North Afghanistan. In 1972, while still living in Kabul, Mr Vollmeier bred a litter from this bitch. The sire was a dog named Katschalu, owned by Americans and born in the King's kennel in Karesimir.

From this litter a puppy, Pascha, was offered to Mr. And Mrs. Vendolsky, who already owned the half-year-old Tazi male "Sherry" from the area of Ghazni.

Pascha and Sherry were of different types, Pascha looking more like the mountain type and Sherry more like the desert type Afghan Hound.

When returning to Germany, the Vendolskys had to smuggle their dogs out of the country because it was not allowed to take them out of Afghanistan.

But they were lucky enough to find a way.....

In Switzerland they met again the breeder of Pascha, who had also returned to his homeland and had decided to breed Afghan Hounds of the type he had already bred in Afghanistan. So he founded a kennel by the name "as Karesimir".

After lots of difficulties with registration and accepting these original Tazis as Afghan Hounds, the first

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litter in the Swiss kennel was born in 1974 from the two imported Afghan Hounds "Pascha" and "Candy".

Five puppies were born in this litter and one of them was "Angur as Karesimir". He was chosen by the owners of Pascha as their mating fee. Because Vendolsky's already had two dogs and didn't want to own three, they looked for a home for this son of Pascha.

The Schramm family, living in Germany, took Angur to their home. Angur became a good racing dog in Germany and the Schramms took a second dog from the same kennel, "Belandi as Karesimir" a granddaughter of Pascha and Candy. Later they bred some litters in the kennel called "Angur's Afghan Hounds". The foundation bitch was Felicitas el Keschan, a granddaughter of the Afghanistan imported bitch "Schana" and stud dog was Angur as Karesimir. But before they could start, they had a long fight with the club who did not want to let them use Angur for breeding because he had not a full, three generation pedigree. But in the end they got permission.

Sadly the line of the Angur's Afghan Hounds died out. The only kennel I know of that bred with Afghans of the "Karesimir-Angur" bloodline, was a kennel in the Netherlands called: "Sorud- i- Melli".

Belandi as Karesimir was never bred; judges did not like her white blaze. So she never got enough show points to get permission for breeding.....what a pity!

And I never heard that there was any offspring to carry this genetic treasure to future generations.

Pictures without special credit by Jutta Rübesam

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Karesimir, the King's Kennel-Afghanistan
Pictures in the kennel taken by and courtesy Ivo
Vendolsky.



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Gipsy and puppies, Vendolsky



Sherry and Pascha, Vendolsky

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Candy with puppies, Vendolsky



Pascha, Vendolsky

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Some “as Karesimir”- offspring



Belandi as Karesimir



Aboulou as Karesimir

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Barak as Karesimir



Babur as Karesimir

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Angur as Karesimir (Pascha x Candy)



Felicitas el Keschan, Schramm

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Angur's Cara-Calina, Chayenne und Cherie (Angur's Alouette x Indra von Mosiesfun)



Greatgrandchildren of "Angur as Karesimir" (Faharaq Andkhui Sorud -i- Melli X Angur's Changal) of the Sorud-i-Melli kennels

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"Aga" from Kandahar

In the 1980ies the breeders of the Sorud-i-Melli Afghans owned an Tazi from Afghanistan called "Aga". She saw him on a racing track in Hamburg where he was raced by his first owners. She felt in love with him. Some two years later she received a letter asking her to buy Aga from his owners. Overjoyed she agreed, because she adored this dog so much. The first owners, who also owned a black desert type Tazi bitch from Afghanistan, told her that Aga came from Kandahar. Aga sadly had no offspring. He died at the age of 14.



"Aga", courtesy L. Bouwman

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An Afghan Hound from Iran

From 1974 to 1978 Uschi Lehr, lived in northern Iran in a little village called Tirtash. She worked for a scientific tobacco institute. Around the little village lived a pack of dogs and one day she saw a sighthound among the other stray dogs. The native people called him "the Afghan dog". So they seemed to make a difference between their own Tazis, what we today call Salukis, and this sighthound in the pack.

Uschi began to feed him and one day, in the morning, she found him sitting on her sofa in the living room. He had opened the door by himself and decided to live in her house. So he stayed and Uschi named him "Afghan".

1978, when Uschi returned to Germany, "Afghan" travelled with her. But he was not happy in this crowded country. He often escaped and liked to hunt and one day he was hit by a car and was killed. A sad end for a great dog!



"Afghan", in Germany, Uschi Lehr

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"Adaho" and "Paco of Ghazni"

Courtesy, Jutta Rübesam

Sister Idaho and her brother Paco are from the area of Ghazni and were bought from an old Afghan man in the 70s by a young man who travelled in Afghanistan and India. He bought art craft for his shop. Paco sired some unofficial litters.



Пако, фото Гюнтер Камен

"Dusty" from Kabul

Pictures taken by Jutta Rübesam

In 2006 a sighthound rescue in Germany was asked to help with the transport of an Afghan Hound bitch from Kabul to Germany and to look for a good home. A young man who had worked in Kabul for an aid organisation had cared for the little bitch and did not want to leave her behind when he returned home.

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Dusty had been found about a year ago in the streets of Kabul by another member of that organisation. He saw children throwing stones at the bitch and saved her. But when he returned home he had to leave her in Kabul.

This time things went better for that bitch.

She arrived in Germany in 2006 and was quickly adopted by a lady who already owned racing Afghan Hounds. Dusty is a little bitch about 60 cm high. She has a very easy and sweet character, loves kids and other dogs and there is no leash needed. She never leaves her new owner. But she likes to run and "hunt" on the race track and "kills" the lure like a little Puma.

Dusty was probably born in 2003 and has now had offspring.



Dusty

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Dusty

A Tazi called "Tazi" in Netherlands

All pictures of Tazi taken by Rina de Vries

Tazi was found on the internet by my friend Rina de Vries. There was an announcement that said he was looking for a good home. Rina, as head of a rescue club, wanted to help. She fostered him and soon felt in love with him. So "Tazi" stayed in her home.

His story began inin Golestan, Farah Province in Afghanistan. A helper from "doctors without borders" was with his Jeep in the country where, by chance, he saw a hunter with two native Afghan Tazis. The hunter had a child with him and asked him for help. The child was tired and they had to return a long way to the camp. So the helper took the child into his car and brought it home. When later the hunter returned, he told the helper, that he just had a litter of some Tazi puppies and

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didn't know how to feed them all. He was afraid some of them could starve. So the helper chose one of the male puppies and named him "Tazi". When he returned to the Netherlands he could not keep him under his new conditions and so finally he joined Rina's pack.



Tazi

At the end of this article I want to thank all the people who gave me permission to tell the story of their dogs and to use their pictures!!!

If a reader of this article knows more stories of native Afghan Hounds and has pictures to show to me I would be thankful!

Here is my mail address:

Saika.ruebesam@freenet.de

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Commercial Squirrel Hunting with Laikas

S. V. Bogatov

**Expert Cynologist of the First Category and Senior
Wildlife Biologist,
Zhigalovo Hunting Cooperative,
Irkutsk Province, Russia**

Dear readers,

Starting this article, I did not hope to discover the top achievements in the art of hunting squirrel with dogs. But against the background of today's "big game hunting mania" this is a tribute and a show of special respect to the unique heritage of our ancestors – the squirrel dog.

It is sad that today, for a variety of reasons, squirrel hunting is much less popular than it used to be in the 1970s-80s. Most threatening is the fact that squirrel hunting became unprofitable. One major reason for this is the economy - low prices for pelts and high prices for ammunition and foodstuffs that are shipped into remote from economic centers in hunting regions, etc. This will inevitably result in the reduction in the population of Laikas capable of squirrel hunting and even the complete disappearance of such squirrel hunting dogs may become a reality. We cannot influence the economic part of the equation, but we can preserve squirrel hunting by popularizing it, by organizing contests and by arranging dog breeding programs. Many hunters, especially young ones, do not realize what kind of a treasure we have in the form of the squirrel dog, because they are unfamiliar with the peculiarities of commercial squirrel hunting. I

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hope this article will remind you about some small secrets of commercial squirrel hunting and will help to attract more hunters to the beauty of hunting squirrels with Laikas.

During the commercial hunting of squirrels with Laikas, the major tool is of course the Laika. Now, I will discuss the dog's working elements.

***Chutyo*¹**

There are two major methods of working a dog on squirrel and there are dogs using both of them. The dog may do its job by searching "low" or by searching "high".

When searching high the dog is using mainly its hearing. When doing so, the Laika is capable of locating the animal precisely over a considerable distance (I recorded it up to 200 meters). With a high searching dog the hunting is very productive under conditions when squirrels are mainly in tree crowns. This is when the crop of pine cones is high. However, when the mushroom crop is high, hunting with such a dog becomes less productive, because all the squirrels are on the ground and they cannot be found by hearing. Besides, Laikas with the high searching style rarely make mistakes. When the air temperature is very low, the scent is quickly "frozen out" and for the dog finding squirrels by scent on the ground, it becomes difficult.

When using the low search style, the Laika finds squirrels mainly by using its nose. The dog smells tracks on the ground and particles the squirrels drop down

¹ Chutyo is a specific Russian term, describing the ability of the dog, in this case the Laika, to find game animals by using all the senses, hearing, vision and smell, whichever provides a better clue, depending on circumstances.

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when they are eating and moving on the tree crowns. The sense of smell of such dogs is unique. In the season when squirrels are foraging on the ground, hunting with dogs with the low searching style is exceptionally productive. However, when the weather is very frosty, low searching style dogs lose to the Laikas with high searching style, because the scent is leaching out quickly. Besides, at very low temperatures, the dog's trot becomes noisy. Squirrels hear the dog, stay quiet and hide. Some very rare dogs are capable of using both search methods. If you have this kind of dog, you are very lucky.

Hunting under conditions of very low temperatures deserves a separate discussion. A proverb: "consistency is a sign of skill" is precisely true, when speaking of the work of Laikas under conditions of extremely cold weather. Most hunters obtain the maximum number of squirrels earlier in the season when the weather is still warm in the fall, before snowfall. When snow is on the ground, it soon becomes crusty and the productivity of squirrel hunting declines. Because the productivity of squirrel hunting depends on the dog, this would seem to indicate that the dogs of such hunters are poor. If you shoot 20 squirrels in early fall and in winter only 3, it means your dog is not a great squirrel dog. If this ratio is 20-25 squirrels in the warm season versus 12-15 squirrels when it is frosty, then you are lucky in having a really good squirrel dog. In general, when the weather is cold with temperatures below freezing, dogs working low become less successful. When it is very cold, Laikas with the high *chutyo* are more desirable. Dogs, which do not know how to work during cold weather act differently.

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They often bark under the wrong tree or, if not absolutely sure that the animal is in the tree, remain silent. The result is the same – no squirrel is found. Unfortunately, even in commercially hunted regions dogs capable of hunting successfully on frosty days are few and it is often necessary to explain to hunters that they should not breed poor dogs but rather raise a new puppy out of strong squirrel hunting dogs and use it for breeding.

Therefore, I am decisively against our rules for trials of Laikas on squirrel, which state that Laika trials “are not conducted when the temperature is below -20 degrees C”. Without testing our dogs for the ability to work under these cold conditions we do not eliminate poor working dogs and breed them.



Chutyo is a very important quality and it is often discussed among hunters. Some strongly opinionated

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specialists are telling many tales. During my 25 years experience of hunting squirrels commercially I have never seen a dog that never made a mistake at least once. If a hunter says that his dog never lies, it is either not true or his Laika finds 3 squirrels out of ten and only if it can see them. The causes of this are many: inexperience of the dog, very low temperatures, wind, dogs making too much noise, etc. For all these numerous causes the solution is only one – never forgive mistakes, but do not cull the dog. Although the truthfulness of *chutyo* is based on hereditary characters of the dog, the hunter may influence the dog by behaving incorrectly. This can either ruin a dog even with good *chutyo* or it can help to stop the dog's deception, although the dog may have an average or a weak *chutyo*. This is important in hunting for profit. Work on a true *chutyo* begins from puppyhood and then continues during the entire hunting period of the dog's life. When hunting with a young Laika, I walk around a tree, trying to find the animal, if the tree is not tall and I am sure there is no squirrel in it. If I am not quite sure, I shoot a small caliber gun into the tree once or twice. If the animal is not there, I do not hit the dog, do not reprimand it and call it off. It is better to miss one or two squirrels, which you could not find, than wasting time and shots on the examination of 10 trees with no squirrels; the dog may bark under them only because it can see my interest in them. Such a “deception syndrome” becomes fixed, if the hunter hits the tree with an ax or stick or tries other methods to flush out the animal, which is not there. This is not what should be done. Unfortunately, an excited hunter ignores this and inadvertently stimulates the dog not to complete

To preserve through education.....

its own search. The dog switches its attention to the clearly visible interest of the hunter and begins to bark under the tree even when the hunter is just looking up.

Of course, this is an extreme case and such dogs usually are culled. No matter how cruel such a measure may seem, for commercial hunting this is the only way to achieve a true *chutyo*. The hunter must know that it is always possible to find a reason for a dog barking wrongly and should not punish it, but it will result in the lack of productivity and this is not affordable in commercial hunting. When I see the squirrel and the dog does not bark, snooping under the tree before the search is over, I do not shoot, but walk nearby and stand aside. If the dog starts barking, I return, as it is not a problem, but this does not exclude the chance that the dog becomes tainted with the "deception syndrome".

This may seem strange, but there are plenty of squirrels in the same regions that are inhabited by sables as well. Squirrels are obtained there with unspecialized squirrel dogs, with young dogs. Young Laikas are very excitable and tireless and they work on squirrels enthusiastically if the master does not stop it in time when he needs to switch from hunting squirrels to hunting sable or some big game. One peculiarity of hunting with young Laikas is the need teach the dog on the job, when it is hunting. Young hunters, starting the puppy off, should know of one peculiarity of Laikas in the first fall hunting - that is frequent checking. The dog finds a squirrel, chases it to a well visible place and starts barking. The squirrel hides and does not show any signs of its presence. If the hunter has not had enough time to come up, the puppy begins to have doubts and tries to

To preserve through education.....

end the search. Once convinced that the squirrel is still there, it continues barking. At this moment the squirrel may move a little or the dog hears another squirrel and abandons this tree to chase another. In this situation, the puppy is not tainted with the "deception syndrome" but is just lacking experience. The hunter must sort it out and not punish the dog. In such a case, convinced that the puppy is rechecking and making a mistake, I try to come up as quickly as I can and make a noise by trying to shoot the squirrel. For example, I shoot with pellets, missing the target once or twice, the Laika returns to my shooting and I kill the animal in its presence. With such simple training the puppy quickly gains experience and its rechecking attempts decline.

Search

Search is the next important element of a Laika's work. In our hunting literature it is considered an axiom that a Laika's search for squirrels should be not too wide and not too deep, by making circles or by zigzagging. In sport hunting it should be this way, but in commercial hunting the rules are somewhat different. Here, the hunter must obtain the maximum number of pelts with a minimum of input of labor and materials. Everything, beginning with the work of the dog and ending with the food rations of the hunter himself, is overruled by this requirement.

In my view, a Laika's search in hunting squirrel is a controllable value and it depends on the skill of the dog and the abundance of squirrels. When the squirrel population is high, the squirrel dog simply cannot run too far from the hunter, because it is barking under one tree after another. When the squirrel population is low,

To preserve through education.....

the search tends to become increasingly wider and deeper, because the Laika is driven by its hunting instinct and tries to find squirrels anyway. The Laika does not run further than 50-100 meters from the hunter. However, when squirrels are few and far between, the hunter leads the dog to the animal. Under normal circumstances it should be exactly the opposite, the dog should lead the search until squirrel is found. In hunting for profit this should be done for the following reason. When the dog barks, the hunter walks faster than he would walk on a regular hunting trip. Depending on the state of the squirrel population, with a Laika searching well, the hunter would shoot more squirrels than if he took the lead.

To illustrate this I will offer you two examples. One afternoon in October, 1993, I walked to the winter cabin. Two dogs "flew" ahead of me and at a distance of about 300 meters and barked at a squirrel. One four-year-old bitch named Yana stayed with me. She found another squirrel at a distance of 50 meters from me, to the right of my path. I left my backpack on the path and shot the squirrel. During the next 30 minutes I shot 7 more squirrels and each time, returning to the path I saw my dog. The high density of squirrels and the high skill of the dog did not permit it to run far. At this time the two other dogs still continued barking at a distance of 300 meters from me.

In September, 2002, we conducted regional trials of Laikas on squirrels at Zhigalovo. The first day we worked until noon and decided to move to a different area, because there were few squirrels. My 3 year-old-male named Skyth found two squirrels at the first attempt.

To preserve through education.....

After we moved to another place, we let him make another attempt and for 20 minutes the dog did not show up and did not bark. We decided to go back to the camp, when the male started barking at 400 meters downhill, near the margin of a field. When this squirrel was taken, we decided to continue along the field margin and the dog found 2 more squirrels. As a result, this dog was awarded a Diploma of the First Degree. This dog simply searched through the entire area, where the Expert Commission walked and there were no squirrels, so the dog widened his range, running further until he found a squirrel. As we found out later, squirrels were gathered in young forest growth along the fields. If the male had worked within a 50-100 meters limit from the hunter, we would have found nothing, because we never intended to walk down to the fields.

In squirrel hunting, as well as in commercial hunting, search in a straight line is very undesirable. With such a pattern of search the dog does not sufficiently cover the habitats and instead of well-planned work on squirrels it is simply running in the forest, especially if the hunting trail coincides with roads and well trodden paths.

Tracking

Unfortunately, in recent times, opinions are frequently expressed that tracking should be eliminated from trials on squirrels intended for awarding a Diploma. The reasoning was that at the trials the hunter does not need to chase the squirrel and shoots it quickly. This is what should never be done! Of course, a professional hunter never chases squirrels, but the problem is in the fact that squirrels sometimes do not ask our permission and run through the treetops over a distance up to a hundred

To preserve through education.....

meters. They do so not only after a missing shot, but also without any obvious reasons. If the dog does not track the squirrels or it does it poorly, there will be a lot of barking at empty trees and a loss of time and ammunition.

Barking style

This is also a very important element of a Laika's work on squirrels. The squirrel season is very short. This is the harvest time. The hunter works without breaks to obtain a maximum number of pelts. The number of pelts, besides his own labor, depends on the speed of work of his dog and how fast every animal is bagged. Ideally every squirrel should be brought down with a single shot and the hunter should spend a minimal time searching for it. The latter depends directly on the barking style of his dog. The behavior of the dog under a tree may facilitate or impair finding and shooting the animal. This is particularly important when hunting is done in mixed or in coniferous taiga forest. I hunted over 20 years in Siberian nut pine forest and consider this feature of a Laika's work most important.

According to our hunting laws described in the literature, the dog should carefully bark at a squirrel when it is slightly away from the tree trunk, watch its movement and be in a position that allows the dog to keep an eye on the animal. This is an ideal and I completely agree with it. Unfortunately, hunting dogs from commercial hunting regions often do not work this way. In this quality, I consider pedigree dogs being better performers. I have hunted with both and Laikas from commercial hunting regions were inferior. There are many factors that influence the style of barking and

To preserve through education.....

heredity is most important here, but also excitement and temperament of the dog, competitiveness among dogs under the tree, etc. With all the different causes, the result is one: if the dog barks right under the tree, jumps on the tree trunk and bites at branches, the squirrel gets frightened and it is hard to find it in the tree's crown. This makes shooting difficult, because once frightened by the dog the squirrel hides or runs away.

I will describe here one interesting anomaly observed among the hunting dogs of commercial hunters. Some of their Laikas do not bark at all, depending on the situation. For example, if the dog hears me walking towards it, it is silent. Sometimes you see both the dog sitting and a squirrel above in the tree. Such dogs have a very well balanced temperament. Strangely enough, such "un-Laika-like" behavior is not a problem in hunting for profit and moreover, in the coniferous forest it is a convenience. I cannot tell what determines a dog's behavior in such a situation, but the game animal is not frightened and sometimes it is sitting only 4-5 meters above the ground as if it was hypnotized. What is even most interesting is the same dog barks normally, according to the Laika rules, in other situations. Such a "silent" dog can be distinguished from puppyhood. In the first fall of hunting, the puppy is excited by the smell and appearance of the squirrel, but it does not bark. You do not need to shoot such a dog, but it would be better to make it "talk".

Attitude to a brought down squirrel

This is a very important and painful topic for me. I worked for 18 years as a manager of Konstantinov hunting region belonging to Zhigalovo Hunting

To preserve through education.....

Cooperative. This region was a "squirrel empire" producing up to 35 thousand squirrels per hunting season. The quality of the squirrel pelts was of prime importance. Squirrel pelts have two most important kinds of blemishes: blood on the fur and bald patches. In our region all the squirrels are obtained with the assistance of dogs and bald patches on the pelt are a result of the incorrect attitude of the dog towards the animal when it is brought down. Squirrel fur is very loose on the skin, especially when the body is still warm. Some bare patches may also occur as a result of the squirrel falling from the tree, but if a Laika grabs the squirrel carcass, the bare patch will appear with a 100% probability and this lowers the value of the pelt. Therefore, the requirements of commercial hunting completely contradict the rules used at field trials. When hunting for profit, the squirrel carcass is absolute taboo to the dog. So many sticks are broken on the dogs; the best reaction of a Laika to a squirrel fallen from tree would be to just go and find another squirrel. Hunters achieve this by drastic measures. An extreme measure is shooting the dog that is biting a squirrel carcass, because such a dog will not find as many squirrels as it will ruin. Besides beating, some throw a hot potato for the dog right after the shooting; others insert nails into the potato, freeze it and, when in the woods, such a "hedgehog" is thrown for the dog right after the shooting, if the dog bites the squirrels too hard. In sable hunting, the dog can be tired out, but when hunting squirrels, the hunter does not do so, because it takes too much time. It is easier to shoot the dog and raise a new puppy.

To preserve through education.....

Here is a case that happened in my work. One experienced hunter brought 300 squirrel pelts to sell. When grading the pelts, I discovered a great number of bald patches, but I could not find the marks of teeth on any of the skins. I knew what they looked like and expressed my surprise at the abundance of the bald patches of unknown origin. After some hesitation, the hunter told me that he got all the pelts with the help of one puppy. It was a very nice affectionate dog and the hunter allowed it to poke squirrel carcass with its nose, like a pig would do using its snout. The result of it was a 20% loss of the value. After such an experience, I am against any touching of squirrel carcasses by the dog.

No matter how valuable and unique the hunting dog may be, it is a hunting tool. One should know how to use this tool. This tool must be used skillfully. In skillful hands a dog is a unique tool for productive hunting. In unskillful hands it is a looser, worthless and an animal exploited in vain and never given a chance to reveal its hunting talents. Therefore, a major figure in commercial hunting is the hunter.

Squirrel harvesting is a job, just like harvesting crops in agriculture. Hunting becomes a job only in conditions of a well-organized process, not the pursuit of chance fortune. The correct organization of hunting for profit includes several components: time of arrival in the forest, knowledge of the habitats, organization of the working day, the methods of hunting and the correct processing of pelts.

I ask for the forgiveness of the regulation agencies, but the time of arrival in the forest and the start of hunting should be decisions made by the hunter. It is

To preserve through education.....

better to arrive about 5-7 days before starting to hunt. Before starting to hunt, you should repair the log cabins, prepare enough firewood, distribute foodstuffs among the cabins, with ammunition and dog food and exercise the dogs. If you still have time, investigate the distribution of squirrels in the forest and the condition of their fur. Squirrels are known to have uneven concentrations in different habitats. These locations should be found, because this knowledge is important for maximum hunting productivity. If this kind of reconnaissance cannot be done before hunting, it should be done concurrently with hunting. According to the plan, the hunter visits all squirrel habitats and determines the places where its concentration is most.



The period of hunting squirrels with dogs is very short and it is important to use efficiently every day spent in the woods. Therefore, hunting should be started in good time. The time when to start hunting is determined by the time when squirrel fur is at its best. The hunter would

To preserve through education.....

not go hunting, if the fur condition was unsatisfactory. The reason for this is very simple. The value of 2nd and 3rd grade pelts is low and you would not cover your expenses on materials and your time. When determining the condition of squirrel fur, one should take into account that on river floodplains and near shores squirrel fur becomes ready sooner than in coniferous forests on in the mountains. There are several reasons for that. In Siberian nut pine forests there is more food and the climate is warmer; this is where more young squirrels gather and their pelts become ready later. Therefore, in early fall, I always try to hunt along the shores first. As a rule, there are fewer squirrels there, but first grade fur among them is up to 80-90%.

The organization of the working day of a hunter depends on the activity of the squirrels. In early fall squirrels are active during the entire daylight. Activity slightly declines between noon and 2 pm. During this time you can take a break for preparing some tea, have a rest and allow some rest for the dogs. When the weather is frosty, the squirrels' activity is limited by the time from 10 am until 3 pm. To obtain more squirrels, one should hunt during this time without a break and after 3 pm return to the cabin, because at this time squirrels retreat to rest and hunting them then would be unproductive.

Weather conditions in the fall are variable. Freezing and thawing alternate and, in recent years, rain in late October is not rare. This causes the formation of an icy crust on the snow called "cheer" [pronounce like in cheer]. "Cheer" is the worst enemy of a Laika. The hunting instinct drives the dog to search for animals and "cheer" causes painful injuries to the dog's feet to the

To preserve through education.....

extent of bleeding. The first duty of the hunter is the preservation of his dog's health. When "cheer" is present, do not start the hunt in the morning. It is permissible to go into the forest only at noon, when the air temperature is above freezing and the "cheer" will thaw. Under such weather conditions, we usually do all kinds of camping chores, such as cooking food for the dogs and for ourselves, doing some repairs of the equipment, etc. While doing this, I periodically go outside to test the snow condition. As soon as the snow becomes softer, this is the right time to start hunting. When "cheer" is on the snow, walking on it is very noisy and the squirrels hear the dog and hide. Therefore, besides the danger of injury to the dog, hunting becomes less productive. Here is an example. One time I headed out to hunt from the camp at 1 pm. At 2:30 pm I met my neighbor at the edge of the hunting territory. He had started at 9 am and had shot four squirrels by the time we met. His dogs, using the break, lay on the ground right away licking their very much bleeding feet. By this time, I had shot five squirrels and my dogs all the time bullied my neighbor's dogs. They did not have the energy even to snarl in self defense and we had to chase my dogs off them. If "cheer" is very heavy, it may be necessary to wait a day or two, no matter how strong the desire to hunt may be. After some time, "cheer" will freeze out and soften or it will become covered with fresh snowfall. This is not a simple decision, because time for hunting is very limited and the hunter is afraid to miss the opportunity. However, in such a case, a sober calculation is needed. If you save the feet of your dogs, you can expect to continue the hunt and the dogs will pay you back in full.

To preserve through education.....

There is one peculiarity of squirrel behavior. When the first frosty weather sets in, the animals become very shy. This continues for literally one to two days. Then, squirrels "freeze up" and behave normally as they did before although it is turning even cooler. Therefore, during the first frosty days it is a good idea to go out to hunt at a later than usual time, when it becomes a little warmer. Do not worry, if the hunting during such days is less productive and do not blame your dogs. In a day or two everything will return to normal.

Once places with concentrations of squirrels are determined, they should be exploited methodically. One should keep in mind that on rainy days finding squirrels in dark coniferous forests (Siberian nut pine, fir and spruce) is more difficult. On sunny and clear days squirrels are easier to see even in the most difficult trees. Therefore, when it is rainy, it is better to plan starting your hunting trip in young and well lit forest growth. When it is clear, go hunting in tall Siberian pine forests.

It is important to discuss the planning of hunting trips. For commercial hunting all movements of the hunter should cross habitats with a maximum squirrel population density. Many hunters, especially young ones, plan their trip from point A to point B and then try to accomplish it with fanatical persistence, regardless of squirrel density. I personally sinned this way for years. When hunting for profit, you do the work, not just running across the area. Therefore, once you are in an area with high squirrel density, walk in a zigzagging or circling fashion. Some hunters let the dog loose and sit down on a log and wait until it barks. This way you save both your own and the

To preserve through education.....

dog's energy and you harvest squirrels in that habitat more efficiently.

The technique of hunting

This includes the process of finding and shooting the animal. I have already discussed above methods of finding squirrels. I can add that the tree at which the Laika has pointed should be walked around and looked over carefully. This should be done without unnecessary noise (stomping, cracking sticks etc.). If the squirrel is hiding, it should be startled. This can be achieved by cracking a whip or by shooting with a small caliber rifle. Using an ax and a long pole produces a desirable effect in dark coniferous taiga forests, if you walk with a hunter friend. When hunting alone, this method is not always successful, because the squirrel jumps out after the first strike, but it is hard to see it from under the tree, because its branches obstruct the view.

Once the squirrel is found, it should be shot. It is better to shoot it at once, because a frightened squirrel runs away through the tree crowns and this involves loss of time and shots. Therefore, the first shot should be sure. I always try to shoot from some support. Of course, it sometimes happens that it is necessary to shoot while holding the rifle in the hand, but it should not be the norm. The reason is simple, because the hunter should not simply shoot the squirrel, he should shoot it *correctly*, with minimal damage to the pelt. The squirrel is shot by aiming at the head, because the result is a pelt is without blemishes, or they are insignificant.

To preserve through education.....



Some hot squirrel hunters often brag about how they shot a squirrel in the eye when the animal was running, or they tell you that they consider shooting from a support embarrassing. I am always skeptical, listening to such talk. First, they are silly and 90% is lies. Second, even if it is true, such sharpshooters are few and most hunters are only average marksmen. After listening to such bragging many want to try. The result is one – low quality fur. When hunting, it is important to get the fur, but in commercial hunting the value of the pelt is most important. The efficiency of the hunter depends on it. Even if a small caliber bullet hits a squirrel and its exit hole is in between the shoulder blades or in the neck, a part of the pelt will be soaked with blood and it will valued 10-25% less. This is at best. The quality of shooting is influenced by many factors: wind, movement of the animal, unstable position of the

To preserve through education.....

hunter, etc. When shooting holding the rifle in the hand, all these factors are most likely to threaten the hunter, because in commercial hunting you have to take care of the quality of each pelt. I recommend shooting only from a support.

When hunting with small caliber or combo arms, using a small caliber rifle barrel, it is easy to shoot in the head. However, equally good results can be achieved by shooting from the smooth barrel of 16-12 caliber shotguns. Just walk a little away and see that the body of the squirrel is behind the tree trunk and only the head is visible. After shooting, some of the pellets hit the tree, but some hit the head and the pelt is saved. This simple method allows a considerable increase in the quality of fur, when hunting with large caliber shotguns.

When shooting with pellets, it is difficult to make any practical suggestions. It is commonly known that squirrels are shot with small pellets. What pellet size to use is at the discretion of the hunter. This depends on the power and density of any specific gun. If the gun is powerful, one can use pellets No. 8 and No. 9. Holes in the skin are small and when it dries, they become closed. Such holes do not cause much bleeding. I use No. 5, but here is a rule: when it is frosty, shooting with pellets is less efficient. Therefore, for cold weather we use No. 3 and always have it in our reserves for the occasion.

Hunting arms and accessories

The hunting gun is a major tool for hunting squirrels with dogs. For hunting, the following guns are used: rifles, shotguns and a combination of both types of barrels.

To preserve through education.....

Rifles and carbines use 5.6 mm cartridges. These guns shoot with excellent precision and are fast enough, and most models have convenient aiming devices, allowing fast and precise shooting. These guns are irreplaceable in commercial hunting in a light taiga forest. However, when these guns are used in a mixed forest or in a dark coniferous forest, their productivity becomes less obvious. When I was hunting with a TOZ-17 rifle (Tula Gun Factory) in a Siberian pine forest, I shot only up to 30% of the animals that I had found.

Shotguns have predominately one barrel or two barrels of calibers 32, 28 and 20. Some hunters use larger caliber shotguns, but they require a greater amount of powder and pellets. Their merits are power, speed and efficiency in any hunting environment. Their deficiencies are the difficulties of carrying heavy ammunition and the impossibility of flushing out a squirrel by shooting from a small caliber barrel. Sometimes, when the squirrel population is dense, the hunter is forced either to return to the cabin to make more cartridges or to carry more supplies in his backpack and to make more cartridges in the forest.

In my opinion, the optimal gun for hunting squirrel is a combo with one barrel 5.6 mm and the second a smooth bore barrel of 28 or 20 caliber. Such a combination allows effective shooting in both light and dark coniferous taiga forest, flushing out squirrels by shooting and carrying sufficient amounts of ammunition, etc. In our country the most numerous models of this type of gun were IZH-56-3 (IZH – Izhevsk Factory) "Belka" and IZH-94 "Sever".

To preserve through education.....

The "Belka" shoots excellently from both barrels and it has quality aiming devices. Its deficiency is a weak rifle barrel, which sometimes bends, when hit, and frequent jamming, when switching from one barrel to the other, especially in second hand guns. This results in misfires when you need to shoot from the shotgun barrel. I think this excellent gun has become outdated today. Some people often say that the "Belka" is the perfect gun for the commercial hunter. It was so in the past. Today, there are very few new guns of this model and those which are used by hunters have already been in use for 40-50 years. Now, it is impossible to supply all hunters with a "Belka". There is often a need to shoot from the shotgun barrel right after the shooting from the rifle barrel, but with a "Belka" you need to push the switch first, cock the trigger and only after these manipulations are you ready to shoot. This takes some time and there is no quick shooting.

In this regard, the "Sever" has an advantage over the "Belka". One of its merits is precise shooting from the rifle barrel and the possibility of shooting from both barrels simultaneously. Its deficiencies are its inconvenient aiming accessories and its heavy weight. During 20 years of commercial hunting for squirrels I used a small caliber rifle and a "Belka". Since 1996 I have used a "Sever". Despite some deficiencies this is not a bad gun. In my view, today, among all the available serial models, the "Sever" is the best for hunting in mixed and in dark coniferous taiga forest. It is desirable that the bore has a medium choke of 0.75 mm or a choke of 1.0 mm. For more precise shooting I had to adjust the aiming devices. In the "Sever" the foresight is 2.2 mm wide and

To preserve through education.....

at a distance of 20-25 meters it completely covers a squirrel's head. Often you have to shoot by using your intuition. The bullet often hits the neck or misses in front of the animal's nose. I reduced the width of the foresight to 1.8 mm, like in the "TOZ-17", and made a new sight 1 mm wide. After these improvements the shooting became more precise and faster.

I should add that the deficient quality of the "Sever" is caused by poor workmanship. A good serial model is made carelessly. Some items are so poor that it seems boys would make their guns with greater skill. A hunter, who bought such a gun, should improve the aiming devices, order a new fore-end, solder barrels, etc. I wish the Izhevsk factory made better quality guns.

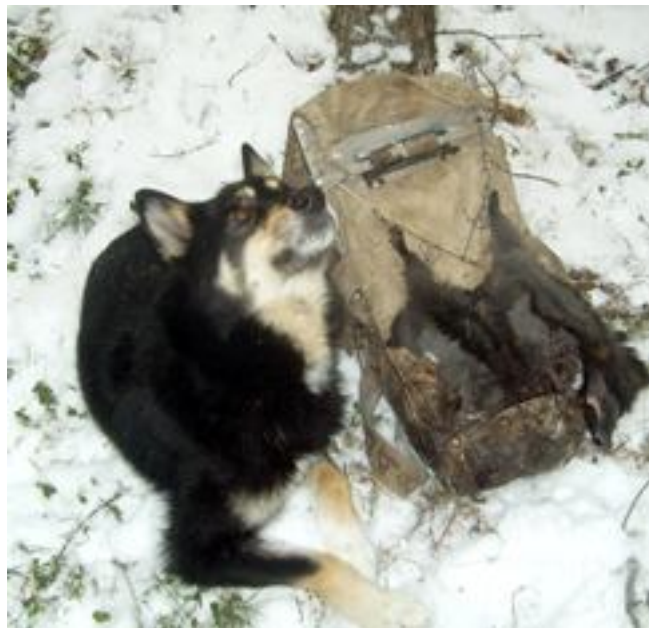
Using scopes on rifles and combos allow high precision shooting. To hunt squirrels, scopes of X 2.2 to X 3.5 are powerful enough. When using scopes it is necessary to take care of them when walking, to check their precision and to protect the lenses from water. I always dreamed of having a scope, but I was forced to give up on it after I had hunted with it. My vision still allows me to shoot without a scope and my restless character does not allow me to follow all the rules for careful use of an optical scope.

Besides a gun, hunting squirrels requires the hunter to have a standard kit: a hatchet, a knife, a small pan and a backpack. A hatchet and a pan can be of any size to fit the taste of the hunter. The knife must be sharp and easy to sharpen, with a blade 10-12 cm long. If the knife is used for the removal of fat from the skin, its handle should be no shorter than the blade or slightly longer, because with a small handle your hand will quickly get

To preserve through education.....

tired. It is better not use the squirrel knife for anything else.

The backpack can be of any kind, but we add a special device for carrying squirrel carcasses. This is a strong nylon rope with 2 mm hooks on it; the hooks are attached to the rope at 2-3 cm intervals. The hind foot of the squirrel is punctured with the hook and the animal hangs head down. Because squirrels are shot in the head, the carcasses do not smear each other with blood. Above the rope a large waterproof flap helps to protect squirrel carcasses from snow, rain and mechanical damage. Such a simple device improves the quality of the fur.



Finally, I come to the major elements of hunting squirrels: the quality of squirrel pelts. After all, commercial hunting is about earning money. The price of

To preserve through education.....

a squirrel pelt is determined by its quality. A hunter need not just kill more squirrels, he should also take care to process the pelts. Only then will he get an efficient result from his work.

Defects in squirrel pelts may have originated naturally during the squirrel's life or they may appear after it has been shot. You cannot control the first cause of damage to pelts, but your earning will depend on the others. After the squirrel is shot, it should be skinned. Skins are removed in a form of pipe and it is necessary to cut off the tail. Unfortunately, many hunters do not do this. As a result, the tails of such squirrels get broken, because they become too dry or they may rot.

All the squirrels that I shoot I skin immediately in the forest. The removed skin is turned fur out, rolled and placed in a polyethylene bag, which is tied to prevent damage. This is how the skin does not dry out. I remove the fat later on in the cabin. If there are many squirrels, I skin as many as possible during the lunch break. Some of the meat I feed to the dogs and I throw out the rest or take it to the cabin to feed to the dogs later on. In such case, I do not waste time on this when in the cabin.

When the carcass is warm, it is important to remove the skin on the thighs carefully, because the hair is weak there and it is easy to make a bald patch with the fingers. If the carcass is wet, it should not be skinned in the forest. It should be brought into the cabin to dry the fur first before skinning. This prevents the hair from matting.

It is better to process squirrels with a buddy. One is skinning while the other is removing the fat. If this is impossible, then it is better to skin 5 to 7 squirrels, wash your hands of blood and then remove the fat from this

To preserve through education.....

group before the procedure is repeated with the remaining squirrels.

Removing fat is done with a knife, a piece of canvas or a nylon stocking. This depends on the skill and preference of the hunter. If you are using a knife, start removing fat from the shoulder blades to the head, starting from the throat and then from the shoulder blades to the head and the neck. Then work on the abdominal side from the level of the shoulder blades down, gathering the remains of muscle and fat in a strip and then the same operation is done on the dorsal side. You will get a ring of meat and fat, which is moved towards the rump. It is important not to tear this ring. In the process, you will turn the skin several times, moving this ring down. Move the knife down the skin and at the same time pull the skin from under the knife. This allows you quickly and efficiently to clean the skin. It is better to do this job on a piece of cloth, which does not form folds while you are working, because it is easy to cut the skin on the folds. The cloth is regularly cleaned with the knife and washed once or twice during the hunting season.

The skins, cleaned of meat and fat, are stretched on thin sticks or pieces of wire 4-5 mm thick, 5 to 7 skins on each and dried. They are dried under the table or under the sleeping benches. They should not be dried under the ceiling, because hot air can strongly warp the skins and they collect dust and soot in the cabin. As a result the skins become dirty and wrinkled. Closer to the floor the temperature is lower and there is no soot and dust, the skins dry slowly and retain a high quality.

The skins remain stretched on wires until evening the next day. In the evening the skins are removed and new

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skins are stretched on the same stick or wires for drying. Some hunters dry squirrel skins on wooden boards. This is convenient as well, but the board should be 3 cm wide. A very broad board stretches the skin too much, widening the shot holes and even the bald patches. Skins that have dried are not kept in the cabin, because they may become brittle. They are stored in the shed or outside.

When leaving the forest, all the collected skins are tied in bunches, 10 skins in each. Some hunters, especially if they have to carry all the furs on their back, compress the skins. For this purpose they use a special device: a small board slightly wider than the squirrel skin is nailed to a log. The board has 3 to 4 grooves for threads. Four wooden sticks 3-4 cm thick and 25-30 cm high are vertically attached to the board. Ten squirrel skins are placed between the sticks and they are covered with another board of the same size and with grooves for threads. A thick nail driven into the log is used to press skins tightly between the two boards using a strong cord or rope. The rope is tightened 2 to 3 times a day. This is how the skins are compressed. When it is completed, threads are used to fasten the skins and the job is done. Such a bunch of skins is 2-3 cm thick and a great number of skins can be accommodated in one backpack. Fur prepared this way can be safely carried to sell to even the most demanding furrier.

This is all about our technical excursion into the "jungle" of industrial squirrel hunting. In conclusion, I will remind you once again that despite all the difficulties and troubles of our time, it is necessary to continue to hunt squirrels and to train our Laikas to hunt squirrels. It is exactly in squirrel hunting that the Laika can develop and

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reveal its natural hunting qualities, such as “*chutyo*”, search, style of barking and tracking, which are so important for using the dog in all other kinds of hunting. It is not worth worrying that squirrel hunting will become a nuisance in hunting other animals in the future. Laikas are exceptionally intelligent dogs. Once a Laika has sharpened its skills to hunt squirrels, it will readily switch to hunting other kinds of game that are most interesting for the hunter.



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