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***№ 31 June 2012***

# ***JOURNAL***



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

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***From the Curator...***

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

In this 31st issue we publish two articles. Elizabeth Naumann and Dr. Werner Roeder analyze population genetics of the existing Azawakhs outside its original range of distribution: mainly in Europe and USA. Alexander Popov, a Russian Laika expert, described interesting historical developments in aboriginal Laika, starting from late 19th century to establishment of the four Laika purebreds and their changes until most recent time.

Sincerely yours,

***Vladimír Beregovoy***  
Curator of PADS, International

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## **Breeding Azawakhs in Europe: A Contemporary Assessment**

**Elisabeth Naumann and Dr. Werner Röder**

The traditional cattle, camp protection and hunting dogs of the Tamashek nomads in the West African Sahel region are bred in Europe and America under the name of “Azawakh”, a designation created for the FCI standard. Azawakhs belong to the few working dog breeds still living under natural conditions in their countries of origin. From the cynological and ethological side, the question arises, in which ways those historical populations of *Canis familiaris* can be saved from extinction: in state-subsidized conservation areas in museum-like ancient living conditions, through the creation of zoological centers which provide some of the environmental structures of their historic habitats, or by the popular revival of the former use of working dogs for modern sports and entertainment - for example with sighthounds in the Arab world, or by the propagation of "national breeds" to promote cultural identity within postcolonial or post-Soviet states. Finally there is the possibility of exporting representatives of endangered stocks to foreign countries with a view to transplanting them into established dog breeding systems under the auspices of the FCI and respective Kennel Clubs. In contrast to extremely specialized

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breeds such as exotic livestock guarding dogs, the multi-talented Azawakh seemed to offer a viable opportunity for migration into the Western hemisphere with the chance to find relatively adequate living conditions with knowledgeable owners and breeders.

The experiment started in the 1970s among dog lovers in France, the former colonial patron of the regions of origin.

Our investigation intends to contribute to the question whether the survival of such "breeds in exile" is feasible from the point of view of population genetics.

The data collected for this study comprise the 24 European Azawakh litters of the year 2011 with their following inbreeding coefficients (IC) and ancestry loss coefficients (ALC), taking account of five generations.

File No.	Country	Date of birth	IC	ALC
1.	Italy	20.09.	9,87	88,70
2.	Italy	07.11.	0,00	91,70
3.	Italy	09.11.	0,00	96,70
4.	Italy	22.11.	0,00	91,30
5.	Germany	24.05.	5,94	85,48
6.	Germany	28.06.	8,95	90,32
7.	Germany	16.10.	5,74	93,54

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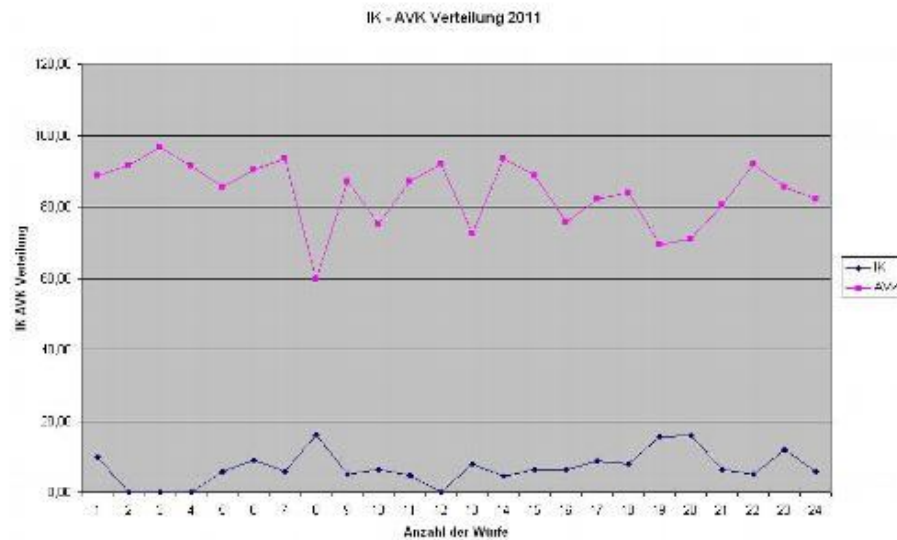
8.	Germany	21.10.	16,10	59,67
9.	Germany	24.10.	5,12	87,09
10.	Germany	09.11.	6,42	75,19
11.	Germany	22.11.	4,68	87,09
12.	Germany	30.11.	0,00	91,93
13.	Switzerland	01.08.	7,90	72,58
14.	Russia	06.03.	4,50	93,54
15.	Poland	06.11.	6,32	88,70
16.	Poland	25.09.	6,24	75,80
17.	France	20.05.	8,72	82,25
18.	France	06.11.	7,82	83,87
19.	France	24.12.	15,60	69,35
20.	Switzerland	20.10.	15,90	70,96
21.	France	20.05.	6,44	80,64
22.	England	08.10.	5,04	91,93
23.	France	11.09.	11,90	85,48
24.	Norway	02.07.	5,81	83,87

These litters have generated well over 130 whelps.

FCI-Kennel Clubs would usually deny the breeding qualification of dogs with an IC over 10 and an ALC under 75 points. Most of the indicators listed above are within this "green zone". A majority of European Azawakh breeders could continue on this

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level of supposed genetic tolerance in the years immediately ahead, if they accept progressive ALC- and IC-downgrading in their forthcoming litters. At first glance, the recent popularization of the breed in the West and the corresponding increase in the production of offspring might be seen as a considerable success in the conservation of Azawakhs outside their endangered habitats in West Africa.



*Distribution of IC (=IK, blue line) and ALC (=AVK, red line) indices among the litters of 2011 by their file numbers (see chart on page 2).*

Is this a realistic hope for the future?

Unfortunately, this does not apply to the long-term prospects for the breeding stock in Europe with its numerically very small founder groups and the

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resulting population structure on the basis of incest- and inbreeding and hermetic “lines”. According to genetic findings, the hereditary sustainability of a race depends upon a minimum of 200 fertile specimens not related to each other. Their number in Europe and overseas might be assessed in a range of below 50. The results of this study suggest a rapid, self-generating diminution of this limited potential.

Meanwhile, the basics of population genetics have reached parts of the traditional “Dogdom”-organisations: The German Kennel Club (VDH), for instance, has introduced by-laws for the acceptance of Breed Clubs. A provisional membership is granted if the applicant can prove the existence of ten females and four males usable for reproduction. Dogs with the same ancestors in the first and second generation are excluded. Full membership will be granted only after this breeding potential “has been increased significantly” and most of the initial females and males have produced healthy litters. Under contemporary considerations, the unconditional incorporation of the French Azawakh founding club and author of the standard into the FCI system, as finally executed in 1980, appears as a problem of its own.

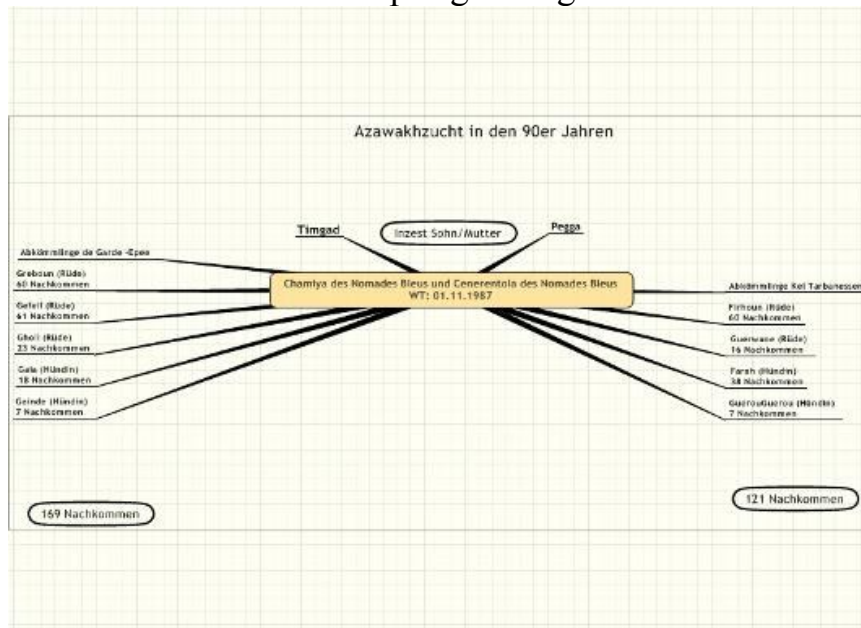
We have taken a look at the litters of the year 2011 and their IC and ALC indicators in relation to the “founding fathers” of the European Azawakh population. Predominant are the two sires Gefell de

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Garde Epee (b.1990) and Firhoun Kel Tarbanassen (b.1991). They were used on the grounds of scarce stud-availability and further on, because of their excellent conformation and show successes, as "popular sires". In 2010 Gefell's frozen semen served for a further input.

The genetic background of the two males is of additional significance. They are products of a mother / son inbreeding

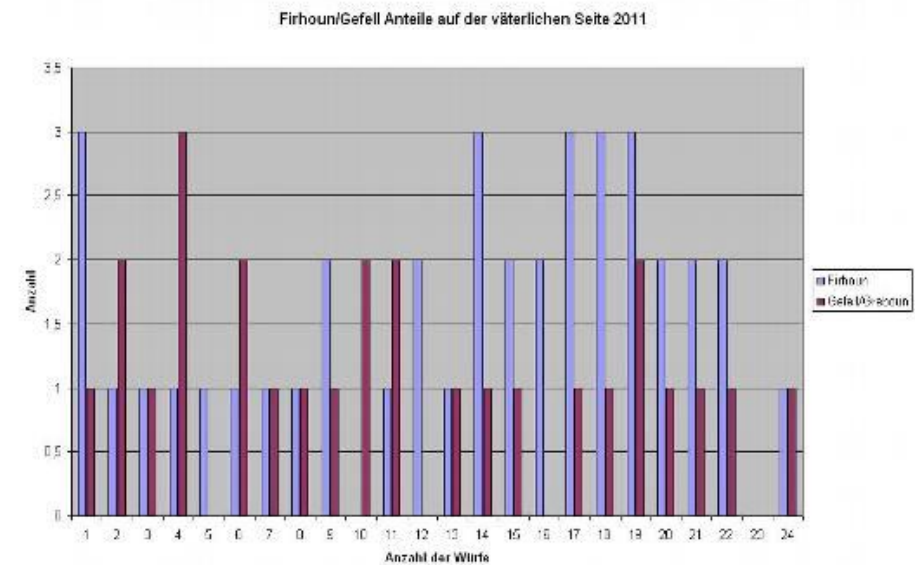
(Timgad and Pegga) with 169 Garde Epee and 121 Kel Tarbanassen offspring during the Nineties.



*Genetical background of Azawakh breeding during the Nineties with 159 offsprings on the Garde Epee and 121 on the Kel Tabarnassen side, originated by son/mother incest Timgad x Pegga.*

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The following charts show the degrees of genotypical presence of Firhoun / Gefell and their siblings among the Azawakh litters of the year 2011, that is after two decades of further breeding. The data are differentiated according to the paternal and maternal ancestors of these litters.

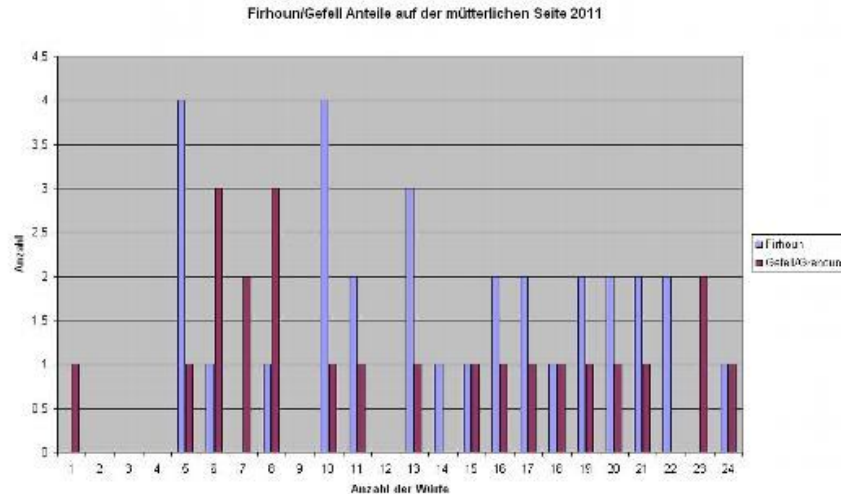


*Number of Firhoun (blue) and Gefell (red) entries in the paternal pedigrees of the 2011 litters.*

91.66 percent of the litters have Firhoun heritage on their paternal side.

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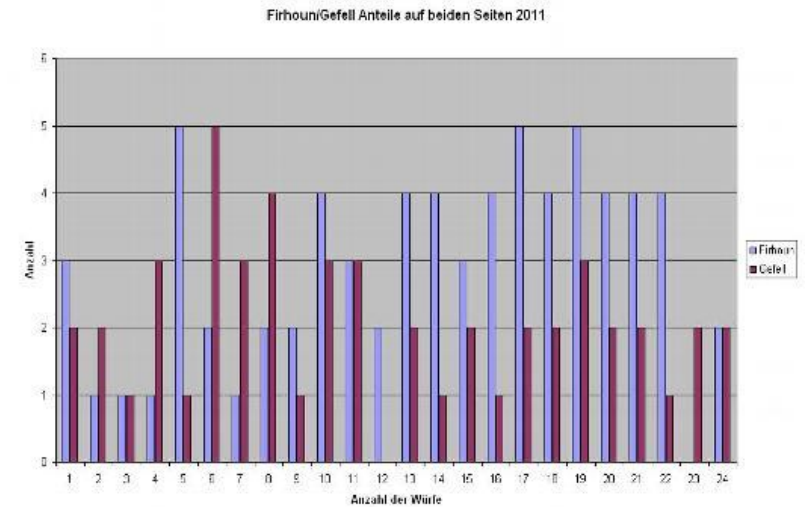
On the maternal side, Firhoun and Gefell/Greboun are represented with 75 and 62,5 percent in the pedigrees of the bitches:



*Firhoun / Gefell entries in the maternal pedigrees*

The extent of the impending self-generated bottleneck in Azawakh breeding in Europe is shown in the overall picture of parental background:

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*Number of Firhoun and Gefell entries in the pedigrees of the 2011 litters.*

In the year 2011 there has been no Azawakh litter in Italy, Germany, France, Poland, Russia, England, Norway and Switzerland without the genetic representation of Firhoun, Gefell / Greboun or their littermates.

Now, the question will be in order whether this finding is to be considered as threatening for the further development of the European breed. Is it not true that during one and a half centuries of dog breeding the evidence of as many champions as possible in a pedigree has been the royal road to a successful career as a breeder or exhibitor? And in any case, most of the IC parameters - as indicated above

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for the contemporary Azawakh population – are still within a more or less acceptable range...

Our Anglo-European breeds derived from a large reservoir of historical land races and working dogs during their creation in the 19th and early 20th centuries and they have been produced by numerous breeders in different areas of the continent. Therefore, they started out on a relatively broad genetic basis and it has taken quite a time for most of these breeds to be reduced to more or less homozygotic populations as a result of rigid “standards”, show competition and commercial production, responsible for the manifestation of more than 500 diagnosed hereditary defects and diseases, plus the modeling of hyper type conformations up to so-called torture breeds. The situation of imported exotic breeds with minimal founding groups and few breeders is even more precarious.

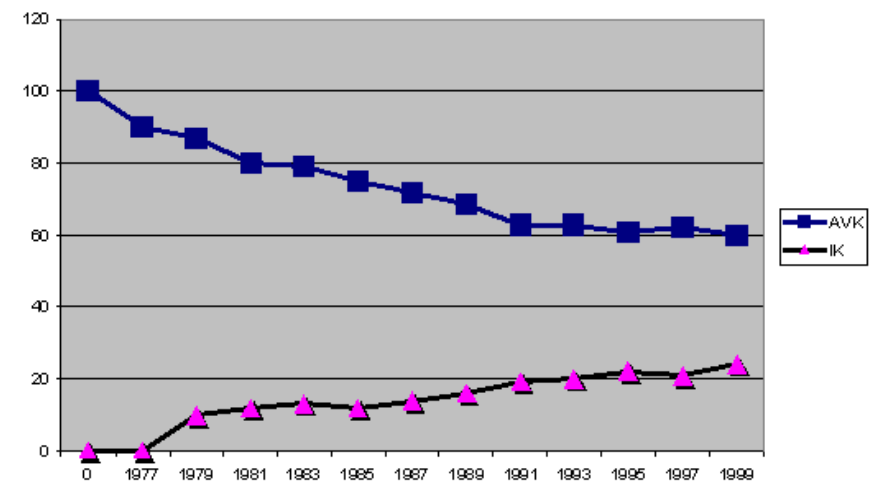
European Azawakhs born in and around 2011 and to be used for breeding in a few years will hardly have an opportunity of being mated to partners which are free from their own Firhoun / Gefell – background and the consequence of further losses of ancestry among their offspring. So, the downfall of the breed from the point of view of population genetics might be much faster than among the native races of European dogdom.

Azawakh breeding outside the African countries of origin is moving again towards the

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"genetic bottleneck" as demonstrated by Elisabeth Naumann for the years 1975 to 2000 (See: “Genetic impoverishment of the Azawakh?”, in [www.arbeitskreis-azawakh.com](http://www.arbeitskreis-azawakh.com) and in various cynological periodicals).

The following chart shows the development of a genetic bottleneck from 1977 to 1999 within a representative German Azawakh kennel using offspring from the first European foundation group:

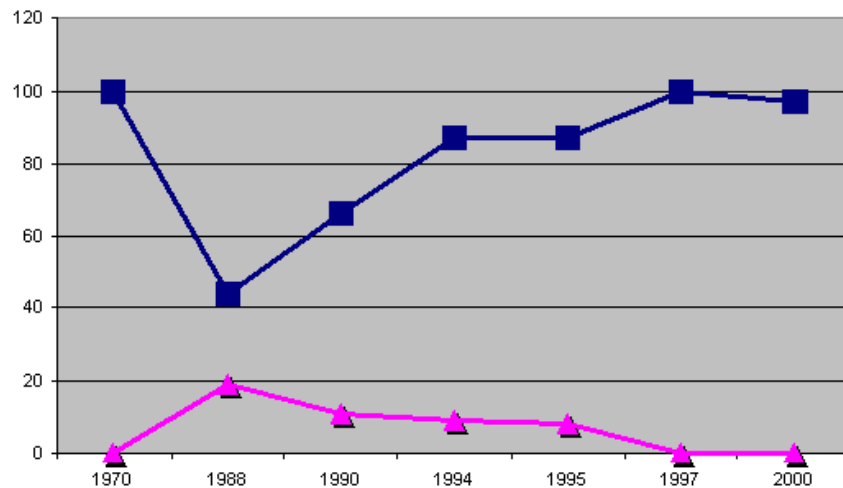


ALC (= AVK, blue line) and IC (= IK, black line) indicators.

The following example for the prevention of a genetic breakdown originates from a German Azawakh kennel, demonstrating the results of anti-ALC breeding policies and the inclusion of imported COO – females.

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(Both charts were calculated on the basis of four generations.)

The Nineties seemed to offer a chance for the sustainability of the European Azawakh population as the result of intensive cynological field research among nomadic tribes in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, related to the aims of PADS, and annual imports of aboriginal Azawakhs, soon exceeding the number of the first European founding groups. Breeding sites in Europe, the United States and Latin America were established or genetically reorganized by fanciers of natural dog breeds. The impact on the following Azawakh generations has been quite noticeable, especially in respect to vitality, social behavior and performance (see Elisabeth Naumann,

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Wie sähe das Deutsche Windhundzuchtbuch Band XLII aus, wenn es keine Azawakh-Importe gäbe? In: [www.arbeitskreis-azawakh.com](http://www.arbeitskreis-azawakh.com), 2010). The temporary rehabilitation of genetic diversity could be also observed among Azawakhs participating in dog shows (see Werner Röder, Wie steht's um die Rasse Azawakh? Beobachtungen und Überlegungen anlässlich der Jahresausstellung 2010. In: Azawakh Jahresjournal 2010, hrsg. von Gudrun Büxe jun. und Dennis Pomrehn, 2011).

This development was mainly owing to the activities of the Association Burkinabe Idi du Sahel (ABIS), incorporated in Ouagadougou in 1992/1993 as an official NGO (see, for example: [www.azawakhs.eu](http://www.azawakhs.eu) /Out of Africa) and in operation over a period of 15 years. The new crisis of European Azawakh breeding as described above indicates that the long-time establishment of an exotic race still below the minimum of genetic diversity in its host countries does require a continued input of this kind from the regions of origin.

At present, the respective chances are not the best: the last Azawakh imports from Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso arrived in 2007. A bureaucratic over-regulation by the European Union is factually strangulating pet imports from Third World countries. So, the legal entry of these Azawakh pups had to be accomplished by a "detour" via the United States, where the majority of the 21 imports took residence.

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The last COO-bred bitches in Europe will have passed their breeding age in a couple of years.

The decisive operative barrier for further “blood transfusions” from native stocks is the present inaccessibility of the African homelands for visitors from outside. An Azawakh expedition planned for 2009 had to be cancelled at short notice because of a new wave of kidnapping and murder by the Al-Qaida forces in the Sahara and the Sahel region. The outcome of the newest Tuareg rebellion for the secession of a Democratic Republic of Assouad - with eventual perspectives for its “national dog” - seems as open as ever.

These are external factors. The integration of exotic breeds into Western systems depends, as well, upon a certain co-operation on the side of kennel club administrations and some cynological interest among the dogdom community in general. In both respects, experiences with COO-bred Azawakhs are less than encouraging. “Standard” fundamentalists and the establishment of early breeders have practiced various ways and means to obstruct the influence of a renewed genetic variability upon the appearance and behavior of the “European Azawakh”. On the other hand, this conspicuous breed has stirred the ambitions of a growing number of show enthusiasts without intent and abilities to recognize its intrinsic qualities and needs. Meanwhile, certain breeders are responding to

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this market by overproduction under commercial aspects.

Marya Morales from the Azawakh Club of America and herself an explorer of the African homelands has brought it to the point: “Why the Azawakh is Not for Everyone - up until now, the Azawakh has remained safely and securely tucked away as a rare breed ... With AKC recognition on the horizon and growing interest from pet owners, it is those of us with a true passion and dedication to the breed that will have to help set out a path for the future of the Azawakh ...” (www.azcablog.blogspot.com., 2011).

Whether this path could include the permanent conservation of these Sahelian hounds away from their historical habitats is an open question.

Abridged edition of an article in >HundeWelt. BREEDER SPECIAL< No.2/2012, Minerva-Verlag Mönchengladbach, Germany.

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*Werner Röder, Dr.phil., historian and archivist, since 1983 owner and breeder of Azawakhs, numerous travels in Saharian and Sahelian countries, annual expeditions to Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger for cynologic field research among nomadic Tamashek ethnicities, 1993 – 2008 European Co-ordinator of the Association Burkinabe Idi du Sahel (A.B.I.S.). Lives in Munich, Germany.*

*Elisabeth Naumann, instructor for public health and medical nursing, since 1997 owner and breeder of Azawakhs, participated in African field research. Numerous publications on canine behaviour and population genetics. Lives in Munich, Germany.*

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## **Hunting Laikas**

**Aleksander V. Popov**

**Professional hunter, expert cynologist in hunting**

**Laikas**

**Russia**

The group of dog breeds belonging to hunting Laikas, perhaps, is the oldest and most primitive of all breeds of dogs, which almost has not change phenotypically for thousands of years. Despite how Laikas became purebreds, they all retain basic traits of primitive aboriginal dogs of native peoples of northern Asia and northern Europe. This is not surprising, because the way of life and the forms of using these dogs in particular has remained the same for thousands of years. Hunting Laikas appeared in the Mesolithic period. The first animals, which paleontologists identified by fossil records as *Canis familiaris* were very similar to contemporary Laikas. Numerous rock paintings left from the Stone Age confirms this. Laikas arrived in northern Asia during the Neolithic period together with tribes of Finno-Ugrian and Samodian linguistic groups and they advanced eastward to the Enissey River with tribes of Tungus-Manju speaking people.

Initially, all Laikas were hunting dogs, but later, when the reindeer was domesticated, herding Laikas appeared that were specialized for work with other kinds of livestock, about which we can only guess.

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Undoubtedly, Laikas were used for transportation since time unmemorable and until the present, but their major profession always has been hunting.

People played not the most important role in the formation of peculiarities of hunting Laikas. Natural selection had a major influence. Laikas are surprisingly durable and undemanding dogs. They are perfectly adapted to harsh conditions of the north. In endurance, they probably surpass even the wolf, because they capable of running many ten of kilometers every day for several months of commercial hunting in taiga forests. Laikas have a perfect coat of harsh outer hair and a soft warm downy undercoat. Even in the coldest winter weather some Laikas refuse to enter the doghouse, preferring to sleep curling right up on the snow. Laikas are capable of assimilating up to 75% of eaten food while in dogs of other breeds this index is about 25-30%. The majority of Laikas, even among modern time Laikas, are capable of finding food in the forest before permanent snow cover on the ground sets up. For centuries, in remote small communities of Siberia, during the summer season, Laikas lived a semi-feral way of life and this was going on until the 1970s. Working in forestry expeditions, I had an opportunity to witness this personally. There were cases, when geologists, timber and oil workers abandoned their dogs, where they worked, hoping to return in a few days. However, for a variety of reasons, such as bad

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weather, unavailability of a rental helicopter or because of procrastinations by bosses they returned after several weeks or even months. The abandoned Laikas and their mixes were in good condition, like nothing happened, whereas dogs of other breeds died of starvation.

Hunting Laikas possess the phenomenal ability of finding the right direction. What kind of “compass” and navigator are built in their heads, I do not know. I would take certain stories I heard from hunters as ordinary hunters’ tales, if not my personal 35 years long experience as a commercial hunter. Here are some examples. In the beginning of commercial hunting season, frightened wives of hunters came to our business office. “Oh, some trouble happened. My husband is out hunting for the second week, but yesterday the dogs came home alone”. We should rent a helicopter to check in their hunting areas about 100-150 km from the homes of the hunters. There were cases, when real mishaps took place during hunting, but most of the times nothing bad happened. In the beginning of the season, hunters still do not hunt. They distribute supplies in log cabins scattered over the hunting area. Dogs, seeing that they are not needed for work and left to their own devices, took off to a long road home. All my own Laika could and still can even at night track any pootik (trapping line) without a mistake even if the dog had run there only once in past seasons. I

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routinely use this. When it turns dark, I let the dog ahead of me. The dog may deviate a little from my hatched cuts I left on trees, but it will never miss a single trap. This is how they work, when they were familiarized with the trapping trail, but there are other examples. In 1983 with a party of hunters, I was taken by helicopter to the alpine zone of Kuznetsky Alatau Mountain Range for harvesting medicinal plants (maral root). I took a West Siberian Laika bitch named Alga. She was at the beginning of estrus. I had a male at home, but was reluctant to breed her in August, because in such a case I would lose the hunting season. Other hunters did not take their dogs and, therefore, I took her alone. A week later, I would fly back home to Novokuznetsk city to dry the harvested maral root at the wood processing plant. I left the dog in care of friends, but very soon she ran away from them. She first traveled to the nearest hunting party camp at a distance about 17- 20 km; they had a male; she mated there, but after a couple of days, she left that place. A week later, she arrived home. It was hard to understand how she managed to accomplish that. The place of harvesting roots was over 100 km from Novokuznetsk. Her daughter, named Tayga, could run over 17 km during one night, to feast on meat of maral deer (*Cervus elaphus sibiricus*), which had been taken with her assistance. She ran towards the meat, not on the my ski tracks, rather she ran in straight line, right over the steep

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mountain ridge, where I have never walked with her. Her tracks line was strikingly straight; the impression was that the dog used a compass. Now, because of my age, sometimes I have not enough strength to walk to the place, where my dog found a sable. With time, the dog learns that if I did not come until dark, waiting becomes worthless. After spending a couple of hours barking, she returned to the log cabin, running in a straight line. She is running not to that cabin, which we left in the morning, but to the next one, to which we were heading during the day. Unfortunately, during recent years, the ability of finding direction diminished in the Laikas of hunters, living in cities and some dogs even can get lost. There are Laikas, which are wandering in forest and cannot find their way home or back to the hunter.

Most importantly are the innate hunting qualities of those qualities that have been valued in the past and are valued at present and, I think, will be valued in the future. I will not list all animal species, which can be hunted with Laika and all methods of those hunts. There is much written about that by others. Some hunters respond jokingly, when an amateur asks them what kinds of animals their Laika hunts: “Everything, from squirrel to bear, they comb through taiga forest.” The hunting desire in the majority of Laikas is very strong and it is inherited genetically. Hunters with Laikas do not even use words like “training of dog”, but they prefer saying

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“walking up Laika”. Even those Laikas, which grew up among cows, horses, pigs, chickens and geese, and are not paying any attention to these animals, when they get in the forest for the first time, find wild animal and start barking with great confidence. During commercial hunting, in a team of the two – hunter and his Laika, positively the Laika is number one, not the hunter. Positively the Laika performs 90% of the work. The hunter should just come up quietly and shoot the animal.

I would like to discuss the versatility of hunting Laikas in particular. Many researchers and specialists in the area of hunting cynology think that a major task in work of Laika is its work on fur bearing animals; this how it was in the past and remains today. They explain that national minorities of Siberia and the European north should constantly pay yasak (tribute). Some even think that in the past there were Laika specialized in hunting bear, because the bear was a deified animal in the beliefs of many people of Finno-Ugrian and Tungus-Manju linguistic groups. This was true, but to those, who did not consider the bear a deity, this animal was simply an edible animal. To other people, the bear was a totem animal only during a certain historical period of their cultural development. Hunting fur bearing animals became important to minor ethnic groups only when trading relationships emerged. We should remember that many ethnic groups of Siberia lived there in Neolithic

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and until the second millennium AD. Under such conditions, pelts are only light and warm clothing, but the major goal of procuring food remained. If our ancestors could kill a moose, deer or bear, the entire tribe would be well fed for a longer time, although small game, such as squirrel and grouses were also a part of the ration. Therefore, the ability of Laikas to hunt big game was always in demand and hunting Laikas has been always as universal hunting dogs. In north European countries, the majority of purebred hunting Laikas are specialized, which is reflected even in the names of some of them. However, this had been achieved by selective breeding during a relatively recent time. However, despite all efforts directed towards narrow specialization, many dogs display versatility and passionately work on other than their game. In Russia, the majority of purebred Laikas remains universal hunting dogs. . Perhaps, only Karelo-Finnish Laika, recently renamed into Karelian Laika, display a strong inclination to work on birds. This happened, because Karelo-Finnish Laikas had been interbred with Finnish Spitz for the purpose of improvement the appearance. This had been done to such a large scale that there was almost nothing left of the Karelo-Finnish Laika. Just compare rings of Finnish Spitz and Karelo-Finnish Laika at a dog show and you will see that majority of the dogs actually do not differ from each other despite the different names of the two breeds. Despite all, dogs of this breed work

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well on squirrel, marten and mink and they work quite well even on moose, bear, wild boar and badger. The majority of amateur hunters prefer a universal Laika. Commercial hunters prefer a narrowly specialized Laika, such as a squirrel Laika, sable Laika, etc. However, this does not mean that they are born specialized; they become such as a result of daily hunting one species for months despite they had been born universal. The same happens in humans. If one was born with outstanding potential in sports, he would never show high results in the kind of sports he never tried. However, if he would train daily with a good experienced coach for a prolonged time, he may become an Olympic champion.

During recent times there are frequent expressions like this: “this is a purebred line (family) of squirrel Laikas and this one is of sable Laikas”. As a rule, this is far from reality. In the first case, this means that majority of dogs have a superb “chutyo” (the ability of dog to detect game animals by using all senses), which is most important to hunt this animal, but not just the inclination to hunt squirrel only. When it is said “line of bear Laika”, it means that majority of Laikas of this line have necessary aggressiveness to this animal. However, all this does not mean that a puppy out of a particular line, having excellent chutyo, will grow up a less efficient squirrel dog, then from another line. A suggestion to classify Laikas by their working qualities into Laikas for small

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game and Laikas for big game is repeated again and again in many publications and many follow this. Actually, the following happens at trials. Hunters bring so-called small game Laikas to trial. The dogs have a very narrow search range and they are lacking endurance, some are cowardly, which would be a fault in any Laika breed, and the dogs have poor chutyo. They are just not able to find anything, except squirrel, capercaillie and black grouse, within range of vision. Others claim that they have a big game Laika. As a rule, such dogs do not even look up and they cannot find and track animal running on tree crowns. However, if they find a sable in a tree hole in a cut down log, or between the roots, these dogs display a lot of zeal and it seems they are about to chew all the tree with its roots.. These dogs have a poor chutyo and them completely unable to use what they still have. It happens, when such “big game Laikas” cannot find a wild boar or a badger even in the pen. Of course, proclivity to finding a certain kind of game is traceable in certain lines, but it is never significant enough for classification of Laikas into big game and small game hunting dogs.

Now, I will discuss hunting Laikas of Russia. The very name for this type of hunting dogs, Laika, came into use relatively recently, in late 19-early 20th centuries. This name was used in cities and densely populated parts of European part of the country. In places of origins of these dogs, term Laika became

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established at a much later time, because there they were majority of all existing dogs and dogs of other breeds often never occurred. Even a well known expert of Laikas Prince A. A. Shirinsky-Shikhmatov named his work “Album of Northern Dogs”. He added word Laika only at the end of the title. In early 20th century hunting Laikas began gaining popularity among city hunters. Publications by L. P. Sabaneev, Professor S. N. Bogolubsky, M. G. Dmitrieva-Sulima, Kishensky, Yasharov and others helped popularization of Laikas. During late 19-early 20th centuries, in Russia, over 20 groups of aboriginal Laikas had been described. Prince Shirinsky-Shikhmatov wrote: “There are as many varieties of Laikas as many ethnic minorities in the north; these varieties are so conspicuous and differ from each other in many well stabilized characters so their division does not leave any room for doubts”. Many ethnographers, who studied peoples of Russian north in 19 century, noticed that among peoples with common roots, the more differences are in their culture, language, way of life and life conditions, the more different their dogs are. “Only the existence of these dogs allows thousands of ethnic minorities to live in the north.” A. A. Shirinsky-Shikhmatov described the following groups of aboriginal Laikas: Zyryan Laika, Finno-Karelian, Vogul, Cheremis, Ostyak, Tungus, Galitsian, Votyak, Norwegian, Buryat and Soyotian Laikas. Unfortunately, his work was never finished.

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After the October coup and Civil War, hunting Laikas grew in popularity in the European part of the country. Turmoil ruled in the country and nobody could keep packs of dogs; Borzois were considered as a vestige of feudalism and killed mercilessly. People were not concerned about entertainment, but rather about food for living. M. G. Dmitrieva-Sulima was right, when she wrote in her book “Laika and Hunting with it”, 1914: “... I will tell that Laika is the most undemanding dog and that will bring to the hunter’s shot such a diversity of game, which could not be even in dreams of any purebred dog. Not a rich hunter with a Laika will always have an opportunity to shoot during the hunting and will never return home empty handed: Laika will always find one or another animal for him to shoot.”

Some hunters obtained Laikas of local type, which already had undergone considerable mixing, but still retained good hunting qualities. Some brought Laikas from Siberia. Red Army soldiers, who were hunters, when military operations in Ural and Siberia came to an end, brought adult and puppy Laikas of local ethnic minorities. Although majority of plain hunters did not distinguish their Laikas by separate breeds (to them it was simply a hunting dog), some breeders focused on certain types dogs. In 1925, a cynological meeting approved “Standards commercial hunting dogs” and distinguished the following Laika

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breeds: Zyryan (Komi) Laika, Vogul (Mansi) Laika, Ostyak (Hanty) Laika, Votyak Laika and Karelian Laika. In 1926, in Sverdlovsk (Ekaterinburg) and in 1928 in Moscow clubs of lovers of hunting Laikas were organized, which began selectively breeding of Laikas. The government also paid attention to Laikas. Before WWII, trade with fur produced up to 12% of foreign currency for the government. Kennels of commercial hunting Laikas appeared all over the country. SOVNARKOM (Soviet of Peoples Commissars) issued an order forbidding importation of other dog breeds in regions of commercial hunting. What is surprising, this order was still observed until the 70s, long after it was no longer enforced. It was observed not as much by local ethnic minorities, but rather by Russian speaking people of those regions. Dogs of other breeds imported there were shot or poisoned; only importation of Laika was permitted regardless of specific Laika breed. One thing was important - the Laika should be a working one. Thus, until the middle of the 20th century nothing threatened aboriginal Laikas. Sporadic importation of Laikas from other regions could not seriously change or damage the quality of local Laikas. To the contrary, they were beneficial by increasing heterozygosity. Aboriginal Laikas of the European part of Russia were in a worse situation. They were in fewer number in the first place and underwent strong uncontrolled crossbreeding after the economic collapse, Civil War

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and during time of collectivization, their population was reduced drastically. In an interim standards of Laikas accepted in 1939, the Cheremis Laika (Kostroma Laika), Galitsian Laika and Votyak Laika were not listed. Probably they were assimilated by that time. However, these Laikas certainly left their trace in Moscow kennels.



East Siberian laika. By Anna Yeremenko.

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War and after war time were difficult for Laikas. The majority of the men in the population was sent to the front line and millions of hunters perished in battles. In some villages of size of 200-300 houses in remote taiga regions not one man returned from war. As a result of evacuation of heavy industries to the east, in Ural during war time, mass urbanization of the region began in post war period. Populations of sable were diminished and its hunting was banned for many years. Hunting Laikas were no longer needed and their population rapidly declined. However, there were still enough Laikas in possession of native peoples. Their dogs still retained some specific differentiating traits that could be used for establishing purebreds. Without much difficulty it would be possible to establish Zyryan, Hanty, Mansi, Tungus and a few other Laika breeds in East Siberia. It is a different question, why this has never been done? In major cynological centers in Moscow and in Sverdlovks, as a result of decades of selective breeding, which sometimes was incorrect, several aboriginal types of Laika became mixed. The history of certain original types of Laikas was hundreds, if not thousands, of years long. The problem of Russia is rooted in its vast natural resources. There is a proverb: "We do not value what we have, but we cry when it is lost". The final blow to aboriginal Laikas was done in 1947, when an All Russian Cynological Meeting accepted classification of Laika breeds based

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on geographical principle suggested by E. I. Shereshevsky. In 1949, temporary standards of Karelo-Finnish Laika, Russo-European Laika, West Siberian Laika and East Siberian Laika were accepted. Each of these breeds was supposedly a result of merging of several local type Laikas. Actually, this was not true. The desirable was presented as if it were real. For example, the Russo-European Laika was developed by deliberate breeding. One of the founder males of this breed named Pootik 651, was obtained from mating of Zyryan type male named Muzgar with West Siberian female named Pityukh-II. At a later time, the blood of West Siberian Laikas with desirable phenotypes was repeatedly added to the breed. In Sverdlovsk region, Hanty and Mansi Laikas were used for the creation of the West Siberian Laika, but in the Moscow Laika breeding region, besides Hanty and Mansi Laikas, Laikas of Zyryan, Votyak, Cheremis and some other Laikas also had their influence. Merging of East Siberian Laikas is still not completed.

In 1952, Cynological Soviet of Glavokhota of Russian Federation has approved permanent standards for Karelo-Finnish, Russo-European and West Siberian Laikas. I will not discuss in detail the history of development of modern purebred Laika breeds, because it had been well done in publications by A. T. Voilochnikov and S. D. Voilochnikov, G. Z. Nasyrov and many others. I am nostalgic about lost aboriginal type Laikas. For example, in the small country of

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Japan there are more Laika breeds than in Russia. This raises a few questions. Why geographical principle and not ethnographical one, as it had been done earlier, was chosen for division of Laika breeds? Why so few Laika breeds had been distinguished? Why cynological and scientific establishment did not resist this? In my opinion this happened by political ideological reasons. "Father of all peoples and genius in all sciences" I. V. Stalin declared that very soon, in USSR, there will be no ethnic nations. There will be only one ethnicity: the "Soviet People". Everything associated with national consciousness had been suppressed at all levels. Sometimes this reached the level of outright absurdity. In Maritime Territory it was not allowed to name a Korean as Korean or a Nanai as Nanai. Instead they should be named "comrade easterner". One, who would not comply, was risking getting real jail time for "small bourgeois chauvinism." Forget the ethnographic principle for naming Laika breeds. The Party and the Government required creating one breed of hunting dogs of peasants and workers and some breeds were declared bourgeois luxury and vestiges of feudalism. This was OK, if they agreed upon four Laika breeds. During those years, in science, "lysenkoism" ruled. Genetics was declared a "whore of imperialism" and any independent thinking was prosecuted by hostile measures. Everybody remembered the fate of N. I. Vavilov. This talented worldwide known scientist was

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thrown in GULAG, where he died like a regular criminal. This was not a big deal being a senior science worker like E. I Shereshevsky was, but his system of classification of breeds had been accepted, despite the availability of professors and academic level scientists, who knew the essence of the problem. It was dangerous to deviate from the “general party line” of the time. However, in the beginning, many dog breeders and hunters resisted this classification, but, unfortunately, nobody listened to them. Anyway, we lost the aboriginal Laika breeds in their original state. This is a pity, of course, but history cannot be reversed. Now, in Russia, there are four purebred hunting Laikas, carrying genetics of aboriginal Laikas of the past.



West Siberian Laika. By Anna Yeremenko.

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In USSR, since the 70s, a new wave of interest to hunting Laikas has emerged. Under conditions of poor supply of goods, people had “extra money.” Demand for fur at the black market grew. Black market prices for pelts surpassed manifold official auction prices. A sable pelt at the black market could fetch 250-300 rubles, which equaled two month average salary of a factory engineer. Salary of commercial hunter became one of the highest in the country. There was a catastrophic shortage of Laikas. In the early 20th century, Laikas were brought from commercial hunting regions to big cities, but after the 70s Laikas were brought from kennels of cynological centers to province. Hunting clubs put together waiting lists of those who wanted a Laika puppy and some waited for their turn for years. After graduation in the 70s and working as a Chief Wildlife Biologist of Mid Amur River hunting husbandries in Khabarovsk Territory, I could not obtain a good Laika for a long time until I traveled to pick up a West Siberian Laika puppy from Novokuznetsk, where my uncle worked as a cynologist. In the third generation of that puppy were Laikas of Kirov VNIOZ (Kirov All Union Institute of Hunting and Wildlife Management). This is when Laikas became most common hunting dogs and this remains so until present. Even now, in Russia, when furbearers hunting declined everywhere, the majority of Laikas have excellent hunting qualities, because their closest ancestors went through

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screen of taiga commercial hunting. Most widely distributed breed in Russia is the West Siberian Laika. Laikas became increasingly often used for hunting big game. Never in the past were so many wild boars and moose were shot with Laikas as they are now.

Without hunting in taiga, hunting Laikas are threatened with a loss of working qualities. This danger is coming from two directions.

Due to efforts of leading cynologists of the country, hunting Laikas of Russia are included in the "Roster of Protected of Peoples Achievements." However, despite this, the Government stepped aside from control over pedigree work in hunting dog breeding. Two public organizations are involved with pedigree work in Russia: "ROSOKHOT RYBOLOVSOYUZ" (Russian Union of Hunters and Fishermen) and "RFOS" (Russian federation of breeding of hunting dogs). The latter one is a subdivision of RKF (Russian Cynological Federation). To register a private kennel with the right of issuing pedigree documents, according to rules of RKF, it is enough to have two female dogs of one breed. Newborn kennels began to grow like mushrooms after rain. Some owners of kennels are dedicated hunters and they are passionate about their dog breed, carefully selecting breeding mates, spending money and time. Many others used the dog for making profit. To them it does not matter, if the dogs have any

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hunting qualities and what kind of offspring will come out. Their major goal is produce and sell as many puppies as possible, using advertisement tricks and deliberate disinformation about appearance and working qualities of the parents. Many breeders registered their dogs only when they discovered that clubs of ROSOKHOTRYBOLOVSOYUZ did not accept them for breeding programs, because faults in the appearance and poor working qualities. The second danger comes from the gaining popularity of "penned animal trial sport". Because of difficulty or even impossibility to test innate working qualities of Laika on wild boar, bear or badger, trials on captured penned animals became worked out and introduced. It seems everything is fine. In a work day, it is possible to evaluate up to 50 dogs; all dogs are under the same conditions prior to the trial, which allows more precise evaluation of their work. Some of these contests were upgraded to a status of interregional, all Russian and even international. At such contests, titles are awarded: "Field Champion" or "Absolute Field Champion". To some dog owners and breeders these contests evolved from simple tests for suitability to do the work to independent goal. Some made aggressiveness and boldness of their dog to big animals a basic breeding goal. Other components, such as chutyo, search and barking were ignored. Some dog owners constantly travel with their big game Laikas to take part in contests, but never take

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them to hunt. Laikas, which cannot find a wild boar in an 8 acre pen in ten minutes or a badger in a 2 acre pen already appeared. Contests on captured animals became a kind of corrida and rules of the trials are adjusted accordingly, constantly raising the bar on aggressiveness and boldness. For example, in modern rules of trials of Laika on captured bear requirement for “aggressiveness” reads: “At any convenient opportunity the dog (or a pair of dogs) should bite hard at thighs, heels and rear, except the head and neck”. Is it necessary during real bear hunting? Of course, it is not. Only kamikaze dogs can work this way. During real hunting a free walking bear Laika makes one or two hard bites, when bear is running away, just enough to let bear know that he has a serious foe. After that, the dog is simply barking at stopped bear until the hunter comes up. If the dog will try to bite bear more often, the bear will catch it eventually, no matter how agile the dog may be.

Big animals, such as moose, big wild boar tusk and bear stay in presence of the dog only, when they are willing to stay. If they are frightened by a human, they run and even several dogs cannot stop them, although they may be hanging on the animal. Some of the Laikas already have such viciousness to animals so they are similar rather to kamikaze, then to hunting dogs. As a rule, they get killed or seriously injured at the first hunting.

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I wish to appeal to all lovers of hunting Laikas, hunters and breeders: “Dear friends! We got a priceless gift from our ancestors – hunting Laikas. Their hunting qualities were honed for millennia and were brought to a degree of perfection. We do not need to reinvent a bicycle, trying to enforce these qualities. Now, there are breeders, who add blood of Pitbulls or wolves to Laikas. Our goal is to preserve in hunting Laikas, what had been built in by nature and many centuries of selection. Let us not to forget that Laikas are made for hunting and we should not make them couch potatoes or brainless gladiators.”

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## Primitive Aboriginal Dogs Society

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